

News and information for Wales from:

Wales Council for Voluntary Action
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WCVA annual conference programme announced

Times are changing fast. Groups face cuts to funding and increasing scrutiny from politicians and the public, yet may be asked to do more with less in the name of the Big Society. The survival of many organisations will depend on the ability of the sector as a whole to adapt to and innovate within this volatile climate.

WCVA's annual conference, *Facing the new realities*, is designed to help the sector prepare itself for the coming changes, and to advise on ways to survive and look to the future.

First Minister Carwyn Jones will begin the day with a keynote address, then Dame Suzi Leather, chair of the Charity Commission, will speak about *Old values, new roles, big challenges*.

Other highlights will include a debate entitled *Big opportunities or Big turn-off?* and a wide range of breakout sessions.

The conference will be held on 2 December at the Mercure Holland House in Cardiff. To view the conference programme and to book your place, visit www.wcva.org.uk, email eventsadmin@wcva.org.uk or call 0800 2888 329.

Get a taste for learning – for free

Third sector organisations supporting out-of-work people on skills and employment programmes can now link their work to educational opportunities offered free-of-charge by the Open University.

The Open University in Wales is looking to develop community partnerships with voluntary organisations and social enterprises to support people on benefits and low incomes into education.

Development Officer for the Open University, Gayle Hudson, told WCVA: 'Through our Openings Programme there are a range of courses available that have been developed especially for those new to studying, returning to education or people who may not have achieved any formal qualifications at school.

'They are aimed at helping people get a taste of subject areas, develop learning skills and to build

confidence. They are ideal progression routes from community learning to more formal education and could offer ideal progressions from projects like the Engagement Gateway and Intermediate Labour Market.

'We are keen to work with local communities and third sector organisations to help raise skills and aspirations. We also may be able to offer free taster and information sessions.'

The Open University's Openings Programme courses run for 20 weeks and start four times a year in September, November, March and June.

For more information contact Gayle Hudson (North and Mid Wales) on 01691 671648 and g.hudson@open.ac.uk or Eleri Chilcott (South Wales) on 029 2026 2798 and r.e.chilcott@open.ac.uk. Alternatively visit www.open.ac.uk/openings.

New small grants fund announced to support third sector capacity development

The Joint Welsh Assembly Government and Equality and Human Rights Commission Capacity Building Fund is a new small grants scheme has been established to support capacity development in the third sector in Wales.

A total grant fund of £50,000 is available, with each payment limited to a maximum of £5,000 per organisation. The programme will consider applications from those wishing to work together in increasing awareness of equality and human rights issues.

Proposals for initiatives which will strengthen the governance of organisations will be particularly welcome. Eligible project costs may include: staff costs (salaries and office overheads); volunteer costs (travel, lunch, expenses, training); operational/activity costs (equipment or venue hire, food, refreshments, childcare); and publicity costs (publicity material, information and websites).

Third sector organisations located in Wales may apply. The deadline for receipt of applications is 17 December 2010. Visit <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/equality/?skip=1&lang=en>

New opportunity to access Gateway funding

Organisations across Wales are being given a new opportunity to access funding from WCVA's Engagement Gateway project. Voluntary organisations and charities that support out-of-work people could win a contract from the project, which is funding organisations to develop the skills and confidence of disadvantaged and economically inactive people.

To become eligible for Gateway contracts of between £25,000 and £150,000, organisations can join the project's approved supplier list by

submitting a pre-qualification questionnaire (PQQ) by 2pm on 24 January 2011.

Organisations whose PQQ meets the assessment criteria will be able to tender for contracts from March 2011.

Briefing sessions on how to complete a PQQ will be run across Wales during November and December. For more information about the Gateway project and the dates of the PQQ briefing sessions, contact the WCVA Helpdesk on 0800 2888 329 or email help@wcva.org.uk.



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