



Dear Reader

This is an emergency issue of our bulletin. It lacks the professional layout our excellent staff provided in the past, yet I hope you will find the contributions interesting and useful.

You might be aware of the changes ARVAC has recently undergone. We have lost significant parts of our funding and because of that lost our dedicated and talented staff.

We now rely on our members and currently very much our trustees to keep ARVAC's work going and its role alive.

This is why I have taken on the role of editor of the bulletin for the time being.

I am glad to say that ARVAC is alive and kicking and that we remain proud of our bulletin and

the quality of its contributions.

Community research needs its voice heard and ARVAC will provide a forum.

In pursuing our aims we need you. We need your suggestions, your contributions, your initiative and where possible help with the daily running of ARVAC

We are, for example, indebted to Kate Jones from CDF for helping with getting our database back in shape so that I could send you this bulletin.

I will continue to produce the bulletin and would greatly appreciate your suggestions and contributions so please contact me at j.grotz@roehampton.ac.uk.

We believe that voluntary and community organisations play a vital role in creating and sustaining healthy communities, and that research plays an essential role in increasing the effectiveness of those organisations involved in voluntary and community action.

If you continue to share this belief this is my call for help and action.

Without our members our vision may not be sustained and eventually our work might seize up and the voice we provided for many years may fall silent.

Do not let this happen!

Jurgen Grotz

(emergency editor)

SOME FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS FOR ARVAC

Colin Rochester

Developing a programme of activities for ARVAC to pursue in its changed circumstances can and should only be undertaken after we address some more fundamental questions. In my view, there are three of these:

- Why does ARVAC exist and why should we want to keep it in existence and ensure that it is vigorously alive?

- What are our key objectives against which we need to assess the value of our activities? And
- What are the strategic operating principles that shape how we should pursue our objectives?

Inside this issue:

Colin Rochester 1
asks some fundamental questions for ARVAC

Steven Howlett 3
looks at the proposals for a UK Charitable Giving and Philanthropy Centre and what it might mean to our members

Steven Burkeman 4
explains what happened after "Building Blocks"

Cathy Pharoah 5
looks at Research and the Third Sector Review

Fiona Poland 6
reviews Kevin Harris (2006) (ed.) *Respect in the Neighbourhood: Why Neighbourliness Matters*

Launch 7
The Centre for the Study of Voluntary and Community Activity at Roehampton University

I'd like to start my answer to the first of these questions on a personal note. I joined ARVAC more than twenty years ago as one step on a journey from voluntary and community sector practitioner and manager to researcher, consultant and teacher. My initial commitment was to voluntary and community action and I only became aware some time later of the value of research and the enjoyment and sense of personal achievement it brings.

I therefore tend to see research as one means of sustaining and enhancing voluntary action at community level. From this perspective, ARVAC has a vital role to play in promoting, sustaining, informing and helping to develop research as a means of developing effective voluntary action at community level.

It is also, I think, a unique stance. There are organisations devoted to research which provide much needed information and support for individual researchers – such as the Voluntary Sector Studies Network the Social Research Association and the Social Policy Association – and I belong to two of them. There is also no shortage of organisations which support and promote voluntary and community action, including the Community Development Foundation, NCVO, Volunteering England, BASSAC, Community Matters and many more. But there is only one national body which promotes research as a means of developing more and better community action.

ARVAC is also distinctive – if perhaps not unique – in the nature of its membership. It combines individuals and organisations and it is a blend of researchers and practitioners. It needs both of the latter two and provides an important means of building understanding and co-operation between them.

So much, then, for ARVAC's unique purpose, distinctive nature and, if you like, its niche. But how do we take its purpose forward and seek to achieve its aims. I think there are three key objectives against which we should judge proposals and suggestions for using the modest time and limited energy we have at our disposal. These are:

Raising awareness of the value of research – among community sector organisations and those who support and fund their activities but also within national, regional and local government;

Developing better knowledge about community sector organisations including the role research can play in helping them develop their capacity and effectiveness; and

Improving practice in community level research by disseminating information and sharing experiences; developing training activities and resources; and through promoting consultancy and mentoring.

The third important question aims to identify strategic operating principles for ARVAC. I can think of three of them which have guided us in the past and can still offer a way forward into the future. They are:

Partnership – even at the highest tide in its funding history ARVAC's resources have always been modest. Working towards its goals in collaboration with a range of other bodies – CDF, NCVO, LVSC and several research centres based in universities for example – has thus been a pragmatic response to the limited extent of our capability. But it is also fundamental to the mission: ARVAC exists in part to bring together practitioner and researcher communities and this involves working with the organisations which represent them and promote their work;

Bridging the Gap between theory and practice. On the one hand, ARVAC has always believed that practice needs to be informed by better theories that help us understand, explain and change the world in which we are operating. On the other, it emphasises the need for theory to be "usable" and to address the real world concerns of the practitioner; and

Creating Opportunities for participation and involvement. This may be the one principle on which the work of ARVAC has been based for more than 25 years which is most important to us at this point in our history. ARVAC began life as a purely voluntary association and, even when it received its initial core funding, the first member of staff was recruited not to take over the operational work of the organisation but to deal with the "housekeeping" issues and allow the committee members and others to concentrate on ARVAC's principal concerns. Even more significantly, moreover, was that the main way of working was to create and develop opportunities for ARVAC members to come together to pursue common interests and shared concerns. To a considerable extent, this role has been overtaken and obscured by the role of ARVAC as a body whose staff have been providing services to its members and others. We need to find a new balance between the two modes of working and put collective action back at the centre of what we do.

This is an edited version of a presentation made to ARVAC's AGM on 22nd March 2007.

A real commitment to research? The proposals for a UK Charitable Giving and Philanthropy Centre.

Steven Howlett

Research, the importance of research and, in particular, the role played by research in informing and strengthening community action is the interest around which ARVAC is built. So when the Office of the Third Sector in partnership with the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), the Carnegie UK Trust, and the Scottish Executive held a consultation early this year into the possibility of a centre dedicated to research giving and philanthropy, the question for ARVAC was 'what might be the provision in this for community research'?

ARVAC has for many years existed to bring together researchers and communities to learn from each other, believing that research within communities is important to identify needs and actions; but more than this, it is research by communities that produces results that matter, which give an authentic voice to findings and through a process which is empowering as well as enlightening.

For the last few years the Home Office agreed and provided ARVAC with core funding to enable our small, but dedicated team to carry out this work. Readers will know that this funding ended in 2006. Having endured many changes within the Home Office, the change to its strategic grants programme deemed that support for community research through ARVAC was no longer a priority. Without that ARVAC was unable to keep its paid staff and we have reverted to a member led organisation run by volunteers and trustees. A final irony was the praise ARVAC received for its important work in a previous *bulletin* by Home Office minister Paul Goggins at the same time as plans were being drawn up to cut funding. The staff and trustees at the time argued, of course, that ARVAC gave voice to local communities – a need still recognised by the funders and policy makers. It is the case with research however, that while everybody is interested in the findings, few are willing to pay for it.

This is not to say however that research doesn't get funded, and it is interesting to note what type of research does get backing; often that will give a strong clue to government priorities. So it was that consultation was initiated into a proposal for a centre for giving and philanthropy. The proposal acknowledged that policy development is hampered by a lack of research and it is proposed that a new centre can address this. It is likely that the centre will be based in a university with the remit to address the research shortfall by having a role in developing short and long term analysis. This is a good move, when research is funded it is often snap-shot studies; long term study that can identify trends is very expensive and as a consequence quite rare with initiatives such as this proposed centre a good way to ensure that the strategic importance of such research is recognised and funding earmarked for it.

The centre is envisaged to draw together leading experts and collate research knowledge, identifying gaps, commissioning work and building the research capacity to enable knowledge on which effective policy can be built. Moreover the centre will be charged with ensuring the transfer of this

knowledge beyond researchers to other stakeholders.

So far, so good. At this stage much is open for debate – that is the nature of consultations. But, it is unlikely that many ARVAC members will benefit directly. The documentation makes it quite clear that the first priority is to gather research to provide an overview, and to look at how money can be spent to achieve longer-term analysis of trends into giving. Money will be limited and trends on giving are the priority. That said the centre is also interested in philanthropy - but this is also limited and couched in terms such as 'The Centre will adopt a broad view of giving as an act of citizenship with value over and above its financial worth'. Is it then that research into philanthropy will only be considered in relation to how it is defined as 'giving'? This is unclear, as is the definition of philanthropy. In terms of this centre is philanthropy only to mean why individuals and companies give money? Acts of citizenship can be so much more – including involvement in the voluntary sector delivery public services (an area government is very interested in), but also campaigning and self-help.

To me, ARVAC is more about supporting the latter through community action, and it is about supporting research to find out and explain the issues, and to help provide policy measures but with the voice of the community foremost.

As yet we don't now the outcome of the consultation. I suspect that there will be little direct impact of a new centre on the work of ARVAC and its members. The centre is unlikely to be in a position to prioritise community research, but it may be that it does carry out some work in communities that will be of interest by highlighting issues at the aggregate level will highlight about giving, active citizenship and the way in which voluntary action builds and sustains communities.

ARVAC will follow the outcome of the consultation with interest. Particularly where the consultation talks about the centre striving to make research relevant to practitioners as well as policy-makers. The consultation makes it clear that the centre will ask researchers how practitioners are engaged in the research process. Maybe this area is one in which ARVAC members can seek to be engaged with research emanating from the new centre and look to the work of ARVAC board member Jurgen Grotz. Jurgen, through his work at Roehampton University is leading a debate among researchers and practitioners about how research can be a much more inclusive, much more of a partnership driven process. Following this line of thought, any research through a new centre would be compelled to research *with* communities rather than it being research *on* communities. This may fall short of the support for community research that ARVAC would like to see, but it may be the best line of argument we have for the moment. Indeed this is a line of argument ARVAC should put forward whenever opinion of research is sought. What do other members think?

Details see <http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/research/index.asp?id=3291#consultation>

Building Blocks and What Happened Next...

Steven Burkeman

When Alison Harker and I were first approached by City Parochial Foundation to look at how 2nd tier support for frontline voluntary organisations in London was working, we did not fully realise the strength of feeling around second-tier support for frontline groups. Our report, *'Building Blocks'* (which can be downloaded at www.cityparochial.org.uk/cpf/publications/building_blocks.html) was intended to start a debate. CPF had been funding many second-tier organisations for years and was keen to promote discussion and explore how services to frontline organisations could be further developed. But when the report was published, a lot of attention focused on just two of the many issues we raised.

First, although *Building Blocks* dealt with the generality of second-tier support for frontline organisations in London, many readers took this to mean councils for voluntary service. Indeed CVSs are the most universal mechanism for the support of frontline organisations. We found that they share significant problems with other STOs, but the focus of debate became CVSs, almost to the exclusion of others.

Many of the difficulties faced by STOs, including CVSs, arise because the work is not well-enough paid. As a result, they find it difficult to attract people to do frontline support work with sufficient firsthand experience themselves of running frontline organisations. Some second-tier organisations have difficulty working with all sections of the population. Many CVSs in particular have difficulty in representing frontline organisations in discussions with funders, because they are themselves competing for the same pots of money. We felt considerable sympathy for CVSs which have to be all things to everyone and seem overwhelmed by the scale of the tasks and expectations facing them. In some cases, they seem to have lost their sense of purpose and focus, mainly because they have felt forced to pursue funding streams in order to fund their core operation.

The *second* issue which attracted great attention was one specific recommendation, which emerged from over 100 interviews with frontline organisations. We suggested that in order to try to create a 2nd tier sector which is more responsive to the expressed needs of frontline organisations, over time, ring-fenced funding to pay for second-tier support should be given to frontline organisations themselves, so that they can buy the services they need from wherever they can best find them. We emphasised that this would need to happen gradually and that 2nd tier organisations, including CVSs, would always continue to need core funding support through grants.

Of course the report was much broader than this – we made more than 20 recommendations, many aimed at funders and all arising from our interviews. Importantly,

we focused only on London – there may well be a very different situation in other parts of the country.

Gratifyingly, most of the responses were very positive, and not defensive. Comments from CVS directors in London ranged from *'excellent'*, to *'harsh, but fair'*. There were exceptions, though; a letter to 3rd Sector in response to an article by me, from a former London CVS Director more or less dismissed the report out of hand. It drew an interesting and more balanced response from Kevin Curley, Chief Executive of the National Association for Voluntary and Community Action, the national membership association for CVSs and similar bodies. He emphasised that provision of frontline support by second-tier organisations was more variable than the letter-writer had allowed.

CPF (with its sister Trust for London), unlike many who commission this kind of study, recognised the need to invest seriously in follow-up if it was to have any lasting impact. They hired a highly respected specialist facilitator, Annette Zera, who ran an extraordinary conference at the Conway Hall which attracted 125 participants. This was not the conventional *'PowerPoint and presentations'* gathering. Instead, it was built around the *'open space'* approach and the results are now available for all to see (or download – from www.cityparochial.org.uk/cpf/news/building_blocks_open_space_report.html). By taking this approach CPF ensured the start of the debate. The outcome of the day was 11 action plans, all with people signed up to take them forward, and a public commitment by CPF's Chief Executive, Bharat Mehta, that the Foundation will play its part in progressing matters.

We have tried to reflect honestly on the responses to the report. We see no reason to revise our critique of the CVSs, but we want to emphasise that it is a critique of the structure, and the system – while some CVSs have been more successful than others at combating the worst effects of this, we are not on the whole critical of individual CVSs. As far as our suggestions about putting more of the funding for 2nd tier support in the hands of frontline organisations, we have heard some strong arguments, with which we agree, in favour taking care about how, and at what speed, this happens. Little is achieved in such matters by acting too speedily or without sufficient care. We share the concern that funding will find its way to consultants, and that the smallest frontline organisations – those which don't get funding at all – will be unable to access services provided by second-tier organisations, because they won't have the means to pay for them. Many saw this as part of the solution but one which needed to be accompanied by a range of other interventions. In particular, ways need to be found to enable STOs, including CVSs, to be even more aware of, and sensitive to, the needs of those they are there to serve.

Research and the Third Sector Review - opportunities to frame the debates

Cathy Pharoah

A significant strand of the interim report of Cabinet Office/ HM Treasury on its recent major review of the third sector was the importance placed on the need for further research and for building the sector evidence base. (*The Future Role of the Third Sector in Social and Economic Regeneration 2006, TSR*). The report set out government thinking based on one of the largest sector consultation exercises it has ever undertaken, and concluded with a set of key questions for each of its main themes, highlighting the need for further research. The document's focus on research offers the sector research community a valuable opportunity. The breadth of its inquiry means that the perspectives of all types of research – community-based, applied, theoretical and academic – would be relevant. How can – or should – the research community respond? Are the 'right' questions being asked? If not, what should be asked? What relevant evidence already exists and where is it lacking? What will the government's strategy for building the evidence base be? It is arguable that a response would not only be valuable – it is essential, as the aim of the review is to shape government policy towards the sector for the next ten years.

The five themes of the document are:

- voice and campaigning
- communities
- contribution to transforming public services
- social enterprise
- supporting a healthy third sector.

These areas are likely to frame government interest in sector research for the foreseeable future. The next few paragraphs set out the main questions asked in each of these areas, with some comments aimed simply at starting discussion and debate.

Voice and campaigning

The questions around voice and campaigning concern the mechanisms and skills needed to enable *the sector's voice to be heard more loudly over the coming years*. There has been considerable sector research related to themes of independence and the conflicts inherent in advocacy and service delivery roles. Could there be a useful meta-analysis of this work? Would a review of the impact of such research be valuable? How much new research is needed? The need for research on international experience is highlighted, which opens up some very new and exciting research avenues.

Communities

The theme of *creating active, strong and connected communities* is a broad one, but the report homes in on two areas - small community groups, and volunteering. The key questions posed here reflect some concern that existing policy needs to go further. For example, the report asks *how can government best consolidate the investment it has already made in volunteering and mentoring? how can government ensure that small community groups are reached and resourced effectively?* Does the evidence suggest that new initiatives are needed, or was the London Voluntary Services Council right in its response that *together we need to find ways of making what exists work better?* What should be key indicators for measuring connectedness?

Public services

The document's emphasis on further research is strongest in relation to the question of public services. It states that government will commission research *on where the third sector plays an important role in shaping public services, the ways in which the sector is involved and the resulting improvement in services*. An analytical study on *how the public sector can learn from and scale up the third sector's innovative approaches to delivering public services* will be undertaken. In addition to this government wants to know *what are the priorities for establishing a better evidence base for the third sector's role in transforming public services*, as well as understanding how to commission better and *how the changing public service delivery environment in the next ten years will impact on third sector organizations*. This is a very big agenda, and one where evidence is singularly lacking. It is surely one which many third sector researchers will want to get their teeth into? It is essential that impact is researched well and appropriately, and these questions move well beyond the 'whether' of sector involvement in service delivery into the fundamental questions of what the sector brings.

Social enterprise

Interestingly the document's agenda around social enterprise, where policy has seen a heavily organizational focus over the last few years, puts a renewed spotlight on the role of social enterprise leaders, asking about *the particular skills needs of social enterprise leaders and employees*. Interest in social enterprise leadership lay at the beginning of policy ten years ago, as reflected, for example, in Leadbeater's *The Rise of the Social Entrepreneur* in 1997. What does the apparent coming full circle mean? And as government also turns its focus towards assessing *the effectiveness of social enterprises in tackling particular social and environmental challenges*, can researchers help to ensure that appropriate measurements are used, sensitive to the sector's role and capacity?

A healthy third sector

Questions of sector funding and capacity lie at the centre of this theme, and the document picks up on the evidence of the NAO report in 2005 which argued that statutory funders need much more understanding about the role of 'investment', 'grant' and 'contract' funding. Here too there is already a wealth of sector research which could be brought to bear, and also to inform *how government can better use and disseminate best practice and evidence on the third sector*.

The TSR poses a challenge to the research community for at least two reasons. Firstly because of its focus on substantiation of sector policy. Secondly, because results in these major themed areas, which could be seen as at the heart of what defines the third sector, such as its capacity and skill in campaigning, will have a significant influence on future perceptions and policy towards the third sector. The TSR shows increasing interest in impact, the sector research community is vitally placed to help frame how this is defined, measured and used.

Kevin Harris (2006) (ed.) *Respect in the Neighbourhood: Why Neighbourliness Matters*. Lyme Regis: Russell House Publishing. ISBN: 978-1-905541-02-7.

Reviewed by: Fiona Poland

Can we really attribute the widely-deplored problem of increasing 'lack of respect' to 'other peoples' ' ignorance of some straightforward set of rules which only need to be forcibly re-stated for social order to be restored? In this excellent edited collection, Harris and the other contributing authors in this book, cogently argue otherwise - that respect cannot be a 'given' within modern, civic society. This is because the meaning of respect must first be mutually negotiated by those who must now make each other's acquaintance in everyday encounters in a world of shifting and diverging values. Harris locates neighbourhoods between the privacy of homes and less-controllable public spaces, where, without specific attention, they can become potential sites of mutual disappointment, retaliatory actions and growing insecurity.

Each chapter evaluates different components of locally-situated interactions of individuals, groups and services, through which respect may or may not emerge. Placing the blame for disrespect on 'morally defective' individuals or 'dysfunctional' families, perhaps conveniently shifts criticism from policymakers and planners. We are provided with counter-evidence that the failure of services and policymakers to respect and respond to community concerns, may itself undermine those communities' abilities to manage the tensions generated by diversity and life-stresses in low-income neighbourhoods where conflict over access to services can be intense. Where social networks need to be strengthened, fear of authority and shame are unlikely to be effective means to engender widely-shared local rules for self-regulating everyday living. For instance, Mehmet Ali's discussion of the treatment of young people in Turkish migrant communities highlights how professional dealings with families dependent on bilingual children may undermine those communities' confidence in managing family relationships and increase reliance on 'coercion politics' (p.97).

Alongside critique, this book also offers valuable evaluative discussion of resources to encourage cooperative behaviour to encourage respect. Both Barnes' study, comparing parental views of parenting norms and confidence to intervene in 4 different UK wards, and Richardson's research on schemes

to encourage neighbourly action, suggest that publicly-stated rules and sanctions may be less effective than providing incentives for people to demonstrate neighbourliness in low-key ways. Other constructive measures may include encouraging more (and new) uses of streets for local social, rather than anti-social, contact. These are argued by Connolly as helping to 'crowd out those engaged in illicit trading or incivilities' (p. 83) and by Steyaert's Lowlands examples of local authorities empowered to support 'street etiquettes' and more walkable environments, as helping promote self-regulation.

These accessible chapters provide valuable practical guidance on moving neighbourhoods away from tipping points of instability, by demonstrating the uses of collaboration between services and policymakers as well as communities, for building more congenial local lives. The work of Harris and his co-authors provides stimulation and encouragement for anyone interested in promoting a more community-orientated notion of mutual rather than imposed respect.

Launch:

The Centre for the Study of Voluntary and Community Activity at Roehampton University

VOLUNTEERING ENGLAND'S CHIEF EXECUTIVE CLAIMS "VITAL ROLE" FOR ROEHAMPTON UNIVERSITY'S NEW CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY ACTIVITY

Roehampton University has a vital role to play in bringing about "a society in which the potential and passion of people to transform lives and communities through volunteering is fully realised" in the view of Christopher Spence. Speaking at the launch of the University's new Centre for the Study of Voluntary and Community Activity Centre on 27th March, the Chief Executive of Volunteering England and former Founding Director of London Lighthouse, praised universities like Roehampton "which have had the vision and courage to develop centres dedicated to the study of the voluntary and community sector, with a strong focus on volunteering".

He wanted to see "relationships between the sector on the ground and academic institutions strengthened, with a continuous flow of learning between the two" and suggested that "this flow of learning is best achieved, and that such relationships flourish, when universities see themselves, as you do here at Roehampton, as active in civic engagement, through participation in volunteering itself, through service learning by students, through specialist teaching and, of course, through research".

It was "through research that we find out what the real issues are: who volunteers, why and how; what really works and what doesn't; how and how much investment is distributed and with what returns; what the barriers are that prevent people from getting involved; what the impact of volunteering is on individuals who do it, on the organisations which involve them and on the wider community?"

Volunteering England, the Institute for Volunteering Research and the Independent Commission on the Future of Volunteering had all benefited from the work of the new Centre's predecessor, the Centre for Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Management, and its Director, Colin Rochester, Spence looked forward to "many more opportunities for fruitful collaboration".

The new Centre undertakes, promotes and facilitates research on volunteering, community action, self-help and mutual aid, campaigning, religious and faith-based organisations and voluntary and community sector bodies. It also provides a home for two programmes of postgraduate education for the sector leading to the postgraduate certificate, postgraduate diploma, MSc and MRes in Voluntary Action Management and the Management of Religious and Faith-based Organisations.



School of Business and Social Sciences
Roehampton University,
Southlands College
80 Roehampton Lane,
London SW15 5SL

promoting effective community action
through research

About ARVAC

ARVAC (The Association for Research in the Voluntary and Community Sector) was established in 1978. It is a membership organisation and acts as a resource for people interested in research in or on community organisations.

We believe that voluntary and community organisations play a vital role in creating and sustaining healthy communities, and that research plays an essential role in increasing the effectiveness of those organisations involved in voluntary and community action.

We want to hear from you:

Please send us:

- News items
- Details of new publications, resources or websites
- Information about research in progress
- Meetings or events you would like us to publicise
- Comments or opinion pieces you would like to share with other ARVAC members

by e-mail to
j.grotz@roehampton.ac.uk