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Children Matter East's February meeting report

Children Matter East's second regional forum was held in early February, despite the inclement weather very few members were unable to attend. The meeting which focused on 'Developing the Forum's national links and influence' began with a presentation from Maggie Jones, Chief Executive of Children England. Maggie's presentation explored the environment in which the sector finds itself operating and the challenges and opportunities this presents, it also identified an emergent national agreement across the CYPVCS on a *vision* for the sector. The Forum then discussed how the vision related to Children Matter East priorities (**in Blue**) and their own organisational or service driven perspectives. The following key messages emerged;

Engagement: *A thriving VCS able to contribute to the wider agendas of place shaping, empowerment and civic engagement*

- Some Local Authorities (and their Children's Trusts) are beginning the journey toward a commissioning only structure that is enabling and provides community leadership, but there are barriers.
- Transfer of Employment (TUPE) is not practicable for the foreseeable future, without work to align terms and conditions across all potential partners.

Commissioning: *A breaking down of outmoded professional barriers and "protectionist" behaviours*

- There is a definite correlation between good relationships and impact.
- Local authorities appear to have different arrangements, who is evaluating/monitoring the effectiveness of communication between them and the VCS?

Workforce: *Is there mutual respect emerging between sectors based on common aims and a shared skill base?*

- WSPP networks are a good example of bringing groups together to focus on issues, but they are only a start and more needs to be done.
- However, this is a real opportunity for the VCS to build relationships and establish a mutual respect with Children's Trusts.

Quality: *What does 'integrated practice' look like for the VCS?*

- There is patchy delivery and co-operation and new ways of working are having a disproportionate impact on very small, very local activities.
- A statutory 'arrogance' continues to exist, viewing the VCS as less important and failing to recognise the professionalism, expertise and knowledge of the sector.
- Multi-disciplinary teams throw up issues around terms and conditions, annual leave, etc. Common expectations and practice need to be more firmly developed before integrated working can really begin to work.
- There are examples of good practice, but an unwillingness to intervene where it is not working.

During the day the Forum also had the opportunity to review the new Children Matter East website, elect the forums' executive membership and respond to the early messages emerging from its Clear Expectations research, this included members identifying that:

- There were real difficulties emerging with `commissioning intentions' linked to Local Government reorganisation such as neighbourhood commissioning, and the continuing uncertainty was problematic.
- The sector needs the regional framework to support the identification of key issues.
- The proposals should encourage Children's Trusts to ensure that all in house providers are required to cost in the same way as the VCS, and to include office and administrative and management functions in their costings.
- There needs to be specific provision to support the CYPVCS' ability to tender skill set, at arms length from any process.
- **Members also identified that the proposed regional commissioning framework needed to address;**
 1. Public indemnity insurance requirements, their variability and proportionality,
 2. **That the sectors ability to safeguard is being compromised by the relative inability to get it (commissioning) right.**
 3. The groups identified that the framework should also provide guidance to partners on the best practice in developing specification i.e. level of and depth of interaction with the sector on needs analysis and design of service.

Executive Elections 2009

The meeting was brought to an end with a closed session that supported the democratic processes of Children Matter East by populating the Executive through its colleges; the session elected the following representatives and agreed that the Executive should elect an interim chair for the next 12 months at its first meeting.

Voluntary Youth Services: Mary Sanders (VYSER) David Springett (Clubs for Young People) Brenda Towle (Essex CVYS)

Regional providers: Leigh Vallance (BREAK) Catherine McLaughlin (Family Action) Diana Read (Ormiston)

Networks and Forums: Andy Cogan (COVER) Linda Bulled (VOC, Bedford and Central Bedfordshire)

Reviewing the Year:

The end of every (financial) year brings the customary flurry of reporting, and planning for the next year, done well it affords the opportunity to reflect on what worked and what didn't. So the first section looks at how things worked for Children Matter East from an outcomes perspective, whilst the challenges and opportunities part explores the areas the Forum might need to help address in 2009-10 in order to maintain its `progress'

What's happened and why

Children Matter East has continued to make progress, the VCS Engage programme which it delivers on behalf of Children England and its national and regional partners, has also continued to flourish, and the highlights have included;

- **An increasing influence in the regions Children's Trusts**, the programme has continued to provide targeted support to specific Children's Trust areas and their VCS' and has developed good links with most Children's Trusts.
- **Progress has been achieved through appropriate joined up activity in support of a specific aim**; for instance supporting the introduction of the Vetting and Barring Scheme for the VCS alongside Go East and local partner's i.e. Essex Council for Voluntary Youth Services.
- **Good and growing relations with Go East**, and a positive influence on many regional partners, highlights include the investment in Children Matter East by Children's Workforce Development Council.
- Children Matter East's shape and structure continued to emerge **but as importantly CYPVCS specific networks in the region and their associated specialist support providers continued to develop and thrive.**
- The emergence via Children Matter East of a clear direction for the 0-19 CYPVCS in the region, with linked activity being developed and delivered.
- **The joining up between CWDC and VCS Engage objectives**, which enabled CME to access investment, and helped to develop regional thinking and provided further support to local partners.
- **The joining up between Go East's Safeguarding plans and CME needs**, which enabled CME to access resources that supported frontline organisations and helped to initiate follow on activity by local partners

Challenges and opportunities

Not everything has always gone totally to plan and sometimes the unexpected can come rushing in from left field. Children Matter East has only a limited ability to accurately predict where and when these events, such as Baby P, might happen. That the Forum had already begun to develop its Safeguarding activity was down to good intelligence and effective sector needs analysis and support.

However many of the Forums specific challenges persist, they might change slightly and there might be progress but the issues continue to create the backdrop to CME's 2009 -10 Work Plan, and include;

- The continuing inability of the key fundholders and partners closely associated with the VCS to invest in specialist support for the Children and Young Peoples VCS.
- Not all of the sectors generic support is wanted or appropriate, and evidence is beginning to emerge of the negative impact of a failure (in some cases) to acknowledge the distinctive environment of Children's Trusts.
- A reluctance by some to accept support or make changes, unless it is linked to investment
- The subjective nature of benchmarking interpretations and performance.
- Not all the regionally based strategic partners of DCSF are engaging with the sector, yet.
- Lack of a clear pathway, guidance or performance framework for the support of the Children and Young Peoples VCS, and as a result a limited evidence base.
- Size of task, an ever moving overall agenda and the lack of prominence in current iteration of Children's Trusts statutory guidance.

The Vetting and Barring Scheme sub regional seminars: the important messages

This Spring Children Matter East, in conjunction with; Go East, The Home Office and the Forum's sub regional partners have facilitated three seminars that have begun to introduce the Vetting and Barring Scheme to the sector.

Despite the biggest snow storms ever! and a **partial change** of heart on the schemes introduction date, the events in Peterborough, Luton (eventually) and Chelmsford have been a runaway success. They have supported almost 250 organisations to receive a first hand insight into its details and initiated further local activity to support the sector to get to grips with its requirements. The feedback has been hugely positive; Children Matter East would like to thank all those involved, specifically;

- Simon Morrison, Head of Communications at the Home Office for his commitment and the quality of his presentations, and
- Go East, through their Safeguarding Adviser Diana Madden for helping to work through the many many questions so that everybody went away with a good learning outcome.

Key Messages for the VCS

Please remember the scheme is being introduced to try and avoid another Ian Huntley type of conviction, **so please do not panic or have nightmares**, but;

- Its almost here, not all its requirements have been put back to July 2010
- It is going to have an important and largely positive effect, do not be scared of it, or by it.
- There are however serious ramifications for non compliance.
- The costs need not all fall on the sector.
- Yes, many if not most Trustees will require a registration and **all who** are Trustees of organisations that work with Children and Young People or vulnerable adults **will have to register**.
- It will make these sectors more robust and less prone to targeting, but consistency is the key, its adoption must be universal for all to benefit.
- Yes, someone could and may, in the future, get sent to prison for allowing a barred or non registered volunteer or worker to have access to the constituency covered by the scheme.
- Employment policies may need some review or amendment to bring them in line with the relevant legislation, and whilst organisations might be protected by the law it may not prevent ex employees wasting everyone's time seeking redress to which they are not entitled.
- Organisations need to be clear that checks on volunteers and staff that have been procured by a third party are robust, pleading.... but they were `sent by others' is unlikely to secure your acquittal.
- Organisations may need to strengthen the exit arrangements for volunteers and staff, for instance; where there are concerns and an individual just walks away... it will be mandatory to advise the Independent Safeguarding Authority (which oversees the scheme) of such an event.

Simon will be `appearing` again at `Safeguarding the Future` and an autumn round of activity via local partners is currently in the planning.

Clear Expectations – Commissioning and its impact on the VCS

Following Lord Laming's enquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié, Every Child Matters called for 'a whole-system reform of the delivery of children's services', a focus on joint working and a positive role of the Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS) in strategic planning, commissioning and delivery of services. Joint Commissioning is at the heart of these changes:

'Effective joint planning and commissioning is at the heart of improving outcomes for children and young people. The transition to joint planning and commissioning is a step change that requires clear leadership. Effective joint planning and commissioning necessitates new partnerships, redistribution of power towards the user, strategic understanding of how all outcomes in the local area are met, and a more commercially minded approach to procurement - all focussed on the child and young person.'

Clear Expectations explores the progress the Eastern region's Children's Trusts are making in developing and implementing their joint commissioning approaches, and the impact on the children and young people voluntary & community sector. The report explores the statutory sector and VCS perspectives, levels of and changes in funding for the sector across the region.

The following recommendations are made:

1. Trusts need to clarify their wider strategic plans with regards to Commissioning, the sector is increasingly confused about the direction of travel i.e. will all funding be subject to the commissioning process, when and how.
2. Whilst clear progress is being made the VCS are not universally engaged in the needs assessment phases. Whilst the position is improving more needs to be done to support the sectors engagement at point in the process.
3. Simple issues, such as stability of funding; timing of payments / balance of risk; full cost recovery; and reducing the burden of bureaucracy - are still not fully resolved and serve to undermine progress in other areas.
4. The continuing high prevalence of 1 year funding needs addressing
5. The difference in the mechanisms of commissioning and procurement across the region presents a confusing and challenging scenario to the VCS. The development and adoption of a regional commissioning framework should be explored to support the progress of all partners. This should be supported by a regional activity to enable Commissioners and the VCS to support cross-sector and cross-regional learning.
6. Governance arrangements need to be addressed robustly in order to ensure impartial and effective decision making, including robust arrangements to manage the commissioner / provider split in many Trust areas.
7. There also need to be a strengthening in the engagement of VCS providers in some areas, to support the strong engagement of infrastructure organisations. **This should encompass**

support for commissioners and their colleagues with clear revised VCS supported guidance on what constitutes good sector engagement across Children Trusts.

National Third Sector Safeguarding Unit and the East of England VCS Safeguarding Action Plan 2009-11

The establishment of a National Safeguarding Unit for the Third Sector in England was a DCSF commitment in the Staying Safe: Action Plan 2008. The NSPCC and Children England (formerly NCVCCO) have been commissioned to set up and jointly manage this Unit.

This will be achieved by working closely with and through a number of delivery partners, umbrella groups and existing national, regional and local networks and infrastructures. In the East of England the responsibility for the delivery of regional support element has been devolved to Children Matter East, the Regional Forum for the Children and Young Peoples VCS via its Regional Manager.

Key Outcomes: there are five key outcomes for the Unit;

1. Third Sector organisations have effective safeguards in place to prevent the abuse of children and young people.
2. Recruitment practices for paid staff and volunteers in the Third Sector reflect best practice and are demonstrably safer.
3. Organisations have in place effective and proportionate arrangements for assessment and management of risk in all their activities involving children.
4. The safeguarding arrangements of Third Sector organisations are integrated into local inter-agency safeguarding arrangements.
5. Parents and carers of young people are able to identify the basic safeguarding arrangements that organisations involved with their children should have in place and to reassure themselves that this is the case.

The initial auditing of the support available in the East of England has been developed through a survey of members, key partners and stakeholders, which has included web based research and one to one interviews and indicates that;

- Most LSCB have VCS Representation, most areas have good access to universal and level 2 Safeguarding training,
- In many areas there is strong dialogue with the relevant LSCB.
- LSCB's are working increasingly collaboratively with the Third sector and this includes helping to support Safer Recruitment and the introduction of the Vetting and Barring Scheme (VBS).
- There is some help from all Children's Trusts to support a wider concept of Safeguarding for the VCS, via the development of integrated working, such as CAF and Contactpoint.
- There is significant activity to cascade and embed basic Safeguarding information for the sector and some support for quality assurance has been developed which helps to underpin the sectors ability to safeguard.
- The relationships with Local Authority Designated Officers (LADO's) and allegations support are developing, and
- The region has at least one maturing VCS Safeguarding training provider.

Children Matter East's Website

Launched in March with a functional service date of 1st May Children Matter East's new website

www.childrenmattereast.org.uk

The site is designed as the knowledge hub for the Children and Young Peoples VCS in the region, it is expected to complement and collaborate with existing local and national partners websites. The site will provide information at many levels, but its focus will be on providing policy, news and updates that support frontline providers and partners supporting the sector at a local level including Children's Trusts

The site will carry links to and information on; partners, training opportunities, funding and help maintain CME at the forefront of policy development via its focus on thematic support e.g. integrated youth services and its key strands: Engagement, Commissioning, Workforce Reform and Development, and Quality including Safeguarding.

Welcome to Children Matter East. 9 March 2009

Children Matter East

East of England Children and Young Peoples VCS Forum

Search our website Go

Home	About Us	Engagement & Partnership	Commissioning	Quality Assurance	Workforce Development	Partners	News
<p>Click Here To View Our CME Newsletter For January 09</p> <p>Click here To View The Commissioning Guidance Newsletter For Jan 09</p>	<p>Welcome to the Children Matter East Website - this website is currently under construction and will be complete by 31st April 2009.</p> <p>Then you will be able to access a full range of, resources, policy, information and links associated with the voluntary and community sector working with children, young people and their families in the East of England, and its partners.</p> <p>You will be able to access information on, for instance;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">The latest developments around Safeguarding and the VCS in the wake of Baby PNational, regional and local events for the children and young peoples VCSCommissioning trendsStructures and key contacts for each Children's TrustLinks to partners websites, including workforce information and training availability <p>Children Matter East is the East of England's Forum for Voluntary and Community organisations that work with children, young people and their families. The forum is modelled on and complements existing local best practice and is closely aligned with COVER its lead agency and whole sector umbrella, it seeks to: Provide a cohesive and coordinated voice for its sector to national regional and local government and its partners</p> <p>Although this site will not be fully functioning until the latter part of the spring demand is sufficient that a decision has been taken to part launch providing an interim news feed service with the 'Home' and 'News' columns being regularly updated along with a front page that will feature the very latest developments including downloads and event booking capacity.</p> <p>This includes;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">Clear Expectations - publication date 23rd MarchVetting and Barring Seminars To book Luton, Herts and Beds 2nd April To Book Essex, Southend and ThurrockCommissioning and Safeguarding guidance to the sector and its partners -publishing 31st MayAnnual Conference To Book Duxford, Cambridgeshire 16th June (document to be released On 15th march 2009)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Customer Voice Research Customer Voice Research is small scale, timely, qualitative research work, desi... Read More >Tender for scoping study Tender for scoping study The Speaking Out project, a joint initiative be... Read More >DCSF: Customer voice research - Youth alcohol action plan In 2007 the Secretary of State asked Communications Directorate to establish a m... Read More >Comprehensive Area Assessment: Ofsted published its proposals for assessing local authority children's s... Read More >Consultation on children, young people and alcohol The Department has launched a consultation about young people and alcohol. Alth... Read More >DCSF-RW082 Customer Voice Research - Play Customer Voice Research is small scale, timely, qualitative research work, desig... Read More >Real Help for Communities: Volunteers					

Safeguarding the Future: Children Matter East's 2009 Conference

Children Matter East, the East of England's Children and Young People's VCS Forum invite you to its annual conference

Tuesday 16th June 2009, at: Airside Suite, Imperial War Museum, Duxford, Cambridgeshire

The events underpinning themes are: Safeguarding, Partnership and Integrated Working and the event will feature;

Simon Morrison,

Head of Communications, Home Office on the arrival of the Vetting and Barring Scheme and keeping everyone safe

Helen Dent,

Chief Executive, Family Action exploring their experience of multi agency partnerships and integrated delivery

Clare Barham

Director of Children and Learners, Go East will look at how Trusts are responding to guidance

Liz Railton,

Chief Executive, Together for Children, on supporting the youngest and most at risk and their Parents

Integrated Youth Services

Frontline organisations and their support systems from the voluntary youth sector sharing their experience of change, challenge and opportunity.

The workshops will include the opportunity to learn about;

1. **The work Children Matter East and Go East** have commissioned to develop and pilot a safeguarding framework for both commissioners of services or activities delivered by the VCS on behalf of Children's Trusts, and the CYPVCS.
2. **The National Third Sector Safeguarding Unit** and its Regional Action Plan
3. The detailed introduction of the Vetting and Baring Scheme, including direct input from the Home office
4. **Integrated Working** – the latest developments on CAF, eCAF and Contactpoint
5. **Quality and access to workforce development in the Youth sector**, CWDC will update delegates on progress with the Youth professional status
6. **Quality and access to workforce development in the parenting sector**, the National Academy for Parenting Practitioners will lead a session looking at ensuring access to Safeguarding support for those working with Parents

To book: simply complete and return the booking form which is downloadable via the website: www.childrenmattereast.org.uk