

East Sussex Assembly 2015
8 December 2015, International Tennis Centre, Eastbourne

CONFERENCE REPORT

RECOMMENDATIONS

The ESSP is recommended to:

1. Note the results of the Quizdom session and the presentations to the Assembly; and
2. Note the feedback and suggestions for next year's Assembly.

BACKGROUND

The East Sussex Assembly meets once a year and focuses on a topic that will be of interest to Assembly members and other partners. This year around 55 delegates attended from partner organisations across the public and voluntary and community sectors to discuss the topic of Community Resilience. This focus was selected as a result of Assembly members' recommendations made at last year's conference.

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S1. INTRODUCTION

Community Strength and Leadership is one of the key themes set out in East Sussex Strategic Partnership's (ESSP) *Pride of Place* strategy, which recognises that East Sussex communities need to be strong, sustainable and able to adapt to social, economic and environmental changes. *Pride of Place* also recognises the need to develop and support local leadership and enable communities to be active in planning services and making decisions that affect their lives and neighbourhoods.

The term 'Community Resilience' is traditionally associated with planning for responses to emergency crisis, such as flooding. However, as finite public resources are reduced Community Resilience is taking on a new meaning as community responses to community issues play an

increasingly important role. ESSP has a key part to play in fostering Community Resilience in East Sussex. In *Pride of Place* the following tasks were set to work towards building strong communities:

- plan for and meet the needs of changing and new communities;
- empower local people of all ages to have a greater voice and influence over local decisions that affect their lives and neighbourhoods;
- develop and strengthen the local Voluntary and Community Sector;
- promote community ownership or control of buildings, spaces and local community service delivery; and
- support and encourage volunteering.

Therefore, the Assembly focused on how the ESSP and its partners can make community responses viable, with particular focus on the public and third sectors' role in fostering community activities. In the presentations and on the market place stands we heard from existing resilient communities that are effectively responding to a range of community issues.

S2. ASSEMBLY ITEMS

2.1 Quizdom

Following an introduction from Steve Marwaring, ESSP Chair, and an update on the current financial situation from Becky Shaw, East Sussex County Council Chief Executive, the first part of the assembly involved an interactive session to gather the views of delegates on different aspects of Community Resilience. Attendees were asked a number of multiple choice questions and provided their answers through interactive devices, which were collected and fed back to the audience.

Question 1: Are you hopeful or doubtful that communities and the public sector can work together to overcome the challenges ahead?

This question was asked twice during the event, once at the beginning as a warm-up question and again at the end of the event.

The responses from the beginning of the event were:

40 Hopeful

8 Doubtful

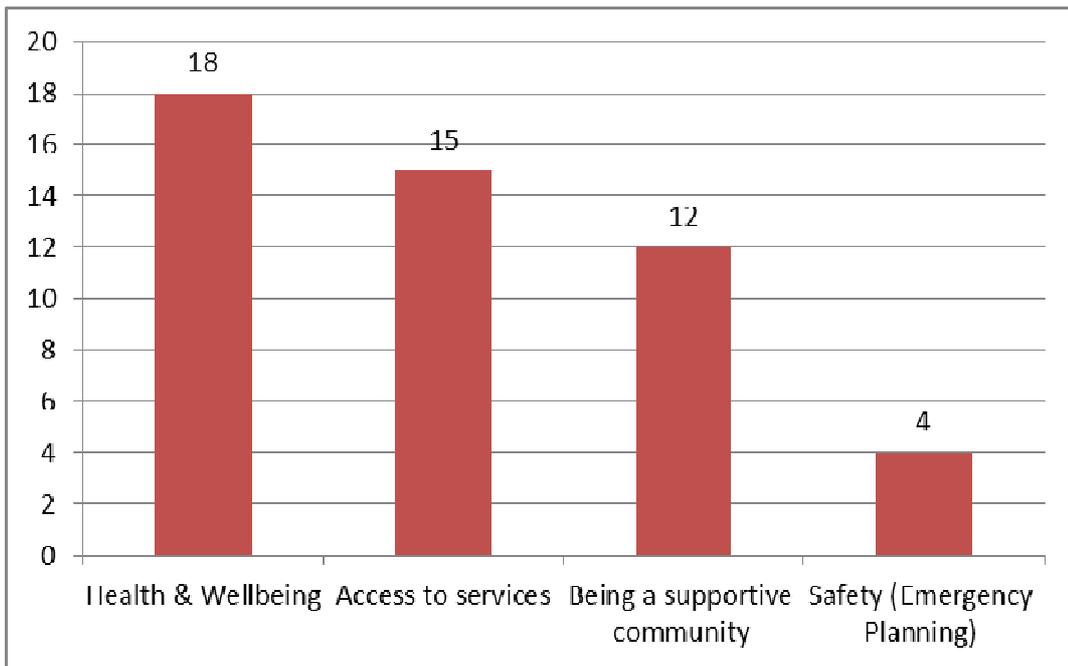
The responses from the end of the event were:

33 Hopeful

14 Doubtful

Although there was a shift in responses, on both occasions the majority of delegates were hopeful that communities and the public sector can work together to overcome the challenges ahead, with 83% hopeful the first time and 70% hopeful the second time.

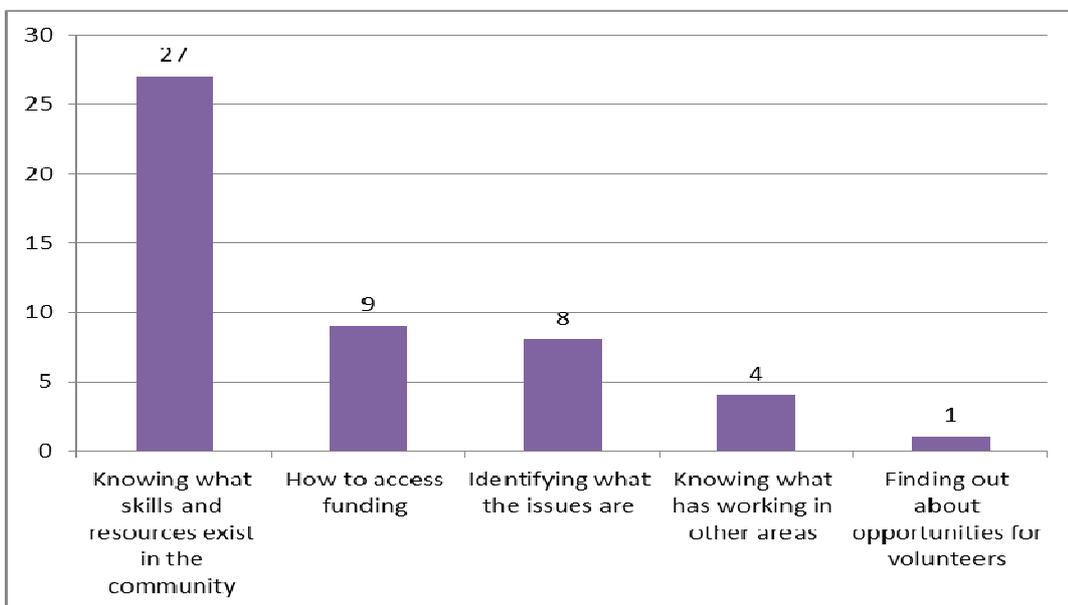
Question 2: If you had to choose one of the following, which one would you consider being the top priority for your community?



The answers given suggest that delegates broadly regarded 'health & wellbeing', 'access to services' and 'being a supportive community' as equally important priorities for their communities.

Question 3: Of the five choices listed, which one describes the most important support a community might require?

The answers offered were broad and categorised the type of support that communities might require to become resilient.



'Knowing what skills and resources exist in the community' was selected by over half (55%) of the delegates suggesting that delegates regarded knowing the make-up of communities as important for effectively building resilience.

Question 4: Which is the most important characteristic of working collaboratively?

'Promoting mutuality and reciprocity' proved to be the most popular answer, as 14 delegates selected it as the most important characteristic. Delegates were told that in the context of Community Resilience the two terms meant: 'mutuality' - a sharing of sentiments, points of view, goals; and 'reciprocity' - the practice of exchanging things with others for mutual benefit.

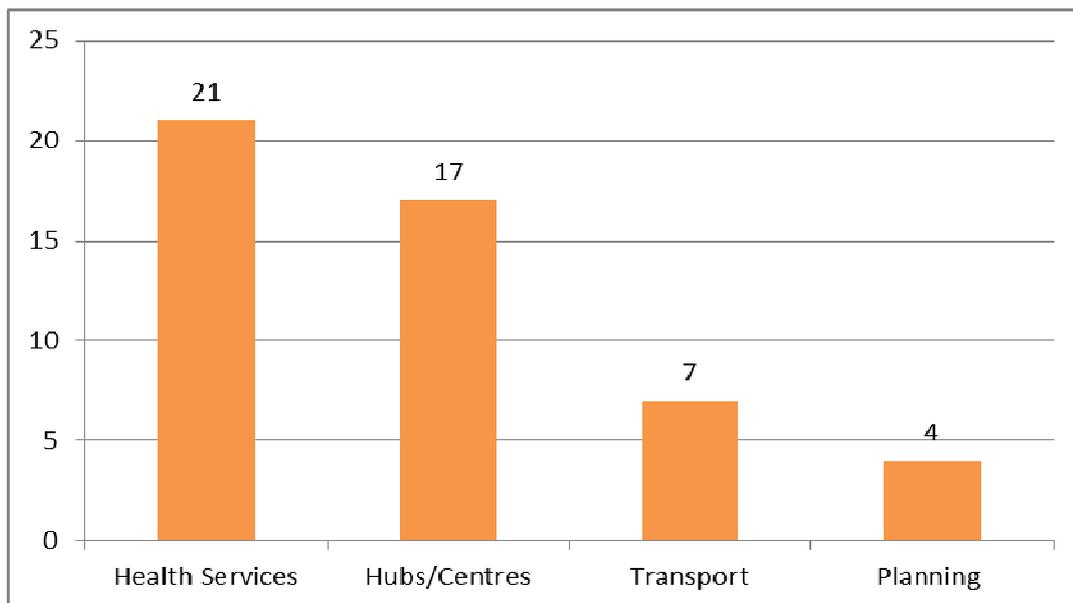
The second most selected characteristic was 'recognising people as assets' which was selected by 9 delegates.

The remaining characteristics were selected in the following order:

- 6 delegates said 'building on people's existing capabilities';
- 5 delegates said 'breaking down barriers between professionals and recipients';
- 4 delegates said 'facilitating rather than delivering'; and
- 3 delegates said 'developing peer support networks'.

The responses to this question are of particular interest because the voluntary and community sector (60% of delegates) and the public sector (40% of delegates) were fairly evenly represented, demonstrating that both sectors regard a variety of other characteristics as required in effective collaborative working; 34% selected 'promoting mutuality and reciprocity', 22% selected 'recognising people as assets' and 44% selected other characteristics.

Question 5: Choose one area that you feel could benefit from the characteristics of working collaboratively?



While these four service areas are not the only services that could benefit from applying the characteristics of collaborative working, they were provided as answers as they are well known service areas within East Sussex. The majority of delegates (78%) felt Health Services or Hubs/Centres could most benefit from the characteristics of working collaboratively.

Questions 6 and 7 asked what aspects were seen as most important for sustaining community based activity in rural and urban areas.

Delegates gave the following answers:

	Rural	Urban
Transportation (moving people around)	17 delegates (35%)	1 delegate (2%)
Venues (places for people to meet)	10 delegates (20%)	6 delegates (12%)
Volunteers (people helping out or taking the lead)	16 delegates (33%)	26 delegates (53%)
Reward and Recognition	0 delegates	1 delegate (2%)
Funding (people helping raise interest and money)	6 delegates (12%)	15 delegates (31%)

The main distinction between the answers given for rural and urban areas was that delegates regarded transportation as one of the most important aspects for maintaining community activities in rural areas, whereas only one delegate regarded transportation as important in urban areas. Additionally, more than double the amount of delegates selected funding as the most important characteristic for urban areas compared with rural areas.

Delegates regarded volunteers to help out or take the lead as important in both urban and rural areas, and reward and recognition was not regarded as most important in either.

The answers given in this session have been passed onto the East Sussex Better Together programme to feed into phase one of their work on Community Resilience (see section 2.2.3).

2.2 Presentations

Following the Quizdom session, attendees had an opportunity to network and view market place stands from the following organisations and projects currently responding to issues in East Sussex communities: East Sussex Credit Union, the Welfare Benefits & Debt Advice Project, the Community Wellbeing Service, HealthWatch East Sussex, the commissioned public reference forum for the East Sussex Better Together programme, HOME, the Big Local, and Village Agents.

The Assembly then received presentations on examples of existing Community Resilience in East Sussex and how public and voluntary and community sector bodies can work to build resilient communities.

2.2.1 Health and Wellbeing Visits Project

Adam Chugg from 3VA and Abbie Wraige from East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service (ESFRS) and 3VA gave a presentation on their joint Health and Wellbeing Visits Project.

This project stemmed from a pilot scheme established by ESFRS volunteers who conducted specialist Home Safety visits to vulnerable older people. When conducting these visits, Fire Service professionals identified that vulnerable older people had health and wellbeing needs, alongside safety needs, and with their foresight the project was developed. The project has five main ambitions:

1. vulnerable older people will be more aware of their health needs and their choices of public and community services;
2. vulnerable older people will be taking more action to manage their health better;
3. vulnerable older people will feel more socially connected;

4. health inequalities will be reduced; and
5. a model will be developed which can be used nationally.

The project will meet these ambitions by arranging for older people to be visited in their own homes (up to three visits may be arranged) for a conversation about their health and wellbeing needs and priorities, and basic information and advice is then offered together with the offer of a referral to an appropriate source of help.

The project is currently between years 1 and 2 of a 3 year plan. In Year 1 the project secured 3 years of funding through the Department of Health, and in the coming 2 years 3VA and ESFRS will refine, develop and then finalise the model with a view to continue the project beyond the 3 years and enable it to be used beyond East Sussex and Brighton and Hove.

The project has achieved a lot in its first year:

- 20 volunteers have joined the project;
- 91 people have been supported across East Sussex and Brighton & Hove;
- 84 visits have been made; and
- 71 referrals have been made.

Volunteers have also provided testimonials of how their visits have improved the lives of vulnerable elderly people, such as:

“Doris had fairly serious mobility issues and was obviously lonely. We rang Age Concern to arrange for a befriending service for her. She was determined to tell us she could get in and out of the bath safely, but we were not at all convinced and contacted Adult Social Care to see if a walk-in shower could be fitted. Again, whether something like this would be provided free would obviously depend on her financial circumstances, but the initial contact is a start.”

The project offers a number of opportunities to improve community resilience in East Sussex including opportunities to reach more people, especially those considered ‘Hard to Reach’ and less engaged, opportunities to focus advice provided based on specific aspects of older people’s Health and Wellbeing, and opportunities to build an effective referral network to reduce partners cost and time spent on addressing vulnerability.

For further information about the project contact Adam Chugg at Adam.Chugg@3va.org.uk or Abbie Wraige at Abbie.Wraige@3va.org.uk.

2.2.2 Clean Seas Please and Hastings Pollution Assessment Volunteers

Jan Cutting from Rother Voluntary Action gave a presentation on the Hastings local community action campaign Clean Seas Please.

The Clean Seas Please campaign was started when it emerged that Hastings was at risk of failing new European Sea Bathing Water Regulations due to polluted water running into the sea. The campaign is managed by Hastings Voluntary Action and Rother Voluntary Action in partnership with the Environment Agency, and was set up to combat manmade sources of pollution: household waste such as fats, oils and greases; ragging (flushing items other than toilet paper and human waste); and misconnected waste water pipes. The campaign encouraged the local community to:

- check that their drains were not wrongly connected;
- clean up dog excrement;
- check that their household septic tank is not leaking;
- only flush toilet paper and human waste;

- put cooking oil and fat in the bin, rather than down the sink;
- use a water butt to reuse rainwater;
- not litter; and
- only pour items down the drain that they would be happy to have in contact with their skin.

Numerous volunteers from Hastings and the surrounding areas got involved in the campaign and helped out by hosting stalls at community events and by raising awareness among children and their parents, schools, colleges, catering outlets and other public bodies. The campaign created eye-catching publicity material such as badges, stickers, signs and flyers; established the memorable three Ps slogan ('only flush pee, poo and paper'); and set up a website containing information about the issue and what the community could do to make a difference (www.cleaneasplease.net).

As a result of this successful campaign Hastings' bathing water has passed the new standard and is classed as good, and excellent at St Leonards.

Ian Sier, a Hastings Pollution Assessment Volunteer, followed Jan Cutting with a presentation on the Hastings Pollutions Assessment Scheme and how this scheme has worked to improve the water quality of the Hastings & St. Leonards Stream.

The scheme involved the Environment Agency (EA) recruiting volunteers in Hastings to assess local minor incidents of pollution. The EA provide volunteers with the training and resources necessary to assess pollution so that when the EA hear of a pollution incident in the Hastings & St. Leonards Stream, the volunteers are called and asked to assess the situation. They then feed back to the agency whether further investigation is required and thereby ensure a fast, efficient and effective response. Through the scheme the EA are also able to identify pollution 'hot spots' and trends, enabling a targeting of pollution prevention schemes.

The work that Ian and other volunteers in Hastings have carried out has been invaluable in improving the quality of bathing water in Hastings by ensuring that pollution incidents in the Hastings & St Leonards stream are contained quickly and effectively.

For further information about Clean Seas Please or the Hastings Pollution Assessment Scheme contact Jan Cutting at Jan.Cutting@rva.uk.com.

2.2.3 Growing Community Resilience for Health and Wellbeing

Anita Counsel from East Sussex County Council gave a presentation on how East Sussex Better Together (ESBT) is growing Community Resilience.

A growing and ageing population is rapidly increasing demand for NHS and social care services in East Sussex, but as public resources are reduced funding for health and care services is likely to stay about the same or decrease. The ESBT programme was established to transform health and care services so that they can effectively respond to the emerging situation by making the best use of combined budgets. It is led by Hastings and Rother Clinical Commissioning Group; Eastbourne, Hailsham and Seaford Clinical Commissioning Group; and East Sussex County Council.

ESBT recognise that communities play a key role in promoting health and wellbeing and that more resilient communities not only enjoy a better quality of life but will also need fewer health and social care services, which will help reduce future demand. Communities' resilience increases when community members faced with a challenge come together to identify and use their resources and strengths to help make things better. An example might be a group of people identifying local voluntary groups, businesses, parks or buildings which can be used to

encourage a healthier way of life (such as setting up a new walking group) or to help manage their health and care support needs (such as a coffee morning for older people who feel lonely).

ESBT also know that more resilient communities are confident and well connected; and through using the Public Health England Confident and Connected Communities model they intend to build strong communities in which people have control over their health and lives.

Traditionally, to fix problems in a community we have looked at what is 'wrong' with an area. However, the 2015 Annual Public Health Report on community resilience developed an alternative approach, the 'asset/strengths based approach' that has gained increasing interest nationally.

Assets are anything which increases individuals' and communities' ability to maintain and sustain health and wellbeing and help reduce inequalities. Assets include the abilities and energy of local community members, as well as physical resources such as a village hall or allotment. The asset based approach encourages community to look at what they have, rather than what they lack, helping communities to make use of their existing skills, knowledge and relationships.

Through talking to people who work in local communities ESBT know that much is already being done in East Sussex, from which they can build. East Sussex County Council has commissioned two schemes to promote community resilience: Chances 4 Change in public health and Building Stronger Bridges in Adult Social Care. Action in Rural Sussex is one of the delivery partners in both programmes and employs people as Village Agents to act as facilitators in local communities, getting people involved in activities to promote health and wellbeing and reduce isolation.

We then heard from Lesley Thompson, a Village Agent from the Friends Across Wadhurst befriending scheme, who gave a talk on how herself and others got involved in the scheme and the difference the scheme has made to reduce loneliness and social isolation in Wadhurst.

Anita concluded the presentation by outlining the next steps for ESBT's community resilience work:

- **Phrase 1** - work with communities and organisations across East Sussex to agree priority actions that will help build stronger, more resilient, communities where they are most needed; and
- **Phase 2** – work with the communities and organisations to make changes needed at county level and work with all those who are interested to agree how these changes can be applied practically in local areas.

Between February and April 2016 ESBT will be working with an independent organisation (still to be appointed at the time of the Assembly) to involve local communities, community and voluntary groups, service providers, and local businesses in conversations about the most important ways we can support communities to become more resilient. This organisation will help people to understand more about asset approaches, where necessary, and also organise a series of events to bring people together to discuss the issues and priorities.

For further information about East Sussex Better Together's work on Community Resilience contact Anita Counsell at Anita.Counsell@eastsussex.gov.uk.

2.2.4 Sussex Community Foundation

Kevin Richmond, Chief Executive of Sussex Community Foundation (SCF) finished off the set of presentations with a talk on how SCF provide support and funding for community based activities, and how the public and voluntary and community sectors can work together to enable community resilience.

Kevin outlined that communities in East Sussex are already highly resilient. People work together to help each other and make their communities great places to live – in fact surveys have shown that volunteering and active community involvement are among the things that people value most about British Society. Communities often offer the best and long term solutions to issues, because when communities own an issue they are frequently able to come up with a solution.

Sussex Community Foundation's role is to support these local initiatives and to help communities to help themselves by providing grants to local charities and community groups. In the last ten years SCF have given out grants worth £8.5m across Sussex and £2.75m in East Sussex.

The Foundation's grant funds come from local people and companies who care about their community. SCF provide a bridge between those who wish to give locally and the community groups that need funding to make a difference to people's lives. SCF is therefore in a unique position as they work at the heart of local communities and have a strategic view of issues across the county. Furthermore, the fact that funding comes from private sources gives CFS complete independence from the statutory sector. They work alongside local authorities and other statutory organisations as partners, but also maintain an independent agenda.

Both the public sector and the voluntary and community sector face a huge challenge ahead. Expenditure on public services is soon to reach record lows in the UK (similar to the level of spend in the United States) but at the same time, the general public still expect the same level of public service provision. In the past, local authorities have commissioned the voluntary and community sector to provide services, rather than providing grants. As a result, local authorities have sought to closely manage and define the projects they fund.

However, Kevin argued that for the voluntary and community and public sectors to work together to face the challenges ahead a new form of mutually beneficial partnership working is required, particularly as local authorities are becoming enablers rather than providers and are often no longer the main provider of resources in the community. Both sectors need to work together to consider how they want East Sussex to look in the future, what each sector is trying to achieve and how each sector can most beneficially help the other. It is fundamentally important that both sectors recognise the value that can be added, and the transformation that can occur, when community action is unleashed.

This is a challenge to both sectors. Voluntary and community organisations recognise that they can no longer rely on the public sector to be their main source of funding, but this can be viewed as a strength; an opportunity for the voluntary sector to be strong and independent.

Kevin finished by urging public sector bodies, including East Sussex County Council, to not 'get out of the way' of communities, but get around the table, share ideas, find new solutions, and support great ideas in the community without trying to manage the positive community action that emerges.

For further information about Sussex Community Foundation contact Kevin Richmond at Kevin.Richmond@sussexgiving.org.uk.

All presentations from the Assembly speakers, as well as the summary of audience responses to the Qwizdom questions, can be found on the [ESSP website](http://www.essp.org.uk/Meeting-papers-and-reports/East-Sussex-Assembly). (<http://www.essp.org.uk/Meeting-papers-and-reports/East-Sussex-Assembly>)

2.3 Question and Answer Session

At the end of the assembly, the presenters answered questions from the audience in a panel Q&A session.

Question 1: The East Sussex Assembly presentations have demonstrated that social isolation is an issue for communities in East Sussex, but it's difficult to quantify social isolation and prove that it's an issue. How can we prove that social isolation exists?

The panel said that to a certain extent we just have to take a leap of faith; we know from first-hand experiences and anecdotal reports of those working in East Sussex communities that social isolation is a problem, so this alone can form the basis of projects. Pilot projects, such as the Health and Wellbeing Visits Project, can also identify issues that are otherwise difficult to quantify by reaching out to people, listening to their experiences and needs, and then using the feedback to inform the project response. Other projects such as the Building Stronger Bridges Project have also found from speaking to people that befriending is one of the biggest community issues in East Sussex.

The ESBT Community Resilience Programme has been looking at how to effectively measure community needs and have come up with the 'wellbeing and resilience measure,' which will measure the loneliness in the community that we know about anecdotally.

Question 2: Smaller voluntary and community organisations (VCOs) make a unique and essential contribution to the community, yet they are now likely to suffer from increased competition for funding with larger VCOs. Is there any planning or strategic work under-way to strengthen smaller VCOs in the face of increased competition?

The panel said yes and pointed to the Sussex Community Foundation, which was set up specifically to help fund smaller organisations that don't have as much exposure or access to funding as larger VCOs. SCF have found that private donors often like that they can give a sum of money and, for instance, fund an organisation's activities for a whole year; it's a very compelling narrative. The panel recognised that Smaller VCOs are a very good way of funding smaller pockets of need in the community. However, sometimes statutory bodies need to learn to let go of funding given to VCOs as the third sector cannot be monitored in the same way that public health, for example, can.

The panel emphasised that although we have to face the reality that we are currently experiencing the lowest amount of Government spend on welfare in a generation, we shouldn't forget the huge difference that smaller organisations can make.

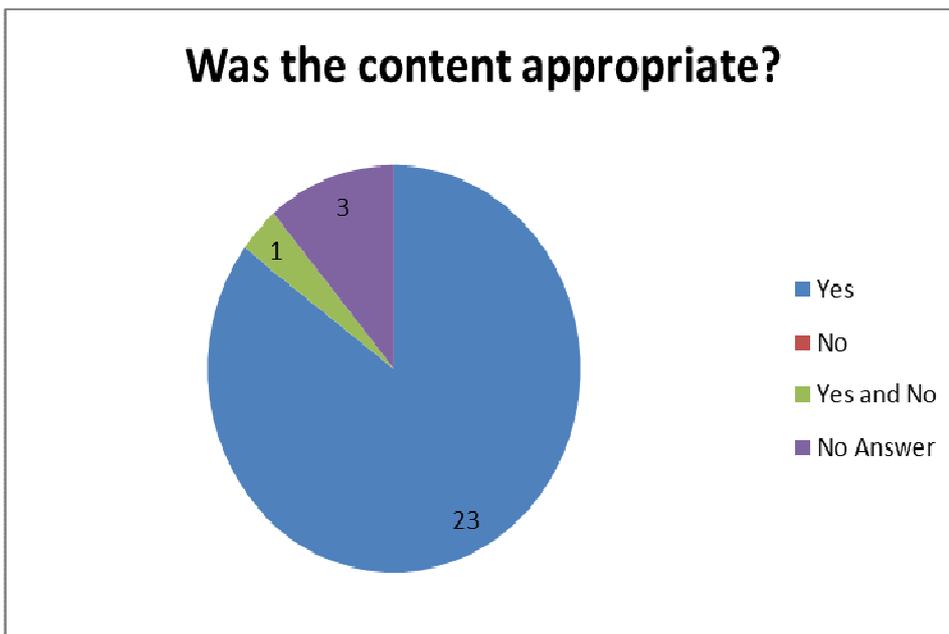
Question 3: There seems to be an assumption that clients using public and community services are without financial resource – have we considered raising money from participants?

The panel spoke about innovative ways that income can be generated for public services and activities. For instance, the Chances 4 Change programme supports local people to get together and deliver their own community health activities and events. The programme does not raise money from participants, but it does help communities to set up their own projects, which can involve participants using their own funds. Once projects are set up, the programme takes a step back to let communities run the project as they see fit. East Sussex County Council is also considering new opportunities for income generation.

The answers given in the Q&A session by the panel were also passed onto ESBT to feed into their work on Community Resilience.

S3. FEEDBACK

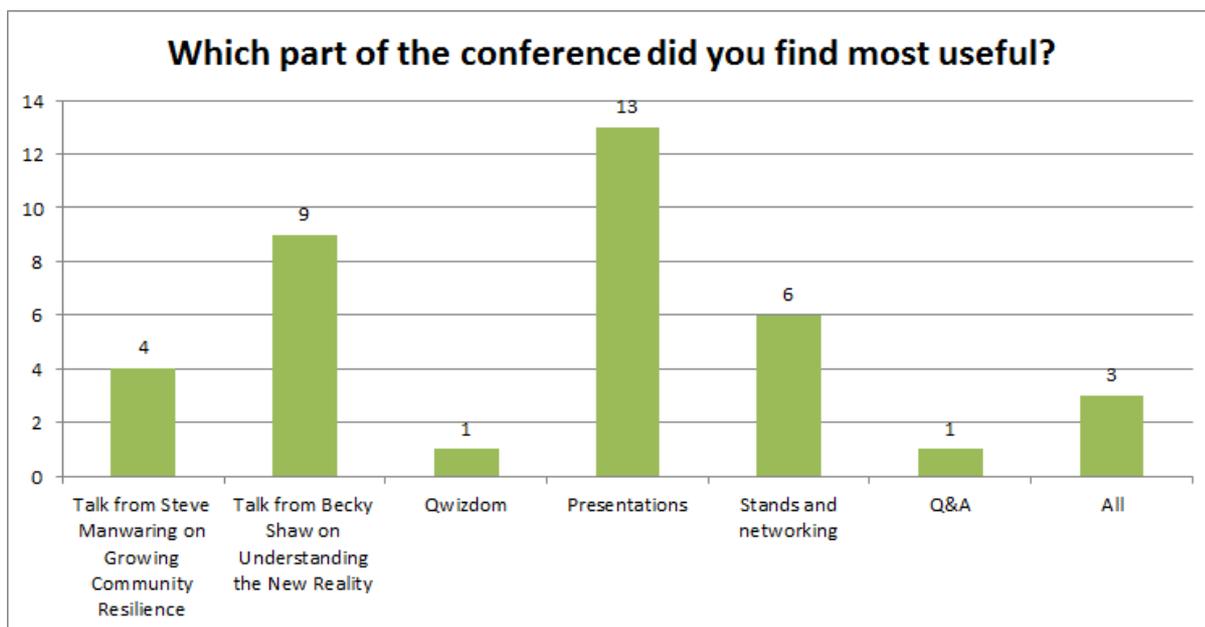
All delegates were provided with an event feedback form. The following results are based on the 27 completed forms returned by attendees at the Assembly.



	Yes	No
Was the timing and duration of the event appropriate?	100%	-
Was the pre-event administration sufficient?	100%	-

Attendees were asked which part of the assembly they found most useful. Most participants found the presentations particularly useful, one respondent said *'the presentations gave a useful snapshot into the types of impact local projects can have on resilience'*, and others said it was

helpful to ‘hear the reality of the position the country faces’ in order to understand the context of the current situation and be able to move forward successfully.



Attendees were also asked which part of the conference they found least useful. The majority of respondents found the whole assembly useful, while others gave the following suggestions for improvement:

- Smaller group or table top discussions to facilitate increased audience participation and a better understanding of Community Resilience.
- More information about how statutory organisations, or organisations other than VCOs, are fostering Community Resilience.
- More information about how projects attract and retain volunteers.
- More about a strategy or vision for implementing Community Resilience.
- Recognising the ‘competitive’ as well as the ‘collaborative’ nature of the current economic climate – how can we support smaller voluntary and community sector groups to foster community resilience?

Overall, the evaluation forms found that attendees regarded the content of the event appropriate, informative, engaging and useful. We will continue to ensure that content is relevant to organisations invited to future events. Attendees’ suggestions for next year’s focus will be considered when planning the 2016 Assembly. The suggestions were:

- An update on the progress of Community Resilience – e.g. ‘Community resilience one year on’
- Mental Health
- Income generation
- Doing more for less
- How communities can successfully inform statutory agencies
- Working Age
- Working with Local Enterprise Partnerships
- Rurality
- The connection between authorities and community organisations
- Community Health
- Transport

- Data/information sharing between groups in the future
- Equal working between voluntary, public and private sector
- Equality and Diversity
- Supporting volunteering
- Capacity building in communities

RECOMMENDATIONS

The ESSP is recommended to:

1. Note the results of the Quizdom session and the presentations to the Assembly; and
2. Note the feedback and suggestions for next year's Assembly.

NEXT STEPS

Consider how ESSP can best support ongoing East Sussex Better Together community engagement work.

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