



*Promoting, Supporting and Developing
West Lothian's Voluntary Sector*

“LEADING THE WAY”

Operational Action Plan

2010 - 2012



“LEADING THE WAY”

Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian

Operational Plan

(2010 – 2012)

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“LEADING THE WAY”

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“THINK STRATEGICALLY – ACT POSITIVELY”

THE PLAN AND ITS PURPOSE

This operational action plan presents the strategy and course of action which Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian will utilise to underpin its support for, and working relationship with, West Lothian’s Voluntary Sector during the period April 2010 – March 2012.

The value, reach and possibilities afforded by West Lothian’s Voluntary Sector activity have long been recognised by West Lothian Council. This recognition extends to the Scottish Government, in light of its actions in April 2008 in its commitment to “maintaining a strong Voluntary Sector throughout Scotland” embodied within a localism agenda and the implementation of local interface management and working alongside and within the framework of Community Planning Partnerships.

Post 2011 will see a reduction in Voluntary Sector funding, this period and the lead up to it must see a “step up” in the consultation process between Council and the Gateway, with assistance from VSSG members, to ensure a proactive and pre-planned approach into how the financial shortfall can be countered. The Gateway will address this by focusing its efforts in six key areas, aimed at empowering people, organisations and communities so that they can contribute more fully and effectively to their own and their organisations’ well-being, future development as well as contributing to a healthier, wealthier, fairer, safer, stronger and greener West Lothian.

The six areas’ are:

- Developing the role of Volunteering
- Supporting Voluntary Action
- Facilitating Voluntary Sector Engagement
- Empowering Performance and Growth
- Developing Social Enterprise
- Partnership Working

The Gateway’s activities as the Interface are clearly aligned with the Scottish Government’s and West Lothian Council’s expectations of new infrastructure bodies in that they will meet specific objectives and a minimum core set of functions. These will include:

- Support to voluntary organisations operating in the area, both local and national
- Support to and promotion of volunteering
- Support and the development of social enterprise
- Connection between the CPP and the voluntary sector
- A detailed mapping and increased capacity building and development of the sector

The challenges facing the Gateway are not to be underestimated. As the newly formed “Interface” between the Voluntary Sector and West Lothian’s Community Planning Partnership, it is of the utmost importance that the Gateway’s effectiveness as a conduit for information and communication is evidenced as often as possible through tangible results and benefits. To achieve maximum results, the Gateway, in demonstrating its support for the Voluntary Sector, has to ensure

equality of access and, where necessary, target resources to address the needs of particular excluded communities and groups.

Over the duration of this operational plan there will be a clear and distinct focus on West Lothian's more disadvantaged individuals and communities with particular emphasis on the disabled, the unemployed, the under 25s who are living in the most deprived areas or who lack formal qualifications and would be less likely to volunteer.

In putting together this two year operational action plan, the aim is to build an even stronger public and voluntary sector through dialogue, positive action and collaborative working at every level of engagement. The task set before us is very challenging. We will strive to work and advocate for a unified voluntary sector, which embraces its need for change and diversity and in preparing for the challenges that await us in the years ahead.

The impact and potential of West Lothian's Voluntary Sector is better recognised today than at any point since 1998. Today it is viewed as a vehicle for social and economic change. The Gateway's role is to push the boundaries even further. By challenging, complementing and working more closely with our strategic partners, the Gateway's operational action plan and strategic outlook will achieve more from its partnerships by giving it a broader, clearer, focus and direction.



WEST LOTHIAN'S VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR



West Lothian has a population of 168,000. The Voluntary Sector consists of more than 800 voluntary and community organisations and makes a sizeable contribution to West Lothian's social economy.

In 2003, 23% (28,477) of the adult population undertook some form of volunteering activity. Over 455,630 hours of volunteering took place each month, contributing the equivalent of £30 million to the social economy. (Source Volunteer Development Scotland, Scottish Household Survey)

Without this, much of the work with vulnerable and marginalised children and adults would be adversely affected.

West Lothian's Voluntary and Community Sector, in its diversity, spans most areas of community interest, these include: Voluntary organisations, community groups, self-help groups, charities, faith based organisations and uniformed organisations, (Scouts, guides, etc.) who strive on a daily basis to create a stronger and more inclusive community with volunteering and active citizenship as key instruments of social capital at its heart.

Voluntary and Community Sector traits include:

- Energy and commitment of its volunteers
- Ability to focus clearly and articulate needs
- Ability to provide value through voluntary work
- Ability to attract additional resources
- Responsiveness and flexibility
- Provision in terms of addressing need, range of organisations, nature of responses, staff profile (mix, skills and experience) and volunteers drawn from all community groups
- Ability to act as a catalyst for community change, empowerment and engagement.

TIME FOR CHANGE



The economy is now slowly taking a turn upwards but the legacy of the nation's financial downturn will remain and impact on us for years to come. All the sectors – public, private and voluntary – are gearing themselves up to be better prepared for the challenges to come to ensure a successful future for clients and the community.

West Lothian's Voluntary Sector is well aware that cuts to the Voluntary Sector budget of between 8% and 16% are likely, though the exact figure is still to be determined. COSLA recommendation on these projected cuts is to "work on 12%".

The Voluntary Sector has, from the first day of the new financial year 2010/11, about nine months to bring about the changes in its working practices, which show that measures are in place to help combat the projected reduction in its funding on the first of April 2011. The Gateway, supported by the VSSG, will take a lead role in assisting organisations address and achieve these necessary changes.

Organisations will have a number of choices:

- Do nothing and accept the cuts
- Learn to work smarter and put efficiencies in place
- Work collaboratively, or in partnership, with other Voluntary Sector organisations
- Merge or amalgamate with other like minded organisations.

The need for change is apparent. Organisations will receive less money than they are used to year after year from local and national government. If changes to working practice resulting in efficiencies are not addressed as a result of poor planning then some organisations will fail.

The Gateway's role in getting the message out to the sector will require an above average amount of staff resources and time, particularly over the first twelve months of the operational plan. It is envisaged that as the level of awareness rises as to the financial implications of reduced funding over a protracted period of years, then the services of the Gateway will be in greater demand, in particular from smaller to medium sized organisations. The demands on the Gateway's resources may include:

- Organising and running information events and advice sessions
- Facilitating meetings between organisations
- Briefings for staff and Board/Committee members
- Working with other agencies to bring in the right level of expertise
- Working with West Lothian Council and other Community Partners on a consultative basis to influence decisions on service cuts or reductions in services
- To represent the sector in the case for the delivery of public services.

The demands on the organisation could not be tougher. It is therefore imperative that all board members and staff have a very clear picture of what will be expected from Voluntary Sector Gateway over the duration of this plan and that resource and skill levels of all are consistent and fit for purpose.

BENEFITS OF A VIBRANT VOLUNTARY SECTOR



Support for volunteering and building the capacity of West Lothian's voluntary and community organisations assists in the creation and development of a more robust and vibrant sector. This may, in turn, contribute to a society that will take the route of self-sustainability and develop a culture of active citizenship that will, from community to community, engage in volunteering as an activity, and view it as the right thing to do for the benefit of others.

One of the most important advantages of a pro-active, vibrant voluntary sector lies in its grass roots base, its flexibility, its diversity and its genuine ability to respond and engage with marginalised individuals and communities.

West Lothian's Voluntary Sector has an in built capacity and flexibility in its approach to service provision and a proven ability in addressing the needs of those members of our community who find themselves in a disadvantaged situation that may include social, financial, personal, mental or physical disadvantage.

The projected funding cuts, come April 2011 and a further five or more years thereafter, may force some West Lothian Voluntary and Community organisations to cease operating due to financial pressures. This will add to the community's burden and put additional pressure on statutory services to plug the gap that, in turn, are also subject to reductions in services, exacerbating an already critical situation.

Voluntary Sector Gateway, in representing the interests of West Lothian's Voluntary Sector will, with the support of the Voluntary Sector Strategic Group (VSSG), advocate that the sector has a pivotal role to play in service provision, where its distinctive strengths, flexibility, diversity and expertise have the proven ability and expertise to provide front line services currently delivered by the public sector.

The starting criteria for the delivery of front line services by the Voluntary Sector should be at the consultative phase between Council and the Gateway, and representatives of the VSSG, where there is an opportunity to influence the decision makers at a strategic level within Council. The Gateway will advocate on behalf of the sector for the introduction of a "Business Case" to deliver specific frontline services. A case for the delivery of frontline services by the sector should be when:

- Service users have multiple disadvantages requiring a co-ordinated cocktail of services
- The service anticipated would benefit greatly from the flexibility and commitment of volunteers
- Service funders and procurement teams are unsure of the exact services required and are seeking innovative approaches to multiple and complex service delivery.

SUPPORTING VOLUNTARY ACTION



Volunteering and Voluntary Organisations are inextricably linked. There is an inter dependency on each other for mutual success. The Gateway has a clear and distinctive role, as a core activity, to ensure that it provides a broad range of services that can be accessed by West Lothian's Voluntary Sector organisations that builds their capacity to better meet the needs of their client group. The national Thrive and Connect vision articulates the need to address six core objectives. These include:

- Understanding the voluntary sector
- Communicating with the voluntary sector
- Representing the interests of the local voluntary sector
- Providing support services
- Promoting good practice
- Growing the sector

The Gateway is looking to expand on the vision for West Lothian's Voluntary Sector development by:

- Playing a Key Role in Developing Thriving Communities
- Connecting to Policy and Decision Making
- Growing the Social Economy

The adoption of the "Thrive and Connect" parallel approach to supporting West Lothian's Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations is still relevant, the parallel approach being:

- Thrive – The Gateway to provide direct capacity building support to voluntary and community organisation throughout West Lothian
- Connect – The Gateway, as the recognised "Interface" for representation, effective communication and engagement between the Community Planning Partners and West Lothian's Voluntary Sector

In these times of financial uncertainty, the role of the Gateway in supporting the "Thrive Programme" takes on an urgency to ensure that organisations are properly informed, equipped and prepared to address the challenges that will undoubtedly materialise as the economic climate shifts as projected, future levels of funding grants from national and local government will become more difficult to access, particularly for smaller, less experienced organisations.

The "Connect Agenda" is that part of the parallel approach where the Gateway represents the interest of Voluntary Sector Organisations on a wide range of forums; including the Community Planning Partners; Community Health and Care Partnership and Local Social Economy Partnership. (See annex A for a current list).

Voluntary Sector Gateway's current and future roles, including its core activity, have been arrived at based on an extensive period of stakeholder consultation. This is to ensure that the Gateway's infrastructure support for West Lothian's Voluntary and Community organisations reflects the Scottish Government's aims for stronger more empowered communities.

All stakeholders agreed that the Gateway provide an enabling service for West Lothian's Voluntary and Community organisations and to develop a stronger relationship with Public and Voluntary Sector organisation, in light of the expectation of the Sector to assist West Lothian Community Planning Partners in achieving the desired outcomes within the Single Outcome Agreement. The Gateway, in the delivery of its services, will build on what has gone before to improve West Lothian's Voluntary and Community Sectors way of working with other Community Planning Partners by influencing the design and delivery of public services as well as growing, developing, empowering and supporting, strong and active communities.

The Gateway's role is therefore based on the needs of our stakeholders. To fulfil our obligations and services, there is a greater need for: diligence, resources, vision, leadership, focus and commitment at every level of the Gateway structure. Our stakeholders agreed that the Gateway must be able to:

- Operate at a more Strategic Level with Community Planning Partners, Interpreting, Representing and Influencing Policy at National and Local Level.
- Articulate the needs of West Lothian's Voluntary and Community Sector, including their contributions towards the success of the Single Outcome Agreement (SOA).
- Influence the Planning and Delivery of Public Services, Improve Coordination and Targeting of Services to meet the Community Need.
- Be well informed about Local Need, Thematically and Geographically, and have access to Local and National Agencies.
- Be more efficient and Effective and be able to evidence impact.
- Be Well Managed, with Strong Leadership and Effective Human Resources.
- Be Representative and an Advocate for West Lothian's Voluntary and Community Organisations.
- Promote, Support and Develop Social Enterprise Activity.
- Establish a well connected Network of Thematic Groups capable of effective communication with each other.
- Build the Capacity of Individuals and Organisations. (Their skills, knowledge, resources, self belief, potential, confidence and self-esteem.)
- Support Organisations, Individuals and Communities to plan, set goals, and achieve their stated outcomes.
- Ensure that there is a wider appreciation of the benefits of volunteering and more effective Community Planning Partners support and understanding of the impact of volunteering in a civic society.
- Promote the benefits of Efficiencies, how to work and operate "Smarter", including more Collaborative and Partnership Working, shared services, premises, accommodations, publications, promotional literature, cross referrals, funding support, information and skill sharing.

In supporting these stakeholders' needs, the Gateway recognises the need for an organisation that will robustly support, promote and develop the Individual Volunteers and all Voluntary and Community Organisations seeking to build their capacity.

DEVELOPING THE ROLE OF VOLUNTEERING

“Volunteering is a life long activity.”



Volunteering is now widely recognised at local, national and international levels as an activity that provides a variety of benefits for individual volunteers, voluntary and community organisations and the community as a whole. Volunteering is an important part of a modern and forward thinking society. For it to continue to develop and grow requires active participation from Voluntary and Public Sector partners at local and national level.

West Lothian currently has a vibrant volunteering base with 23% of the adult population involved in either formal or informal volunteering activity (population 168,000). The Gateway, through its planned activity of volunteer development, is looking to see this figure rise to 25% by the end of 2012 by using a variety of marketing and media campaigns to improve the reach and image of volunteering and its benefits, particularly targeting those most disadvantaged.

There is a clear need to further promote both the variety and the potential impact of the volunteering experience for both the volunteer and the “beneficiaries”. To achieve a step change in the image and perception of volunteering will require a sustained effort allied to a clear and well thought out Volunteering Strategy for West Lothian supported by the Community Planning Partners.

In order to properly service the growth and development of volunteering a range of actions have been identified and will be championed by the Gateway. These include:

- Strategic leadership and positive representation of volunteering at Community Planning level
- The introduction of a robust Volunteering Strategy for West Lothian endorsed by Community Planning Partners
- Continuation of the core volunteering matching service
- Further development of volunteer opportunities with voluntary and community organisations throughout West Lothian
- Promotion of best practice and quality of service
- Development of volunteer’s capacity through the promotion of personal and social development training
- Promotion of accredited volunteering roles
- Extensive promotion and marketing of volunteering opportunities
- Promotion of the adoption of a volunteering policy

Volunteering is now recognised and widely accepted for its therapeutic benefits in that it provides, in a non challenging way, a structured and meaningful activity that lends itself to the needs of people with a mental health illness. The Scottish Government produced a report “With Inclusion in Mind” and the section on volunteering states:

“Volunteering can help people increase their confidence, self-esteem, sense of purpose and belonging, take control over their lives, improve links with people who do not have a mental health illness, learning disability or personality disorder. Crucially it can give people the opportunity to contribute to their community.”

By supporting and developing a Volunteering Strategy for West Lothian, Council and its Community Planning Partners will contribute to their work on meeting the Scottish Government’s Volunteering Strategy and their own localism agenda in the form of the Single Outcome Agreement (SOA).

One specific area of volunteering that is unique is the area of Governance. The changing nature of West Lothian’s Voluntary Sector has placed increased demands on Trustees, Board and Committee Members, necessitating a greater need for a broader range of skills and knowledge. The Gateway will dedicate time and resources to the recruitment and training of volunteers who opt for this role in recognition of its specific, unique and challenging role.

Development work is also planned to support Volunteer Involving Organisations through Managers and Staff, who have a direct responsibility for Volunteers’ well being, particularly in the area of recruitment, selection, training and retention. The Gateway will put particular emphasis on increased participation from groups in the areas of the Arts, Sport, Healthcare and Black and Ethnic Minority Groups.

The involvement of young people in volunteering has been a feature of the Gateway’s activities over the years. A more robust approach will be taken to further increase the number of young people’s involvement in volunteering, particularly in the area of 16+ using the MV Awards Project, dedicated to 16 to 24 year olds. Voluntary Sector Gateway has a pivotal role to play, working alongside its strategic partners in assisting young people make the transition from school to employment or further education. West Lothian has a percentage of its young people labelled under the category of “More Choices, More Chances” (approximately 960 16 to 19 year olds) who did not make the successful transition and are unemployed.

A combination of Volunteering activity and Mentoring programmes will be further developed to act as a catalyst for change in the young people’s lives. These interventions are only part of an extensive range of support mechanisms on offer, through the Community Planning Partners, to be introduced as a preventative measure to assist the young people make transition to employment or further education and then on to an independent and self supported life style.

FACILITATING VOLUNTARY SECTOR ENGAGEMENT



The financial changes forecasted for West Lothian Public and Voluntary Sectors based on reductions in budgets at national and local level, will have a direct impact on Public and Voluntary Sector service delivery plans. This will present the Sectors with a mix of challenges and opportunities over the duration of this plan. It is incumbent on the Gateway to ensure that West Lothian's Voluntary and Community Organisations have proper support and access to information and are able to utilise that support and information to their best advantage.

Decisions will have to be arrived at by the Sector to evidence their commitment to "Smarter Working". The process of information dissemination has already been started by the Gateway through the Voluntary Sector Forum.

The remit of the Voluntary Sector Strategic Group (VSSG) is our innovative approach to addressing the needs of the sector. The uniqueness of West Lothian's VSSG, Scotland wide, is that it is the only group of thematic representatives from West Lothian's Voluntary and Community Sector organisations who have been duly elected by their peers to take on a strategic role in direct support of the Interface.

The remit of the VSSG is to:

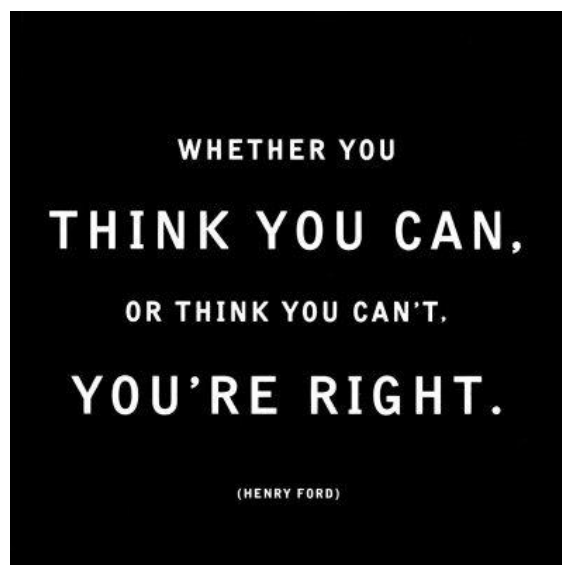
"Act as an advisory body to the Voluntary Sector Gateway on policy and strategic issues affecting West Lothian Voluntary Sector and its relationship with West Lothian Council and other Community Planning Partners."

In order to ensure a more communicative, better informed and joined up sector across West Lothian, Voluntary Sector Gateway will embark on an intelligence gathering exercise that will involve an in-depth mapping programme of all West Lothian's Voluntary and Community organisations. The purpose being to establish a central source of information that can be shared to benefit the sector, to inform on areas of strength and need, and to highlight the value and benefit of a thriving and productive voluntary sector.

By operating from a position of knowledge, shared information and improved communication, Voluntary Sector Gateway will take full advantage of its representational roll at Community Planning Partner level to influence opinions and planning that impact directly on services and the community through the constantly developing Single Outcome Agreement with its outcome-focused approach to planning and service delivery.

Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian intends to be innovative and robust in fulfilling its representative role in support of West Lothian Voluntary and Community Sector across the broad range of partnerships.

EMPOWERING PERFORMANCE AND GROWTH



“Changing the way we think changes the way we Act”

To grow individuals and organisations requires a combination of skills, resources, vision, belief and an ability to plan strategically with the interests of the organisation, its staff, volunteers and its core objectives at the forefront of all planning.

Voluntary Sector Gateway will focus on specific areas of need as they are raised by organisations large or small throughout West Lothian. Areas already identified as requiring attention are: governance, funding, financial management, HR, skills development and a wider adoption of a quality assurance system, particularly for smaller organisations. The Gateway’s planned programme of support will aim to:

- Improve the skill levels of Board/Committee members, staff and volunteers.
- Modernise organisational management system and procedures.
- Raise the standard of financial practice and management.
- Diversify the sector’s funding base.
- Introduce quality assurance systems.

The success or failure of a voluntary sector organisation, from a strategic point of view, rests with those charged with its governance. The demands made upon volunteers who opt to take on a governance roll are wide and varied. Finding the right person, who has a combination of business acumen, experience and knowledge of the voluntary sector, is becoming increasingly difficult.

Identifying and successfully recruiting the desired individual is but a small part of a necessarily long developmental process to ultimately achieve a valued Board/Committee member. Training will supplement existing skills, add to the experience, enhance product knowledge, and develop a positive attitude and ability to operate effectively as a team member in a Board/Committee environment.

The time and resources spent on fund raising within voluntary sector organisations can be disproportionate to the success rate, and can direct much needed staff time and energy from service delivery. In some cases the form filling and interpreting of criteria for funding can, and often does, present as an inhibiting factor, particularly for the smaller organisations with less experienced staff

or volunteers. The Gateway, in the course of providing a full funding service for the sector, will have a specific focus on assisting smaller organisations identify sources of funding.

We will, in addition, work with Voluntary Arts Scotland and Sports Scotland to highlight the services of the Gateway to local arts and sports groups who have not otherwise engaged with the Gateway in the past and who may benefit greatly from the additional support and services on offer.

There is a dependency on national or local government grants or rolling 3 year Service Level Agreements (SLA). The SLA, innovative in its approach to Sector funding, allows for a three-year planning period, reviewed annually. Grant funding is on an annual basis, allows plans to be set on an annual basis and can be removed at short notice. Imagination, partnership working and innovation, on the part of organisations, can lead to additional sources of funding becoming available to them on a regular basis. The Gateway, while offering general funding support, will provide advice and guidance on alternative sources of funding, financial, business and strategic planning.

To address the issue of “quality awareness throughout the sector” the Gateway will make enquiries about having staff members trained to PQASSO mentor standard. (Practical Quality Assurance Systems for Small Organisations) PQASSO covers 12 quality standards and promotes continuous improvement through self-assessment. These include: Planning for quality, Governance, Management, User-centred service, Staff and volunteers.

Measuring Social Return

West Lothian’s Voluntary Sector has, to date, not fully involved itself in a standard form of measuring social return on investment (SROI).

SROI is a way in which voluntary sector organisations can look at what they do, measure that activity and the difference it makes to people’s lives and inform on that difference or impact.

The Social Return on Investment project was launched by the Scottish Government in 2009 to develop, promote and support a standard form of measuring social return, which looks at the complete story of an organisation’s outcome using a combination of narrative, quantitative and financial measures.

The staff of Voluntary Sector Gateway will look to:

- Develop a widespread awareness and knowledge of SROI among voluntary sector organisations
- Promote the increasing adoption, acceptance and use of SROI as a reporting method by the sector
- Support organisations to have the ability and understanding to take forward SROI on their own behalf
- Enable funders, procurers and commissioners to make more intelligent investment or purchasing decisions.

DEVELOPING SOCIAL ENTERPRISE



Social Enterprise activity within West Lothian’s Voluntary Sector is very much a minority activity and is still viewed as an unknown quantity by public sector partners and many voluntary sector organisations alike.

Some organisations are operating, in part, as a Social Enterprise without realising it. Others have the capacity to become fully fledged Social Enterprises and generate income but lack the expertise to do so.

One of the Gateway’s three core objectives is to “Develop Social Enterprise activity in West Lothian”. This is in line with the Scottish Government’s declared aspiration to increase the voluntary sector’s role in the delivery of public services. Many of the larger, aspirational, voluntary sector organisations in West Lothian would like to, and have the resources to, take over the delivery of front line public service contracts. Recent discussions with West Lothian Council have indicated a willingness to progress this course of action.

The Gateway’s role in Social Enterprise Development is to promote income generation through Social Enterprise activity for West Lothian’s Voluntary Sector and at the same time explore areas of potential for its own involvement in Social Enterprise development.

For the duration of this Plan, or until it acquires its own expertise, the Gateway will have a reliance on external sources of expertise to assist West Lothian’s Voluntary Sector organisations develop their potential as a Social Enterprise and generate income streams through Social Enterprise business practices.

Based on observation and discussion with Community Planning Partners, areas identified as opportunities and gaps in public service delivery include:

- Handyman services for social housing tenants.
- Social care, healthcare and disability issues.

To ensure longevity, a sharing of ideas and a structured framework that is mutually supportive, a local Social Enterprise Network will be set up by the Gateway to progress the development and increase the number of Social Enterprise organisations or partnerships operating across West Lothian.

Through the Community Planning Partnership structure there is a pivotal role for the Gateway to play in seeking a more direct role in influencing procurement and commissioning strategies. The Single Outcome Agreement employs an “outcome based” approach to service and contract delivery, in line with its strategic priorities. The Voluntary Sector is well placed and eminently capable of delivering complex service contracts to a diverse range of communities throughout West Lothian.

PARTNERSHIP WORKING



Partnership Working

We are entering a period where partnership working will take on an even greater importance if success as an organisation and a sector are to be assured. The Gateway is committed to partnership working and is currently involved in a number of key strategic partnerships as the Voluntary Sector's representative. These partnerships include: The Community Planning Partnership (CPP); The Community Health and Care Partnership (CHCP) and the West Lothian Compact.

Partnership is not something that exists solely on a piece of paper, partnership is about our ability as a sector to influence and be influenced, and it is about building relationships with other partners. If these are weak then the partnership will be weak. If these are strong then the partnership will be strong. Strong partnerships may have conflicting interests and disagreements will arise on how best to get things done.

Voluntary Sector Gateway will be adopting a tactic of win/win thinking in its approach to partnership working. We will be looking out for the interests of those we are working with, not just our own interests. If we look after our own interests, we may have some success in the short term, but in the longer term we will lose the confidence and trust of those we are working in partnership with.

In the building of successful strategic partnerships Voluntary Sector Gateway will be mindful of its competitive approach in dealing with partners; competition with others has the potential to create opposition. When we work for the success of our partners we create success for ourselves.

In the challenging days ahead for West Lothian's Voluntary Sector, Voluntary Sector Gateway will be promoting a "we" rather than a "me" attitude, by this action Voluntary Sector Gateway recognises that we are all one in the service of our communities, all on the same side.

The benefits of partnership working as stated by the Scottish Government include:

- Partnership working allows services to be delivered in a joined up way. This has benefits both strategically, in terms of providing a well balanced service, and operationally in terms of pooling resources
- Bringing together the various parts of service delivery provides a unique opportunity to develop new and innovative approaches to service provision
- Economies of scale can be achieved as service providers pool not only their resources but also effort and managerial time
- Through coming together and focusing on a common goal, a shared vision is formed of what partners want to achieve and how they want to achieve it

- Partnership working co-ordinates action between organisations which can provide additional momentum to get things done
- Partnership working also allows many organisations to access funding and comply with Government requirements
- In time partnership working can add a “special touch” to the delivery of a given service, over and above the time and resources that have gone into its provision

The benefits of a strong Voluntary Sector in West Lothian has long been recognised and appreciated by service users and statutory sector partners alike. The flexibility and diversity of the sector, combined with its commitment and experience in delivering complex and reliable services, make it an ideal partner.

The sector’s strength puts it in a prime position to bring together a wide range of services, skills and experience as partner organisations work to deliver front line Council services, to deliver in partnership with other voluntary organisations needs led services for their client users in a mere efficient and cost effective manner, and at the same time be contributing to the organisation of West Lothian’s most deprived communities.

By committing itself to partnership working, the sector and the Gateway will, over the period of this plan, embrace change that will prove to be mutually beneficial. The Gateway will be at the forefront in encouraging the sector and our strategic partners in the public sector to adopt new working practices in line with the changing environment that we will be working in.



MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The tool to be used to monitor and evaluate the impact and effectiveness of the Gateway’s operational plan will be the LEAP formula (Learning, Evaluation And Planning), a simple but effective methodology.

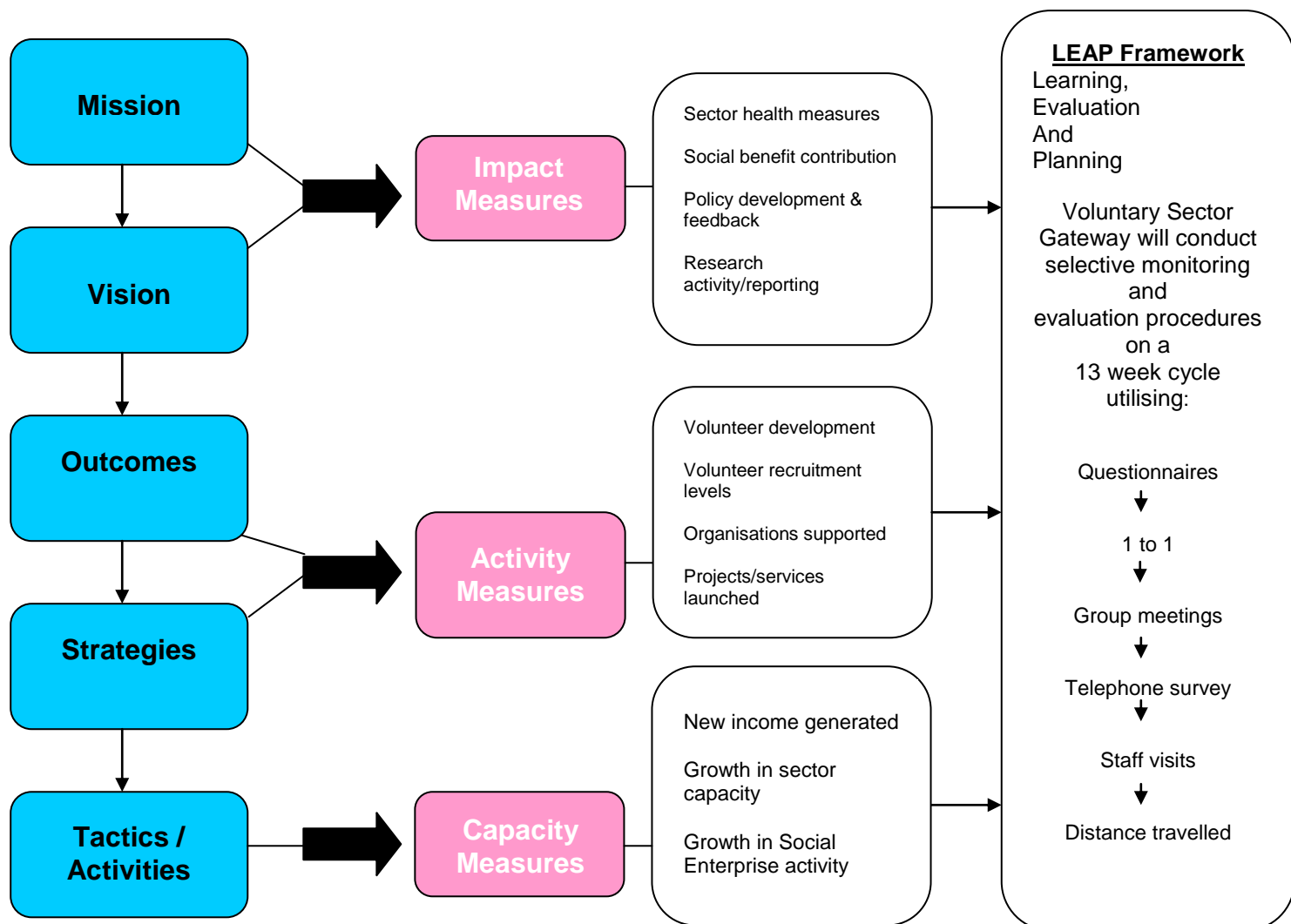
Monitoring will involve regularly measuring and assessing what is happening during the term of the plan against our stated outcomes. We will learn from our findings and adapt our strategy accordingly.

Evaluation at certain key points in the life of our plan allows us to learn and inform our future actions, the results of the finished exercise could become a powerful tool for social and economic change.

Why should we do it?

Regular monitoring and evaluation of our operational plan will provide evidence to inform us of:

- **The strength and impact of our products and services**
- **Whether our services make a real difference to people’s lives**
- **Our organisation’s learning and accountability to our stakeholders.**



Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian Operational Action Plan The LEAP Framework

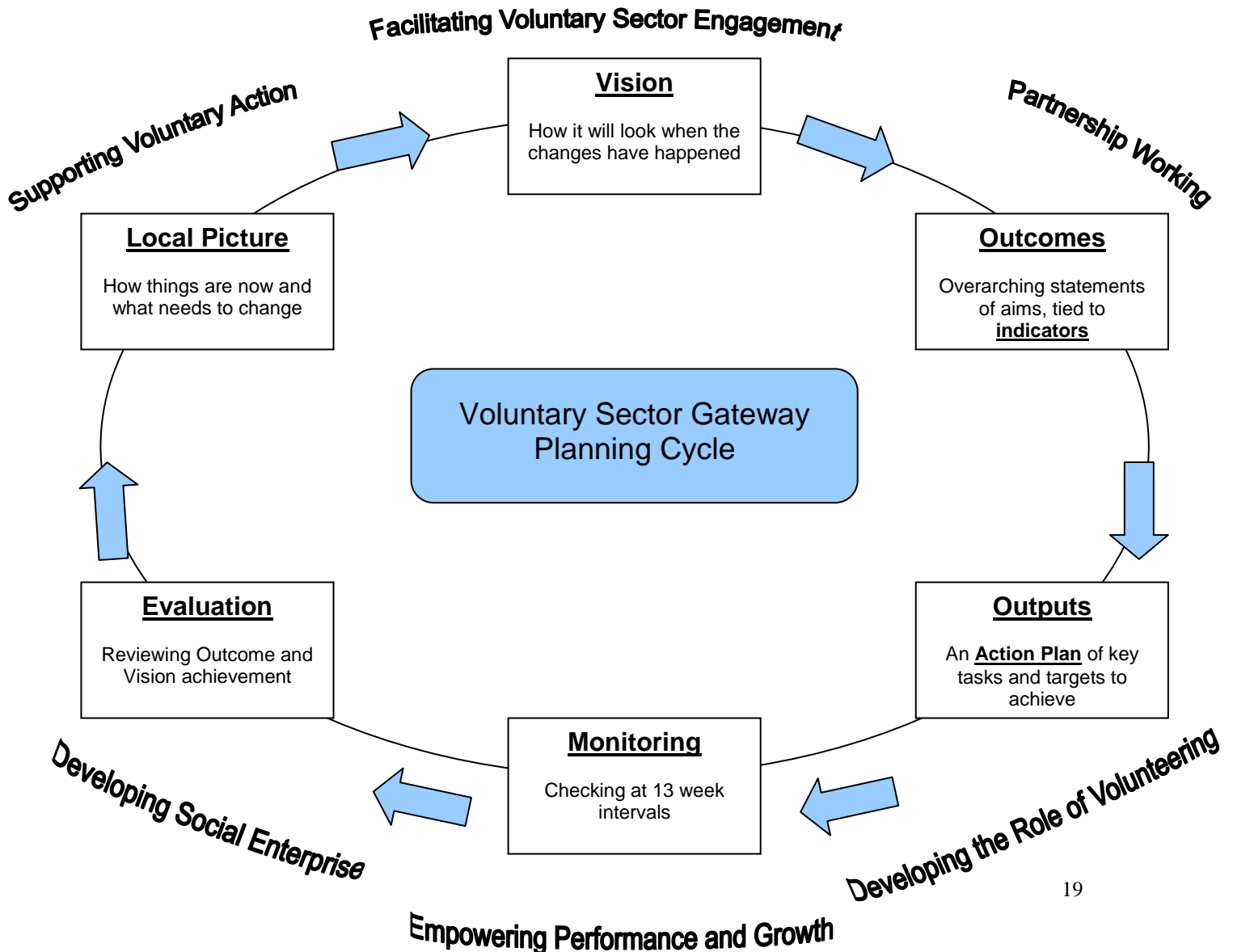
This Operational Action Plan describes how Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian plans to progress towards realising its **Vision** for the development of West Lothian's Voluntary Sector and the services of the Gateway over the period April 2010 to March 2012.

It has been developed using the LEAP (Learning Evaluation And Planning) Framework. It is based on the needs of West Lothian's Voluntary Sector, West Lothian's Community Planning Partnership's SOA (Single Outcome Agreement) and the Scottish Government's expectations of the infrastructure bodies.

The Operational Plan begins by describing the **Local Picture** or current baseline, particularly highlighting what needs to change. The Gateway's **Vision** is simply a statement of how things will look when the positive changes have been made. The Vision is used to create a set of desired **Outcomes and Indicators** that are expected to bring about an improvement in the quality of service delivery and efficiency of West Lothian's Voluntary Sector.

The **Outcomes** will be achieved by implementing an **Action Plan** that identifies specific **Outputs** – key tasks and targets – that will be the focus of activity for the Gateway's staff over the period of the Plan. Delivery of the Outputs will be subject to an internal programme of **Monitoring** to gather evidence of achievement. The achievement of the overarching Operational Plan Outcomes will be assessed through completing an **Evaluation** in accordance with the **Leap Framework**.

Thus the following, when taken together, constitutes the Operational Action Plan of Voluntary Sector Gateway.



**“LEADING THE WAY”
Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian
The LEAP Framework**

1. DEVELOPING THE ROLE OF VOLUNTEERING

(This aligns with Strand 11 of the Single Outcome Agreement)

	Output	Target	Key Roles	Performance Indicator	Outcomes
1.1	Organise specific volunteer focussed events to address volunteer recruitment	4 events Volunteer participation increases to 25% of adult population by March 2012	Chief Executive	Venues confirmed 1% Increase per month in volunteer recruitment.	Increased access and numbers to volunteering opportunities for West Lothian community.
1.2	Develop the image and variety of volunteer opportunities for volunteers and beneficiaries	20 x presentations by March 2011	All Staff	% of West Lothian population agree Volunteering has a more positive image	Community, volunteers and beneficiaries have greater degree of value and self worth
1.3	Develop a robust volunteering strategy for West Lothian with Community Planning Partners	Volunteering strategy in place by March 2011	Chief Executive	CPP agrees to Volunteer Strategy Individual identified to drive it forward	A comprehensive Volunteer Strategy becomes a living document and is used to inform on community planning and SOA outcomes.
1.4	Promote the adoption of a Volunteer Policy by Volunteer Involving Organisations	50% rise in VIOs adopting a Volunteer Policy by March 2011	Deputy CEO All Staff	5% increase per month in VIO's adopting a Volunteer Policy	Volunteer Involving Organisations are better structured and operate more effectively using volunteers.

1.5	Provide support to West Lothian council and the Voluntary sector by promoting supporting and developing the employer supported volunteering programme.	Identify and organize 10 team tasks annually from within West Lothian's Voluntary Sector Organisations.	ESV Co-ordinator	Voluntary Sector offer up a variety of tasks 50% of tasks completed by November 2010	West Lothian Council employees have a greater understanding of West Lothian's Voluntary Sector and enhanced team spirit through their ESV activity
1.6	Develop, promote and deliver Personal and Social Development training programmes for volunteers (STEPS programme)	50 volunteers to participate in training by March 2012	Mentoring Development Officer	Training programmes developed and delivered. 25 volunteers attend by March 2011	Volunteers completing the training will be: more motivated, have higher levels of self worth, confidence and self belief
1.7	Promote the adoption of "Best Practice" in all matters relating to inclusive volunteering	30 x VIOs visited Promotion/information in newsletters, E-bulletin, leaflets	Chief Executive All Staff	Organisations visited, 3 per month. Information disseminated to voluntary sector organisations. Enquiries up by 10%	Organisations will have a greater capacity to recruit, train and retain volunteer and be best placed to implement equal opportunities
1.8	Promote use of website to the public to increase access to volunteering opportunities	5,000 hits on website annually	Membership Coordinator	500 hits on website per month. Hits on website increase	Raised awareness of the amount, range and ease of access to volunteering.

1.9	Using leaflets, presentations and the website, promote the MV Awards project to 16-24yr olds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 100 young people sign up for the project annually ▪ 10 receive 200hr certificate ▪ 30 receive 100hr certificate ▪ 50 receive 50hr certificate MV presentation to 6 schools annually	Capacity Building Development Officer	9 Young people sign up for MVA per month Certificates are issued Presentations take place	Young people are more enthused about volunteering and are more confident and aware of their community needs.
1.10	To recruit, train and support up to 30 Volunteer Mentors to assist 14 to 19 year olds school pupils and post school pupils classified as MC MC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Train 30 volunteer mentors annually ▪ Support 2 West Lothian Secondary Schools ▪ Assist in the reduction of the MCMC category of young people by 5% by March 2012 	Chief Executive Mentoring Development Officer	10 Mentors attend and pass each course Schools supported MCMC figures reducing	Young people are empowered, are able to recognise their responsibilities and better motivated to address their own personal and social development. Volunteer Mentors feel valued for their contribution to their communities and the young people's needs

1.11	Organise an annual Volunteer Awards ceremony to recognise and reward individual volunteers and organisations for their voluntary work within West Lothian's communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 1 Volunteer Award event annually ▪ 200 Representatives attending ▪ 14 individual category of awards 	Chief Executive All Staff	Award Ceremony takes place	The profile and benefits of volunteering are raised to new levels. Award recipients feel valued as major contributors to organisations and communities' needs.
1.12	Provide support and training for West Lothian Befrienders and Befriendees with a learning disability	35 matches maintained annually	Befriending Development Officer	25% Matches achieved quarterly	Volunteer Befrienders are confident in support of their Befriendees due to training and ongoing support activities. Befriendees receive a committed and dedicated volunteer who will spend quality time with them on social and other activities, enhancing their personal and social development.
1.13	Provide a resource for the employment/administration and training for ESOL tutors and learners.	Maintain an employment register of ESOL tutors in accordance CLD requirements	Deputy CEO	Tutors recruited and supported	West Lothian has a bank of qualified ESOL tutors available to instruct learners

1.14	Provide a platform to recognise volunteering from the 5-15 age group at local authority level. A partnership between the Gateway and West Lothian Council.	West Lothian Council to provide certificates to young people aged 5-15 years for achieving: 50 hrs = 30 volunteers 100 : = 20 : 200 : = 20 : 300 : = 10 : 500 : = 10 : hours of volunteering over 3, 5 and 7 years. To start April 2010.	MV Awards Coordinator	Partnership agreed Publicity campaign attracts volunteers. Volunteering hours recorded. Certificates presented	Young people will be enthused by and involved in volunteering from an early age reinforcing the value and benefits of volunteering and embedding it as part of the community culture.
1.15	Provide a Library Outreach Service for home bound library service users throughout West Lothian.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruit and support 30 volunteers annually. Support up to 50 home bound clients identified and signed up by WLC Library Service 	Library Outreach Coordinator WLC Library Staff	10% of Volunteers recruited and supported on a monthly basis. 5% of Client group recruited and supported on a monthly basis	Homebound Library Service users have regular access to a public service and are able to, through their volunteer, enhance their quality of life through regular contact and choice of reading material.
1.16	Develop a bespoke Literacies Programme for volunteers who have difficulties with reading and numbers.	30 Volunteers participate in bespoke Literacies Programme annually.	Literacies Officer	10% of Volunteers identified and take part on a monthly basis	Volunteers have improved literacy skills and are confident enough to apply for and attain advancement in training, further education or employment.

2. FACILITATING VOLUNTARY SECTOR ENGAGEMENT

	Output	Target	Key Roles (lead person)	Performance Indicator	Outcomes
2.1	Organise a mapping exercise to determine the number of Voluntary and Community sector organisations operating within West Lothian.	Identify and contact 400 voluntary and community organisations by March 2011. - A database of information to be completed and analysed by March 2011.	Deputy CEO	9% Mapping exercise completed on a monthly basis	Voluntary Sector Gateway will have access to a diverse range of information that will allow it to align its resources to meet the needs of the sector and to offer better representation based on the sector's strengths.
2.2	Organise a Voluntary Sector wide event to highlight and discuss: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The implications of a reduction in grant funding ▪ Positive course of action open to voluntary sector organisations ▪ Partnership and collaborative working ▪ Delivering public services ▪ Organisational efficiencies ▪ Merges and amalgamations 	75 +representatives of West Lothian's Voluntary and Community sector to one main venue.	Chief Executive	Event takes place. Sector agrees to work smarter. Plans produced to effect efficiencies	Voluntary and Community Sector representatives have a clearer vision of their organisation's future and role and actions open to them.

3. SUPPORTING VOLUNTARY ACTION

“Working Together We Are Stronger”

	Output	Target	Key Role (lead person)	Performance Indicator	Outcomes
3.1	Organise voluntary sector forums for representatives of West Lothian’s voluntary sector to meet and discuss current issues.	A minimum of 4 forums annually 30 representatives to attend each forum	Deputy CEO	Forums held 30 Vol org reps indicate attendance at Forum	West Lothian’s voluntary sector has a platform for open discussion, can express their views and influence the aims, objectives and direction of the sector.
3.2	Training provided in governance for Board/Committee members covering their roles and responsibilities.	6 training courses held annually 40 Board/Committee members attend training	Chief Executive	Training takes place on a Bi- monthly basis and is fully subscribed 95% attendance on each course	The skills and expertise of Board/Committee members is enhanced, providing confidence in their ability to discharge their roles and responsibilities.
3.3	Advocate for increased voluntary sector representation at a strategic level of community planning to compliment the role of the Gateway	- Increased representation from Voluntary Sector Strategic Group. 15 additional representatives	Chief Executive	Additional representatives agreed	West Lothian’s voluntary sector is better served, more informed and better able to influence planning and policy at a strategic level.

4. EMPOWERING PERFORMANCE AND GROWTH

	Output	Target	Key Roles (lead person)	Performance Indicator	Outcomes
4.1	Provide fundraising training for West Lothian's Voluntary and Community Sector organisations	- 6 fundraising sessions provided annually - 60 organisation reps to attend - 30 Awards for All applications submitted	Capacity Building Development Officer	Fundraising events held on a bi-monthly basis and are fully subscribed. 95% Voluntary org reps attend and complete funding application	Voluntary organisations are more competent at identifying appropriate sources of funding and better at completing funding applications.
4.2	Provide advice and support to voluntary and community sector organisations	100 organisations receive a form of advice and support from the Gateway staff	Deputy CEO Capacity Building Development Officer	8% of Vol Orgs target group receive advice and support on a monthly basis	Voluntary organisations are better able to proceed with their ideas, initiatives based on sound advice, and to learn from the experience
4.3	Establish broad range of multi-agency support for voluntary sector organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ HR/legal advice ▪ IT support ▪ Social Enterprise Development ▪ Business and financial planning 	Chief Executive Deputy CEO Capacity Building Development Officer	Multi-agency support in place Take up by the Sector = 8% of target per month	Access to the multi-agency support tools provides sector with ability to deal effectively with organisational problems.

4.4	Support the Future Jobs Fund in collaboration with Access 2 Employment by encouraging the voluntary sector to provide employment and support to young persons aged 18-24yrs	20 x young people employed by the sector by September 2010	Chief Executive Deputy CEO Capacity Building Development Officer	Applications submitted by 12 + Vol Orgs to Access2Employment CV's submitted. Interviews take place Employment takes place	Young people are leading independent lives and taking responsibility for their futures. The voluntary sector organisation benefits from providing the employment opportunity.
4.5	Advice on funding raises much needed funds for West Lothian's voluntary sector.	£200,000 generated annually	Deputy CEO Capacity Building Development Officer	10 funding bids advised on and submitted annually Funds generated £20,000 per month average	Voluntary organisations generate much needed funds to continue to provide services to their client groups and employment for staff.

5. DEVELOPING SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

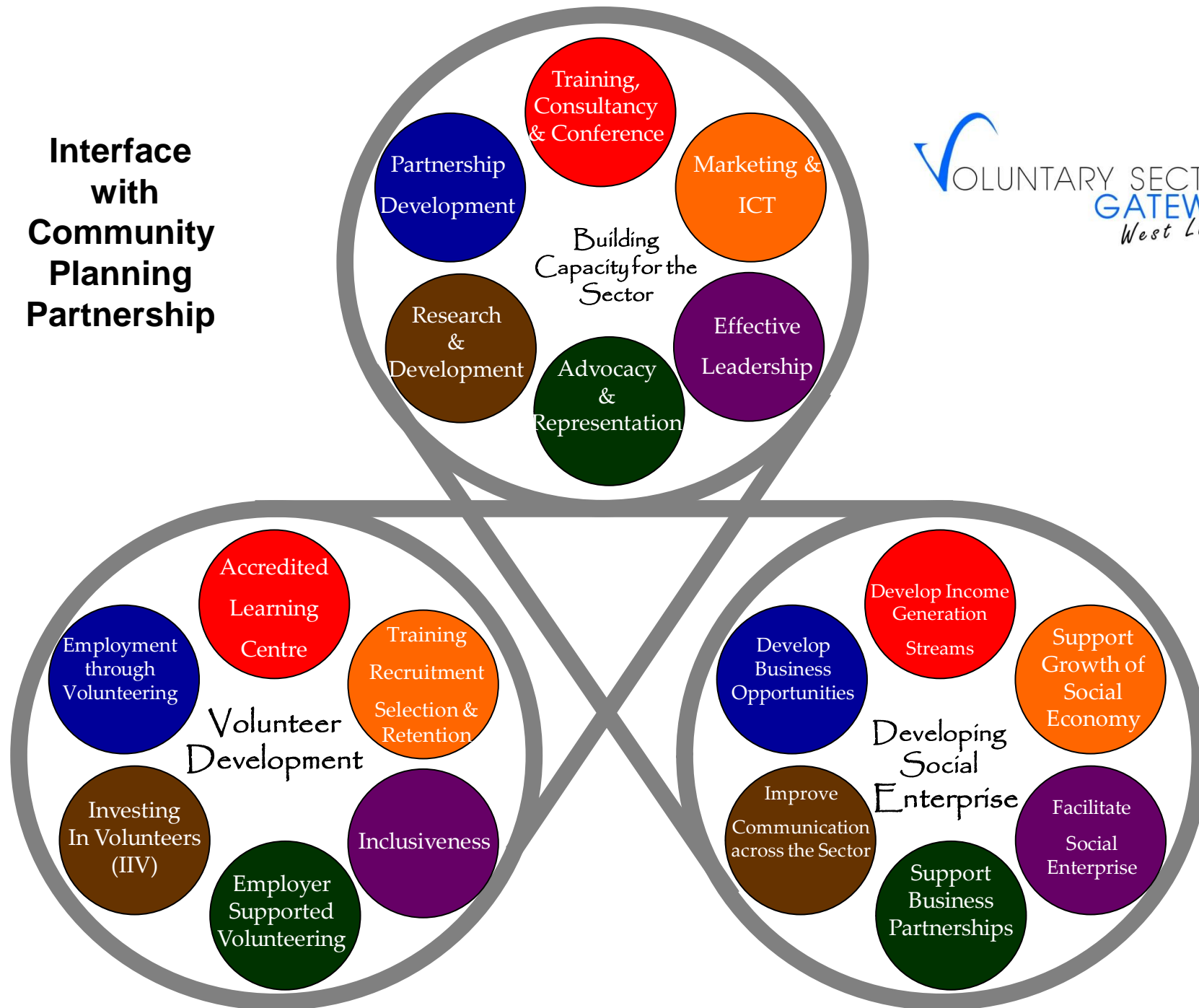
	Output	Target	Key Roles (lead person)	Performance Indicator	Outcomes
5.1	Organise and set up a focussed event on Social Enterprise Development	- 20 organisations to attend - Event to take place before July 2010	Chief Executive	Representatives attend Event takes place	Organisations will be better informed of support, advice, business opportunities and potential partners.
5.2	Set up and develop support mechanisms for local Social Enterprises Network LSEN AND Local Social Enterprise Partnership LSEP	Set up 2 support mechanisms: ▪ Local Social Enterprise Network ▪ Local Social Enterprise Partnership Both to be set up by July 2010	Chief Executive Deputy CEO	Support mechanisms set up 8X vol orgs agree to attend LSEN. WLC send rep to LSEP	The 2 support mechanisms (LSEN & LSEP) give the development of social enterprise activity structure and a focus for mutual support, advice and the opportunity to share and discuss business opportunities.
5.3	Organise Social Enterprise master class for existing and potential Social Enterprises	2 Social Enterprise master classes are set up 20 reps attend each class Classes completed by Sept 2010	Chief Executive Deputy CEO	Master class set up and subscribed to by Vol Orgs. 95% attendance at each event	Representatives will be better informed about: ▪ Areas of funding ▪ Product ▪ Customer base ▪ Research/consultation ▪ Employment law ▪ Partnership working

5.4	Organise support and advice to develop Gateway's own Social Enterprise	<p>Conduct negotiations with West Lothian Council to deliver Council services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Make offer to Council by May 2010 ▪ Prepare business plan and costings by May 2010 	Chief Executive	Offer made	Voluntary Sector Gateway in a position to generate its own income by running a successful Social Enterprise.
5.5	Provide an In-House print and photocopying service for Voluntary and Community Groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a print service in line with current resources. • Build customer base to 100+ clients annually. • Generate £3,000 annually. 	Print service facilitator	<p>Print service established. 10% of target income generated monthly.</p> <p>8 customers per month receive service.</p>	<p>The voluntary and community sectors have access to a local resource that is affordable and provides a quality service.</p> <p>Voluntary Sector Gateway has a source of income</p>

6. PARTNERSHIP WORKING

	Output	Targets	Key Roles	Performance Indicator	Outcomes
6.1	Promote partnership working between Voluntary and Public and Private Sector Organisations.	Voluntary, Public and Private Sector Organisations recognise the need for partnership working.	Chief Executive Deputy CEO	1 new Partnership established and working per month across the Sector.	Voluntary and Public Sector Organisations are working more efficiently and effectively in the delivery of services.
6.2	Develop a 14 – 19 year old partnership with like minded organisations to develop with partners a long term strategy to meet local needs in tackling the More Choices, More Chances agenda.	A coordinated approach to reducing the numbers of MC.MC group failing to attain education, employment or training.	Chief Executive	14 – 19 Partnership in place by September 2010. Long term strategy agreed and working MC MC statistics reduced	14 – 19 year olds have positive support and incentives to pursue education, employment or training.
6.3	Conduct a mapping study of Partnership Working involving Voluntary Sector organizations and Community Planning Partners.	To identify partnership effectiveness of working between voluntary and statutory orgs. Mapping complete by March 2011	Chief Executive	Mapping study begins August 2010. Participation of thematic groups. Preliminary results December 2010.	A clearer picture of the effectiveness of partnership working.

**Interface
with
Community
Planning
Partnership**



Building Capacity for the Sector

Training, Consultancy & Conference – support through training, management, staff and volunteer development in the voluntary and community sector.

Marketing & ICT – website advertising for voluntary orgs. and paying sponsors. Free on-line advertisement for third sector job vacancies. Advice on marketing techniques, press releases, adverts etc.

Effective Leadership – empower voluntary sector organisations through training and use of best practice in the techniques and benefits of effective and robust leadership in achieving the organisation’s aims and objectives and levels of personal achievement.

Advocacy & Representation – through consultation with members provide representation at local and national level to articulate the views, concerns and ideas for the development of policy that may influence the voluntary sector.

Research & Development – practical guidance and support to help individuals, voluntary orgs. and agencies identify statistical facts and figures relating to voluntary sector activity at a local and national level.

Partnership Development – promote the benefits of positive partnership working with voluntary organisations and the public and private sector who have shared views and values leading to strong, sustainable, mutually beneficial relationships

Volunteer Development

Accredited Learning Centre – the establishment of an accredited centre of excellence learning facility in partnership with Learndirect Scotland and local partners for the delivery of literacy and numeracy learning, IT and English as a second or other language (ESOL).

Training, Recruitment, Selection & Retention of Volunteers – advice and guidance for volunteer engaging organisations and the promotion of best practice.

Inclusiveness – identifying and working with individuals and groups socially or physically excluded from society in partnership with appropriate agencies.

Employer Supported Volunteering – work with local employers to foster the development of a good corporate responsibility attitude towards supporting their employees involvement in assisting the voluntary sector by providing paid time off during working hours.

Investing In Volunteers – promote, encourage and support volunteer engaging organisations to gain a national accreditation standard.

Employment through Volunteering - provide services, with partners, for unemployed adults and young people aged 16-18 and those meeting the MCMC criteria, services to include mentoring, volunteering and bespoke training to enhance personal and social development and employability.

Developing Social Enterprise

Support Growth of Social Economy

Develop Income Generation Streams – assist organisations move towards becoming financially self-sustainable.

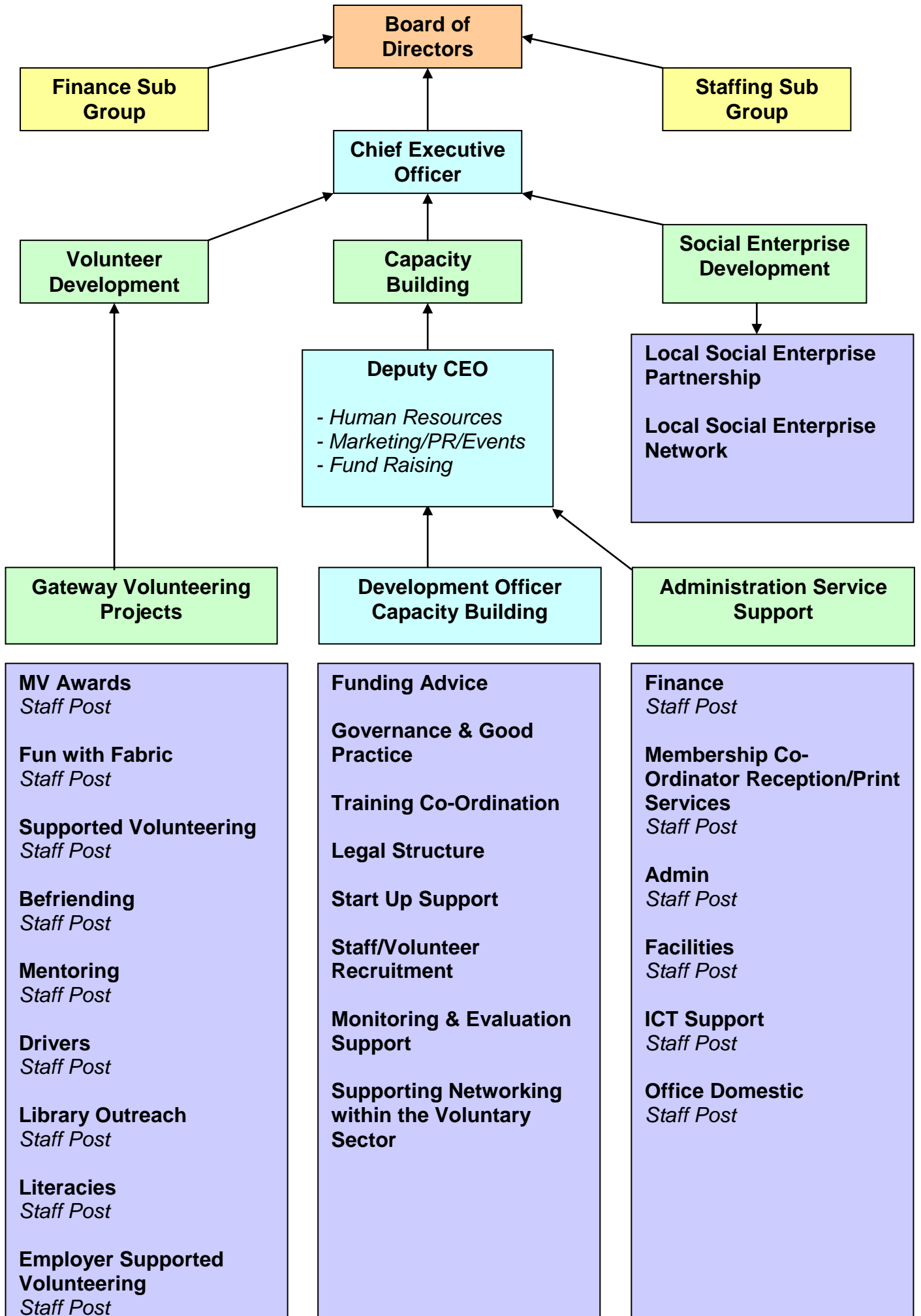
Facilitate Social Enterprise Network - by strengthening the range of locally available support, through partnership working, training and following models of best practice.

Support Business Partnerships - through advice, guidance and training.

Improve Communication across the Sector - through communication, reviews, consultation and partnership working.

Develop Business Opportunities - by helping to identify sources of potential business, promote and develop tendering expertise and business acumen.

Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian Organisational Structure



Annex A to Leading the Way

Voluntary Sector Gateway

Partnership/Group Meetings

Partnership/Group

- 1 Community Planning Partnership
- 2 Community Planning Working Group
- 3 West Lothian Economic Partnership
- 4 Third Sector Interface Pilot Group
- 5 West Lothian Life Stages Strategic Board
- 6 West Lothian Fairer Scotland Action Fund
- 7 West Lothian SOA Writers Group
- 8 Children's Services Management Group
- 9 West Lothian Compact
- 10 West Lothian Compact Writers Group
- 11 West Lothian Compact Implementation Group
- 12 Voluntary Sector Strategic Group (VSSG)
- 13 Community Health and Care Partnership Sub Committee
- 14 West Lothian CHCP Voluntary Sector Sub Group
- 15 West Lothian Health and Social Care Partnership
- 16 Social Economy Partnership
- 17 Scottish Business in the Community
- 19 West Lothian Community Chest Action/Approvals Group
- 20 DAT Review and Commissioning Group
- 21 Early Years and Childcare Partnership
- 22 Child Protection Committee
- 23 West Lothian MCMC Strategy Group
- 24 West Lothian Leader Local Action Group
- 25 Community Safety Partnership
- 26 Community Safety Partnership Funding Sub Group
- 27 Mental Health Forum
- 28 East of Scotland CVS Network
- 29 Lothian CVS
- 30 Violence Against Women Strategic Forum
- 31 West Lothian Homeless Forum
- 32 Health and Wellbeing Management Group
- 33 Adult Protection Committee
- 34 Adult Protection Training and Implementation Group
- 35 West Lothian Day Care Forum
- 36 Strategic Youth Group
- 37 Youth Inclusion Programme
- 38 Community Health Development Network



VOLUNTARY SECTOR
GATEWAY
West Lothian

Promoting, Supporting & Developing

West Lothian's Voluntary Sector

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West Lothian
Council



The Scottish
Government