



Dear Reader

“scout ‘em, and flout‘em: Thought is free” sings Stephano, when planning a horrid deed with Caliban after the mighty Tempest has provided the setting for change.

Why would I want to drag, kicking and screaming, a quote from Shakespeare, into this editorial?

It’s only because there is too much to say, so much change and so many topics to consider that I won’t be able to do it and so I am looking for a suitable distraction.

Whilst not planning a horrid deed myself, I never did mind a bit of mischief. I, too, want to sing that “thought is free” and that this will be our strength in a time of austerity. “Thought is free” can be our armour and our wings. We need not be restrained by lack of resources. Any plans to constrain the reach of community research will hear the song: “Thought is free”. Anyone fearing a grant being cut, can hear the song: “Thought is free”. And we have help. Like Prospero’s sprites we now have far-reaching, almost-magical, tools at our disposal for making

our voices and thoughts heard. In ARVAC’s case it is our new Website. Yet I do wish I had Ariel at my side to assist me with this, as starting to work the internet magic is harder than you may think! Many of ARVAC’s hopes are being linked to our website launched today. We hope it will be a communications hub for all interested in research in the voluntary and community sector. We hope it will be one of the places where “thought is free”. But of course a communications hub is only good if there is something worth saying, with people saying it. Just how much there is to say was shown again by ARVAC’s latest event ‘Making Voices Count’, held in April to which we had fantastic feedback and for which its documents are, of course, now available on the new website. The bulletin itself also highlights the many topics to draw our interest. For this latest issue, I am again indebted to the contributors who find time in their busy lives to write for the bulletin. Alex O’Neil and Julie Worrall’s contributions tie in directly with ‘making

voices count’ through building relationships and trust. Again we hope that the new website may be a place to forge them. Gayle Munro provides insights into practitioners’ views on ethics in research and Colin Rochester echoes Caliban and Stephano’s drinking exploits, by answering my call in the last bulletin for contributions on the delight of conviviality. Finally Peter Alcock and Fiona Poland review two of the most interesting new books. “Art thou afeard?” asks Caliban of Stephano and for a moment I am. The future seems very uncertain and I certainly don’t know whether our website endeavour will find favour with you. Yet, as Prospero asserts, “what strength I have is mine own” and with my colleagues and friends at ARVAC I will continue to sing, convivially, “Thought is free!”

Jurgen Grotz
(editor)

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MAKING VOICES COUNT: towards a theory of user control and community integration in voluntary action research

a report from ARVAC's latest event

ARVAC is fiercely proud of being able to attract influential speaker to its events contributing to the important debates of the day. The latest ARVAC lectures again demonstrated how a small volunteer-run organisation can contribute to the building of trustworthy relationships between scholars, practitioners, service users and policy makers. This must be seen in the context of strained relationships as previously described:

"One of the impediments to collaboration between scholars and practitioners is a history of distrust and deep misunderstanding" (Carl Milofsky)

"...what is currently constituted as 'evidence' is too often dominated by academic researchers (often influenced by the physical sciences and medical approaches) and neglects the views and experiences of people who use and work in health and social services." (Peter Beresford)

Such challenging statements were discussed on 30 April 2010 at the latest ARVAC event during which Carl Milofsky, Professor of Sociology and Anthropology at Bucknell University, USA, gave a lecture about *User control, democracy, and entrepreneurship* and Peter Beresford, Professor of Social Policy and Director of the Centre for Citizen Participation at Brunel University, UK, gave a lecture on *User and disabled people's movements*. Professor Peter Halfpenny from the Voluntary Sector Studies Network and Professor Cathy Pharoah from the Centre for Charitable Giving and Philanthropy then responded to the presentations they had heard.

The format of the event had been designed to actively engage academics, practitioners and policy makers in issues arising from participation in the research process. While these are gaining particular importance in today's economic and policy climate, the debate also clearly contributed to the agenda surrounding the role of academic research in public policy-making. This was underlined by the fact that CUE-East supported the event. (see Julie Worrall's contribution on page 4)

Like in previous event ARVAC received enthusiastic and encouraging feedback.

"Thank you for a great seminar on Friday. I thoroughly enjoyed both the presentations and the informal chats afterwards. I've been looking at the ARVAC website which is impressive and will keep any eye out for future events and seminars" (Stella)

Building on the successes of its events ARVAC is committed to strengthening the community of those interested in questions about research with and in voluntary and community organization. Its latest venture, the redesigned Website, is evidence of this. Of course documents from the event are available on

www.arvac.org.uk

It is also on this site where ARVAC invites you to become part of this community and where, like Stella, you can look out for future events.

Alex O'Neil

Unheard Voices

The term “Unheard Voices” (as used in Joseph Rowntree Foundation’s programme of the same name) is meant to be inclusive of a wide range of people who have been excluded from power. But the term can be problematic and hide the complexity of people’s lives and the societal issues they face. Members of our programme team (most of whom have such direct experience in their own lives) say that the term can create the illusion that *“once your voice is heard, that’s it. You’re sorted!”* Not so. There is a frustrating pattern where you are dismissed as an unskilled/unheard voice at the beginning and then dismissed as a trouble-maker/usual suspect at the end. And the problem with these labels is that it is groups who are powerful who decide which label fits.

The JRF programme brings together groups of people excluded from power. This is not about “one-off” consultation, nor is it about labelling people as needy or tragic. It brings together migrants, older people, disabled people, black mental health service users, people in poverty. There are other perspectives in the programme team, but rather than producing a list of labels, we acknowledge the shared and different experiences of different groups. We share a common identity as people. We also point to a very deep frustration (and sometimes failure) of approaches about engagement, involvement, empowerment, user-led, disabled people-directed to achieve the breakthrough hoped for in achieving human and civil rights and entitlements. To achieve an ordinary life and to be treated equally and truthfully with respect.

The programme has been re-labelled “Change In Action”. There is an irreverent humour in the group which wants JRF to have a CIA programme. We can learn from each other but we also need to look again at what really can achieve breakthrough.

The programme team are not simply sitting round the table discussing ideas – they are also going out working with people who are isolated;

Black Mental Health Service users are working with People with Learning Difficulties about how to achieve the things they each want in their lives; Migrants and White Working Class communities discuss difference and similarities.

- Do we simply need people to be able to tell the stories about their lives without the usual tabloid and stereotypical assumptions?
- Or is it about different groups sharing between them what did and did not make a difference – people developing their own strategies?
- Or is it about allies supporting and challenging groups to find more effective ways of engaging with people who have power?
- Or is there a need to look again at “whole systems”, identifying blockages and barriers; identifying opportunities and solutions?

As a programme team we are aware of approaches that are currently being used to bring about change. We want to work closely with different groups of people, but not trying to see people’s lives as problems to be solved. Nor are we heroically trying to rush in and sort out their lives. In what is an exploratory phase of a new programme, we are trying to work with people who are the experts in their own lives but also seeking to identify and share approaches that they (or others) might find helpful. The aim of the programme isn’t simply to listen to Unheard Voices. It is to help identify approaches that people can use to achieve the life chances or life choices that they wish and from which they are currently excluded. We are seeking to create a genuinely collaborative programme and to learn the lessons in our own practice and our own organisations about what such approaches might mean for ourselves.

Alex O'Neil is a Programme Manager at the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. For more information about the programme see:

<http://www.jrf.org.uk/work/workarea/unheard-voices-power-and-participation>

Julie Worrall

Why connect?

Jointly hosting the ARVAC Annual Lecture 2010 at UEA London provided an opportunity for CUE East to signal the striking similarities between our respective aims as we seek to build knowledge networks, connect with community organisations and bring about a more discursive approach to university-community engagement.

CUE East (Community University Engagement East), based at the University of East Anglia, is one of six four year national 'Beacons for Public Engagement' in higher education; the others are at Newcastle, Manchester, Wales, Edinburgh and University College London, and there is a National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement in Bristol. The Beacons are funded by Research Councils UK, the Higher Education Funding Councils and the Wellcome Trust and are tasked with leading the effort to foster a change of culture in universities, assisting staff and students to engage with the public and with communities. A question that we often hear is, 'what is engagement?' and it can be difficult to describe as it covers many activities, ranging from an academic giving a public lecture to community-based research in which the 'academic' and the 'community' are equal partners. The National Coordinating Centre has devised a draft definition that says,

"Public engagement brings research and higher education institutions together with the public. It generates mutual benefit - with all parties learning from each other through sharing knowledge, expertise and skills. Done well, it builds trust, understanding and collaboration, and increases the institution's relevance to, and impact on, civil society."

Whilst this definition may tell us more about what engagement can do than what

it actually is, it does touch upon the two clearest messages that we took away from the ARVAC Annual Lecture this year. Firstly, that engagement, whatever form it takes, is about building relationships and generating trust over the long term, and secondly, that knowledge is not the sole domain of higher education and the production of knowledge should involve an equal partnership.

To some this might be obvious, particularly those, both inside and outside higher education, who are already signed up to the idea of engagement but it isn't obvious to all and we need events like the ARVAC Annual Lecture to inform the debate and encourage all to get involved. An example of a key audience for CUE East are the postgraduate researchers, that is, the new generation of academics who are already embracing the idea of engagement in their research. We were delighted, therefore, to welcome a UEA postgraduate researcher at the Lecture, who just that week had attended a CUE East supported UEA workshop on 'User Involvement in Research', organised and run by Fiona Poland.

Looking at it from the inside out (at CUE East we are on the inside!), we can see that universities and their researchers are continually buffered by a range of intricate and complex forces such as the commodification of knowledge and the ascendancy of the audit culture amongst others. This isn't going to change and as the very purpose of universities increasingly comes under the spotlight over the coming months, there will be a need more than ever to communicate the benefits of collaborative and inclusive approaches to research.

For more information on the Beacons initiative, please see the websites: National Coordinating Centre - www.publicengagement.ac.uk
CUE East - www.cueeast.org

Julie Worrall is Project Director at Community University Engagement East.

Gayle Munro

Ethics in research — a report from a Salvation Army workshop

Research & Development (R&D) within The Salvation Army hosted a workshop in February 2010 to raise awareness and discuss issues relating to the ethics of conducting research within the voluntary sector.

In November 2009, R&D researchers conducted a survey of some 40 voluntary sector organisations to determine the research ethics processes and procedures which are in place in other organisations and to elicit some more information about the ethics challenges faced by those working in research across the sector's various disciplines. The response from the survey was positive in the sense that respondents expressed an interest in learning more about the ethics dilemmas, ways of solving such dilemmas and ethics guidelines in use by other organisations.

As a response to the results of this survey, which highlighted the difficulties faced by (particularly) smaller voluntary sector organisations in dealing with the difficult and challenging nature of research ethics and the apparent vacuum of formal ethics frameworks for the sector, The Salvation Army hosted a half-day Ethics Symposium at Territorial (National) Headquarters on Friday 19th February 2010.

Invitations were sent to researchers from voluntary sector organisations and the academic field with a research interest in this area.

The event was attended by 30 delegates including representatives from organisations across the following disciplines: children's services, homelessness, community development, working with vulnerable women, advice and advocacy services and academic bodies.

The event opened with an introduction and welcome from Major Ivor Telfer, Assistant Secretary for Programme for The Salvation Army, and was followed by a key-note pres-

entation from Professor Bruce Macfarlane, author of *Researching with Integrity: the ethics of academic enquiry*, from the University of Portsmouth. Professor Macfarlane's presentation was focussed around the proposed development of a 'virtue' approach to ethical research where he placed the responsibility very much on the individual researcher to ensure that moral characteristics are at the foundation of any research that they are involved with. Professor Macfarlane's presentation was then a catalyst for group discussions during the remainder of the morning.

Delegates were then divided into four groups and were each given an ethics dilemma for discussion based around the following themes:

1. Research commissioners misrepresenting findings to meet their own ends
2. Gaining access to research participants ethically when under pressure from commissioners
3. Authorship
4. Interviewing vulnerable subjects.

Each small group was asked to provide feedback on their ethics dilemma which provoked some interesting discussion of the possible approaches to each case.

Time was also devoted to an open discussion of delegates' own experiences of ethics in their work and there was an opportunity for those attending to elicit advice from the group at large.

The main concern expressed was from delegates of smaller voluntary organisations which do not have the resources to employ the support staff needed to conduct research with vulnerable individuals / groups. The representative from the UK Research Integrity Office encouraged any organisations which need advice to get in touch.

Gayle Munro is Research Manager at The Salvation Army

Colin Rochester

'cheers' - about the small scale moments, the fun and fulfilment of being involved and the sheer delight of conviviality

In the last issue of the Bulletin, the Editor challenged readers to share their experiences of some of the 'fun and fulfillment' of being involved in voluntary action and the 'sheer delight of conviviality'. I hope that many of us will respond to this challenge but I am rather afraid that the response will be muted for much of the fun seems to have gone out of life in the voluntary and community sector in recent years. This perception may, of course, be simply the effect of the passing years and the growing disillusionment that sets in after decades rather than years in the sector but it does seem to me that practically all of these moments occurred in the very different circumstances of my early days in the sector.

More than forty years ago, I was interviewed for the post of Tutor-Organiser for the Workers' Educational Association which was to be my first experience of voluntary action. All was going to plan until the venerable gentleman who was to be my boss suddenly asked me if I drank. I just about managed to avoid the pious and platitudinous answer 'yes, but only in moderation' only to be reassured that 'yes' was the right answer because it was quite normal for the members of evening classes run by the WEA to adjourn to the pub at the end of the formal business to continue their discussions in a less formal and more convivial atmosphere.

These kinds of informal encounters continued to punctuate my journey through the voluntary sector. Their primary purpose was conviviality but they also pro-

vided the means of meeting other, more utilitarian, needs. Sharing a drink with colleagues in my own and other organisations was a more effective way of building relationships, sharing information, learning from one another's experience and developing mutual support than more formal activities. The lack of an initial agenda that went beyond having a pint or two meant that anything and everything could be – and was – discussed. There were also other opportunities for conviviality over and above these tailor-made meetings. Most of us have been to conferences where the most rewarding parts of the day have been the coffee breaks or the quick – or sometimes not so quick – drink at the end of the proceedings. I have suggested in the past that we could save a lot of time and trouble by organising coffee breaks or their equivalent and forgetting about the rest of the programme.

The other feature of the world of voluntary action which seems to me to have been more prominent in the past than now was the importance of humour. This is not to say that we lacked seriousness in our commitment to what we were trying to achieve but that this was routinely leavened by humour. One of the most influential series of articles in the bulletin produced by NCVO's Management Development Unit in the 1980s was called 'how to ruin a voluntary organisation'. This taught more people about what constituted effective management than any number of more 'serious' treatises on good practice.

Humour also played its part in keeping our feet on the ground. Informal meetings of the directors of settlements and other bassac members in the late seventies and early eighties involved some running jokes like the idea that we were such a casual or scruffily dressed group that our national body had made available a suit which we could borrow on those occasions when we needed to be properly dressed because we were meeting potential funders. I also remember developing a whole new 'cod' theory of community development based on the experience of one of my colleagues whose role was to assist local residents develop and run activities for children and young people. On one occasion his lack of organisational skills had led to the takeover of his role by the group of parents he was working with. We concluded that his lack of skill was empowering and developed the concept of 'optimal incompetence' in community work.

Humour was widespread. I remember a time when many publications were enlivened by columns and cartoons. In its early days before it was taken over and tailored to the needs of the professional fund-raisers and marketing specialists of the corporate end of the sector *Third Sector* magazine was worth the cover price for the column contributed by a fictional voluntary sector academic based at the University of the M25 (formerly the North Circular Polytechnic). A similarly bilious look at the sector was provided by the Yellow Pages feature in bassac's mailing to members while LVSC's *Voluntary Voice* and the Association of Charitable Foundations *Trust News* featured cartoons and other humor-

ous material. As well as making me and others laugh – which is in itself sufficient justification – these verbal and visual jokes had a wider use. Like the articles in the MDU Bulletin they could give additional weight to serious points and, like the myth of the fund-raising suit, helped to keep people's feet on the ground. Only an absence of humorous commentary can explain how some of the more grotesque self-appointed spokespeople for the sector are allowed to dominate the 'trade press'.

It may well be that the tradition of voluntary action humour is still alive but taking place outside my area of vision in the blogosphere. I hope so and I should be glad to be reassured on that count. But, since the disappearance of lunch in the puritanical nineties, I am very much afraid that we are losing the kind of conviviality that was a feature of the voluntary sector from the days of church ales in the middle ages; through the dinners of eighteenth century clubs; the meetings in local inns of the friendly societies of the 18th and 19th centuries; and beyond.

Colin Rochester is a Visiting Research Fellow at the Centre for the Study of Voluntary and Community Activity at Roehampton University.

***Hybrid Organizations and the Third Sector: Challenges for Practice, Theory and Policy*, D Billis Ed., Palgrave, 2010, pp. xviii and 270.**

Reviewed by Peter Alcock

09 June 2010

This book is the most recent of a number of books edited by Billis and his former colleagues at the LSE Centre and published by Macmillan/Palgrave. As with the previous collections this new book brings together a number of the leading researchers on the voluntary or third sector, all of whom provide lively and up-to-date reports of recent research on policy and practice in the sector. For this collection of new research reports and reflections alone this will be a valuable addition to the reading lists of all those with an interest in third sector scholarship; and indeed some will no doubt read it with just this in mind.

However, there is more to this collection than just a summary of recent research and scholarship. In his role as editor Billis has also sought to explore some interesting and important theoretical and empirical trends within third sector research, and to employ the findings of his fellow contributors to extend and exemplify these.

There is an over-arching narrative which runs through the book therefore, and Billis expounds this in his introductory and concluding chapters and his own substantive chapter – ‘Towards a theory of hybrid organizations’. The narrative underpinning this is the growing extent and impact of hybridity within the sector – or rather around the sector, and perhaps more pejoratively encroaching ever more invidiously into it. The narrative is explored through analysis of the concept of hybridity and examination of the impact of recent UK policy in encouraging and promoting it.

Hybridity is not itself a new concept of course, nor, as Billis, explains is it one only affecting the third sector. As he points out we need to situate this within a broader analysis of the different sectors – private, public and third – and the ideal typical features of organisations within these. From this we can identify the areas of overlap, or hybridity, between them.

The differing depths and forms of hybridity provide a framework for exploring the differential impact of the shifting sector boundaries on different kinds of organisation within the broader third sector. And this is where the other authors are contributing to the overall narrative, for they provide examples of different forms of hybridity

within the research they report on - for instance, in faith-based organisations (Rochester and Torry), social enterprises (Aiken) or housing associations (Mullins and Pawson).

Although not all of the contributions stick so closely to this brief, with Lewis for instance reporting on his work on individual cross sector mobility and what this might tell us about relations between the sectors; and Cornforth and Spear reporting on the challenges for organisational governance of these broader developments.

The theoretical and empirical analysis of hybridity is only one part of the narrative of the book, however. The other concern is with the extent to which recent government policy and practice has encouraged, and even promoted, this. The policy regime of the recent Labour governments is summarised by Harris. Billis argues that this has promoted hybridity, in particular through the notion of the ‘third way’, which eschews the boundaries between government and civil society (p. 9, where Giddens’ work on the third way is quoted). The Labour government embraced the third sector as never before; but this came at a price, and the price was hybridity. Billis even suggests that this might be characterised as a ‘Faustian pact’, although in the end his conclusions about the potential policy and practice implications of this are not quite so apocalyptic.

The book was written in, and about, New Labour policy and the third sector it to some extent created, however. The questions that some might now ask is whether things will be different under the new Coalition Government, who have already set out a rejection of the third sector concept and the commitment to a new, ‘Big Society’, model of inter-sectoral relations. Will this further promote hybridity or lead to a return to a simpler model of voluntarism? These are questions for the next book I suspect.

Pete Alcock is Professor of Social Policy and Administration and Director ESRC Third Sector Research Centre University of Birmingham

**Ben Rogaly and Becky Taylor (2010) *Moving Histories of Class and Community*.
Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke.**

Reviewed by: Fiona Poland

02 June 2010

This is a book which vividly draws on interviews with 73 people living on three council estates in Norwich, to argue that people here see and act in far more dynamic ways than the rather fixed ideas about “white working class communities”. In tracing the many changes and connections in individuals’ own life stories Rogaly and Taylor also build a compelling case that government programmes, even where intended to encourage community-based solutions, can actually weaken the channels through which local people can work together to challenge the limited options in their neighbourhood schools, services and jobs.

The book reports findings from an Economic and Social Research Council-funded project as part of a programme to study identities and place. This project provided a case study which uses interviews, including 23 oral history interviews, to show how or whether people built identities they wanted through the place they have been living. Some people had moved into the Larkman, Marlpit and North Earlham estates when they were built in the 1930s and when jobs were increasingly available in local manufacturing such as the Norwich shoe industry, while others were young people who had grown up into post-1980s unemployment and fewer personal links with local services.

Comparing lives in this way helps underline that there is often more change and actual movement between places in the UK than perhaps we or they may fully realise – as well as deeply moving stories of losses and disappointments in these changes. Rogaly and Taylor are able to show how struggles

over the identities given and allowed to people in relation to their neighbourhoods can change in how people feel able to connect with places and other people who do or do not live there. This runs through the main sections into which their book is divided – place, poverty, state, class, moves. These suggest that many of the experienced changes have perhaps reduced the usefulness of local networks to help make a living, to exercise governance, to gain social mobility, often being distorted by political and media elites and unresponsive educational institutions. Or finding that building the University of East Anglia nearby in the 1960s, offers even more limited work options in cleaning and other service jobs.

Such effects can be seen as especially paradoxical for resourcing community action. A particularly successful concerted attempt by members of all three estates to improve services through the New Deal for Communities (NDC) programme brought in £35.5M directly from central government. However, making the successful case demanded that these communities needed to represent themselves as “deprived”, that the three estates should be seen as a unified community, underplaying some of the real differences between them. Over-claiming unity in the communities, over-relying on relatively few “community leaders” and perhaps pushed to compete rather than cooperate with other local organisations means that, for many of the people interviewed, the longer-term effects of the NDC programme has not been to build momentum for concerted local action.

The chapter exploring experiences of migration is especially insightful. In a city assumed to be quite isolated from inter-continental changes these stories are criss-crossed by translocal and transnational links: their own or family members' moves away and abroad, through military service, as GI brides, job-seeking abroad and, more recently, the arrival of student and other ethnic minority populations. The authors explore how people may have been more or less critical of their own actions abroad and, on return, some may have needed to see their home neighbourhood as more stable and having more in common than their stories suggest. So, diversifying changes may not necessarily lead to more tolerance of diversity or less tolerance of racism at home.

A book like this in which non-academics' stories are set within in academic terms and discussions will always pose debates about who will and should have the final say and who the study is ultimately for.

These authors make it very clear how they engaged with and have respected the accounts of those people who collaborated with the study. In doing so they have provided genuine insights into constraints and tensions in mobilising community action.

Fiona Poland is the current AR-VAC Chair and is Senior Lecturer in Therapy Research at the University of East Anglia.

EVENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

if you want to tell us about upcoming events please email me on j.grotz@roehampton.ac.uk and we try to include it in the next edition

Voluntary Action History Society Research Conference

14th -16th July 2010

University of Kent

<http://www.vahts.org.uk/>

NCVO/VSSN Researching the Voluntary Sector Conference 2010

6th-7th September 2010

Leeds University

<http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/researchconf10>

Action Learning Action Research Association, Eighth ALARA World Congress 2010 Melbourne, Australia 6th – 9th September

Organised by ALARA, hosted by Borderlands Cooperative and oases Graduate School in partnership with The Institute for Development Studies and Deakin University.

www.alara.net.au

from now on the bulletin will be published on the site below

www.arvac.org.uk

to register is simple and free

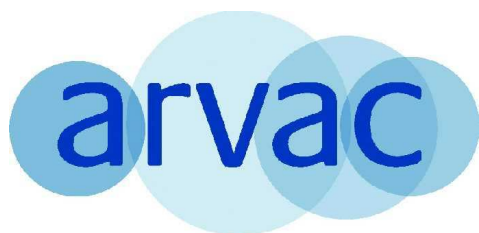
ARVAC is currently developing this site to become a communication hub for all those interested in research in the Voluntary and Community Sector.

We hope it offers many hopefully helpful features, for example:

In the resource section you will have free access to our bulletin, our excellent guide to doing your own research, search and add to a research database and find materials from and links to past events.

In the meeting place you will be able to read our blogs, publish your interests, find others with similar interests and share information with them.

With your help we will develop the site even further.



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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
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