

Case Study: Bournemouth Veteran & Friends Association



Bournemouth Veteran and Friends Association (BVFA) was originally established in 2007 as Bournemouth War Memorial Homes Residents (BWMH) Fund Raising. However different views arose amongst BWMH Trustees and Residents over the management of the funds raised and the donations give, by their residents and friends. Consequently in 2008 the group decided to rename themselves BVFA and agreed a new constitution with the overall aim of providing the following services to benefit former armed service personnel who may be in need (age, financial, disability etc);

- Support and information for veterans;
- Social outings;
- Confidential help and advice;

During the course of 2009 the newly constituted group successfully applied to become a registered charity (1132382) and for £5000 from the Dorset Community Foundation for a Grassroots Grant.

The BVFA is a small organisation, managed by 3 Trustees, with no paid staff and 12 members, who following a decision at the most recent AGM, now pay £5 membership. One of the other Trustees is a Local Authority Councillor who provides an invaluable link into the council networks and activities. Indeed it was through her that they first heard about the CVS and the support they could provide.

The driving force of the Trustees is an active elderly lady who currently covers both Secretary and Treasurer responsibilities. She became involved as a resident of BWMH and as a keen fund raiser for activities to improve the day to day lives of ex servicemen and women.

This small organisation works closely with other voluntary organisations that support servicemen and women such as Fleet Air Arm Association, ex WAAF, and Bournemouth Aden Veterans. This mutual co-operation enables them to maximise the effectiveness of fund raising opportunities and the number of people benefitting from the activities

provided. This joint work is mostly in the form of providing volunteers for fund raising stalls, sharing events and outings organized by BVFA.

To date BVFA income has come from the following sources:

- Grassroots grant of £ 4906.26ⁱ
- Individual donations (approx. £1500 to date)
- Fund Raising tombola/soft toy stalls at various community events, and a stall during the Air Show inside the Veterans Marquee, for 4 days. (raised an average £160 per event)
- Commission on selling programmes for Bournemouth Air Festival in Sainsburys supermarket (approx £400 per annum)where volunteers man a daily stall for a week leading up to the event.

At the Air Festival there was initially some confusion regarding payment arrangements, but is no longer an issue.

'The first year of the Air Show Bournemouth Council wanted to charge ex services to have our fund raising stall in their Veterans tent, but we declined and since then stalls have been complimentary.' Secretary BVFA

The support from both Sainsburys and Asda locally was particularly valuable as both have offered indoor space for the volunteers to sell Air Festival programmes. Only having sufficient volunteers to man one stall for the entire week, BVFA worked with Sainsburys and ran a very successful stall, in the warmth of the shop and with ready access to toilets and refreshments – all much appreciated!

'We couldn't sell without Sainsburys co-operation - giving us the facility to do so which was ok whatever the weather'

The funds raised so far have been used to:

- purchase fund raising equipment e.g. trestle tables, banners, tombola/soft toys;
- cover fund raising activity costs such as public liability insurance and lottery charges;
- BVFA organised events and trips, subsidise trips for members and ex service veterans to e.g. theatres ; Fleet Air Arm Museum; Glastonbury Floodlit Festival;
- hold an annual Christmas lunch, provide a meal after the AGM etc.

These activities have usually been for groups of 20-30 ex servicemen and women, including the BVFA members as well as those who are members of associated voluntary organisations. Feedback from those attending has been very positive:

"On behalf of the committee and members of the Fleet Air Arm Association Bournemouth Branch I would like to say a very big thank you for organizing the trip to the Fleet Air Arm Museum. It was a splendid day.' Secretary Fleet Air Arm Association



'I would like to thank you for being part of the 2009 More Bus Bournemouth Air Festival. The Festival exceeded all expectations, an estimated audience of 1,344,000 were enthralled by the day and night programme setting a new visitor record for Bournemouth.' Air Festival Co-ordinator

Bournemouth Council of Voluntary Service (CVS) have worked very closely with BVFA since it was first becoming established in 2007/08 . In the course of this ongoing work and regular communication the officer(s) helped the organisation identify the main issues to be addressed and then worked with them in tackling each in turn. In particular they:

- drafted and helped finalise the constitution ;
- wrote the application to become a registered charity;
- told the group about the Grassroots grant and helped complete the application
- have provided ongoing advice and support in response to issues arising within the organisation, including a legal challenge which is being taken to the small claims court; and, on a practical basis
- were willing to visit at home in recognition of needs of the Treasurer/Secretary.

They feel becoming a registered charity *'helped increase our status greatly'*. In relation to getting the Grassroots grant they felt that *'there is a lot of information out there but it is very difficult to sort out-we had done our utmost'*. Help filling out the form was *'tremendously helpful –we wouldn't have known how to present an application for a grant.'*

Overall the BVFA describe the contribution by the individual officers as :

'They were wonderful at it, knew exactly what to do'

and that without the advice and support *' I we think it (BVFA) would have folded up, although some very determined people would have tried hard not to let it but I think it would have been a tremendous struggle'*

It is interesting to note that there was felt to be some reluctance amongst Trustees and volunteers to contact/meet with the CVS as they were (wrongly) felt to be part of

Bournemouth Council *'and that would put them off as people can be a little scared of local government'*

Finally in terms of value for money the BVFA were asked whether they would have preferred to have had the approximate amount of money the service had cost and they commented:

'The time from the CVS has been much more valuable, their knowledge and expertise has been invaluable to us. Without this support we would have to have gone to legal for advice in order to find out if we were eligible for certain things e.g. charity registration'



This case study is being written as part of the evaluation of the Bournemouth Integrated Advice Service (IAS). The Evaluation Trust have visited 4 voluntary sector organisations who have received both organisational development and funding advice from the IAS officers, to understand and evidence their contribution to the overall success of each of the organisations.

ⁱ Grassroots Grants is a £130 million government programme (2008-11) for small organisations, with a turnover of under £20,000 per annum, for a maximum of £5,000 and a minimum of £250. It is run locally by the Poole and Bournemouth Community Foundation.