

# Every Contribution Matters

## The VCS Contribution to the Making a Positive Contribution Outcome



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# Section One – Executive Summary

## 1.1. Introduction

The publication in 2003 of the Green Paper Every Child Matters (ECM) signalled major changes in the way that services for children and young people are designed and delivered. Successive legislation and subsequent guidance has identified and reinforced the contribution that the voluntary and community sector (VCS) can make in improving outcomes for children and young people as part of this.

The Making a Positive Contribution (MPC) outcome was defined in ECM as, “Being involved with the community and society and not engaging in anti-social or offending behaviours.” It is seen as a key component in the delivery of ECM and is supported by the work of the VCS.

As integrated youth support service arrangements have evolved, then so have the demands on the sector to contribute to the Children and Young People’s Plans (CYPPs) of local Children’s Trusts. This approach now extends to the devolvement of spending power to individuals or groups, with up to 25% of all decision making from Trusts expected to be led by young people in the future.

Children Matter East/VCS Engage commissioned some research in 2010 to map the contribution that the VCS makes alongside Children’s Trusts and their partners in working towards the achievement of the MPC outcome and other related ECM targets. The aims and objectives of this research were to:

- Provide a clear definition of the MPC outcome.
- Provide a contextual, policy-based, narrative that would reflect and include factors such as the Budget-Holding Lead Professional (BHLP) pilots, Youth Sector Development Fund (YSDF), Youth Crime Action Plan (YCAP) and the emerging ‘personalisation’ agenda.
- Analyse the VCS contribution to the outcomes in the target-based regimes of CYPPs.
- Provide geographic and thematic case studies of VCS best practice that could be aligned with the MPC outcome.
- Provide evidence of exemplars in relation to the sector’s inclusion and collaboration in the delivery of specific programmes e.g. Family Intervention Projects.
- Provide an overview of the sector’s engagement in the commissioning arrangements to deliver local MPC priorities and its ability to influence strategic decision making.

The research approach included a literature review and the use of consultative questionnaires and telephone surveys covering Children’s Trusts, VCS organisations and a variety of partner agencies. The full Every Contribution Matters suite of studies covers both the East and the South East regions of England; the MPC outcome work was undertaken principally in the East of England between January – March 2010.

## 1.2. Key Findings

The research for this report has demonstrated clearly how invaluable the role of the VCS is in working alongside Children’s Trusts and other partner agencies to achieve the priorities,

objectives and targets for the MPC outcome. In particular, the sector provides a wide range of innovative and preventative services which assist young people in their personal development and enable them to contribute fully and positively to our society.

The literature review for the research identified the complex and overarching policy context that has built up around the MPC outcome (e.g. Youth Matters, Aiming High for Young People and the YCAP) and highlighted some of the main funding streams for work with children, young people and families, e.g. the Youth Opportunity Fund (YOF).

Twenty-four VCS organisations and statutory agencies contributed to the consultative research and helped to better define the MPC outcome and its relevance to the sector. The feedback on this definition focused largely on the need for young people, families and communities to be placed at the centre of commissioners' strategic and operational plans.

The feedback also highlighted that there is a significant overlap between all of the ECM outcomes that organisations are seeking to achieve.

Alongside this, the key findings of the research were:

- There are numerous VCS organisations across the Eastern Region delivering universal, preventative and targeted support services to children and young people. The case studies which feature on their dedicated area of the Children Matter East website <http://www.childrenmattereast.org.uk/CaseStudies.asp> have been selected to reflect the range of provision being delivered, including exemplars in key areas, e.g. the effective engagement of young people in positive activities etc. The case studies also provide evidence of the contribution made by the VCS in working towards the ECM outcome in each geographical area.
- Nine of the eleven Eastern Region Children's Trusts' CYPPs were mapped out to gain a broad understanding of local priorities, objectives and National Indicators (NIs) for MPC. Appendix 1 presents this information and highlights that at the time of the research, Children's Trusts across the region were reporting on 18 NIs for MPC. Half of these indicators were not directly linked to the Local Area Agreement (LAA) NI set and ECM Outcomes Framework for measuring the MPC outcome but were reporting measures for the Safer and Stronger Communities programme and other ECM outcomes (i.e. Be Healthy, Stay Safe and Economic Well-Being).
- In the main, the CYPP reporting measures for MPC tended to be reflective of participative targets, survey measures and indicators linked to the reduction in offending and re-offending behaviour. Few were concerned with measuring the preventative work of Children's Trusts and their partners. The VCS makes an enormous contribution towards preventative service delivery and some respondents to the consultative survey were concerned about the risks of not reporting preventative measures in more depth, especially when the sector is moving towards an increasingly performance-led environment. In the current financial climate - with budgets being cut and investment being prioritised - there is also a risk that this will hamper the sustainable delivery of preventative services at a time when they are needed most.
- In some cases, VCS organisations working with children, young people and families had no clear targets or performance measures linked to the local strategic and performance monitoring frameworks for MPC.

- Some smaller and community-based VCS organisations were reported to be struggling to monitor robustly the progressive impact that their services have on young people. This was partly due to the informal and flexible nature of the services being delivered, funding being in place for such a short period and/or being insufficiently funded to allow for any robust monitoring to take place. This appeared to be less of an issue for medium to larger-sized VCS organisations, which tended to have robust performance measures in place, although some did express difficulties in meeting the volume and variance in performance reporting.
- There are some clear reasons why the VCS is able to contribute to the achievement of the MPC outcome by Children's Trusts. Much of this is about the flexibility of service delivery - in being able to apply a mixture of both formal and informal approaches based on the particular needs of individual young people - and the sector's long history of operating in local areas with clear knowledge and expertise in engaging with 'hard to reach' children, young people and families. Other factors include the independence of VCS service delivery and the ability of VCS staff to develop trusting relationships with young people. In some cases, it has been the drive and determination of the VCS to implement integrated and multi-agency working that has supported the achievement of better outcomes for young people.
- Some VCS organisations and Trusts reported challenges associated with the commissioning process and the need to develop reliable and robust outcome-reporting systems. The research also identified the need to promote greater awareness of the VCS market and to maximise the opportunities for greater partnership working.
- Significant concerns were identified around future funding streams and delays in decision making and notification within existing commissioning and contracting arrangements - all of which impacts on the ability of VCS organisations to effectively plan and sustain service delivery.

**It was clear that many VCS organisations had a strong gasp of the legislative and policy changes affecting them. Most had responded opportunistically to these changes, looking for solutions to the challenges faced and adapting their services quickly and expediently to meet any new requirements. Some VCS organisations had not wished to become overtly reliant on statutory sector grants or commissioned funds and had been proactive in raising funds from other sources to sustain existing services (where possible) and to address unmet needs.**



## Section Two – Policy and Strategic Context

### 2. The Legislative and Policy Planning Backdrop

The 2003 Green Paper Every Child Matters (ECM) identified five outcomes that were considered to be most important for children and young people. One of these was to 'Make a Positive Contribution' (MPC). While the outcomes were understood as universal ambitions for every child and young person, the Government at the time hoped that in delivering them, the gap between disadvantaged children and their peers could be narrowed. Looked After children and children with special educational needs and disabilities were identified as one such group of disadvantaged children.

Following the consultation on ECM, the Labour Government published Every Child Matters: The Next Steps and passed the Children Act 2004. This provided the legislative framework for developing more effective and accessible services focused around the needs of children, young people and their families. As part of this agenda it was recognised that the voluntary and community sector (VCS) had significant expertise to offer - particularly in reaching the wider community, identifying unmet needs, involving users in service delivery and developing innovative practice. Thus, Section 10 of the Children Act placed a duty on local authorities and their relevant partners to extend their co-operation on service delivery to encompass VCS organisations. Such co-operation was made a key indicator of effective services under the integrated inspection framework for children's services. In addition, the Government at that time stated its commitment to removing the barriers to the sector's increased participation in service planning and delivery.

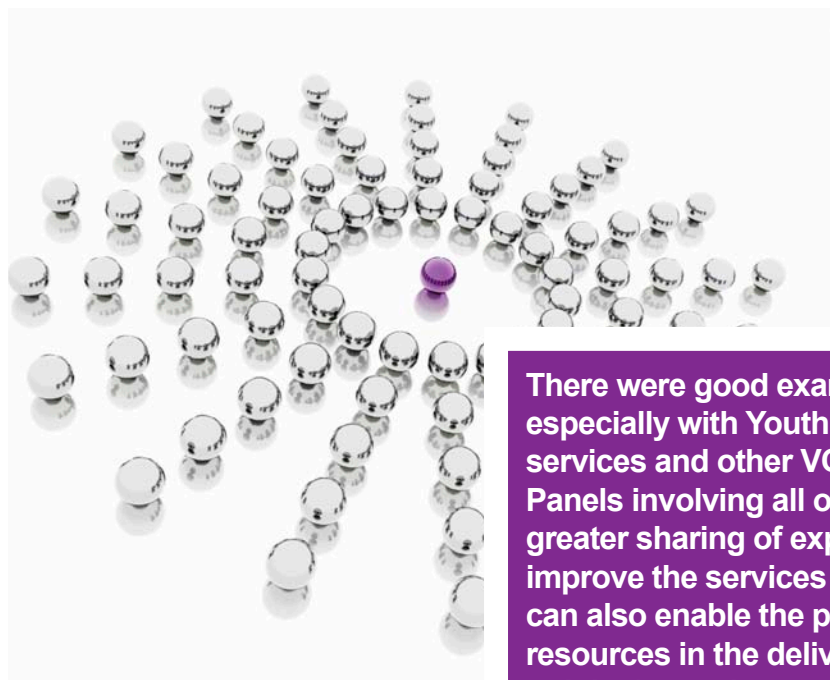
However, as the exact role of the VCS was not fully explored in ECM, a follow-up document was published in December 2004 to define the expectations of the sector. Working With VCOs to Deliver Change for Young People and Families was produced by the then Department for Education and Skills (now the Department for Education). It outlined a strategy to be taken forward by the Children, Young People and Families Directorate (CYPFD) within the DfES. In its funding disbursements, the CYPFD was tasked with moving away from providing solely 'core' funding that supported central administration and management costs, to offering strategic funding to well-established organisations recognised to be of strategic importance. An element of core funding was built into this. In addition, the document reiterated the need to involve VCS representatives in local co-operative arrangements and to remove barriers that might prevent suppliers from the VCS entering or expanding within the market for service provision. The position of VCS organisations within central government was later strengthened by the creation of the (then) Department for Children, Families and School's Third Sector Group in October 2008.

Some of the main funding streams targeted at the public service market in relation to the MPC outcome have included the Children, Young People and Families Grant Programme (CYPF), the Youth Opportunity Fund (YOF) and Youth Capital Fund (YCF) - all launched in April 2006 on the back of the DfES paper Youth Matters which was released the previous year. Alongside these strategic-funding streams, the Youth Sector Development Fund (YSDF) made £100 million available to 2011, specifically to help those CVS-based projects that support young people in reducing NEET levels, crime, illicit drug use and teenage pregnancy to transform into self-sustaining organisations.

CYPF is a national programme designed to fund work by the VCS in improving outcomes for children, young people and families. It has provided a national source of funding that potentially supports any aspect of the ECM agenda and the Children's Plan of the then DCSF. By 2008, the programme had awarded £140 million to more than 200 VCS organisations (at the present time it is unclear whether the programme will continue).

The overall aim of the YOF and YCF was to improve the provision of positive activities for young people, by giving them the power to decide how this funding should be spent in their area. The two funds have different focuses. Through the YOF, young people can apply for money to develop and provide activities using revenue funding. Through the YCF, young people can apply for funding for capital investment on buildings and equipment. In total, some £335 million has been pledged for the two funds up until 2011.

Investments in amenities through the YOF, YCF and - since April 2008 - the £190 million My Place funding stream, were part of the previous Government's broad ambitions to include young people in spending decisions that affected them. On an individual basis, this ambition is also reflected in the emerging 'personalisation agenda' under which individuals work with their informal support networks to assess their needs, draw up plans and pick and choose the support services that best suit them. This type of self-directed support has taken root most obviously in adult social care, but is being extending to young people and children. By September 2009 there had been 195 individual budgets 'activated' for disabled children, and approximately 1,700 individual budgets being held by Budget-Holding Lead Professionals (BHLPs) to support children and young people who have additional or complex needs and who are entitled to publicly-funded support. Again, the personalisation agenda has stressed the need for VCS service providers to move away from block contracts and pooled funding to individually-tailored support and separately-priced service elements.



There were good examples of integrated working, especially with Youth Offending Teams, Supporting People services and other VCS organisations, e.g. Joint Housing Panels involving all of the key agencies. These allow for greater sharing of expertise and knowledge, helping to improve the services delivered to young people. They can also enable the partner agencies to 'barter' or share resources in the delivery of services (e.g. premises and training) to reduce costs and maximise the quality of services being delivered.

Children England (2009) 'Personalisation', Briefing for the Yorkshire and Humber Children England Regional Group. Available at

<http://www.childrenengland.org.uk/upload/1Briefing%20for%20the%20Yorkshire%20and%20Humber%20Children%20England%20regional%20group.pdf>

## Section Three – Outcomes of the Research

### 3.1. Defining - More Clearly - the Making a Positive Contribution Outcome

ECM defined MPC as “Being involved with the community and society and not engaging in anti-social or offending behaviours.” There are five MPC aims in achieving a positive outcome for children and young people. These are to:

- Engage in decision making and support the community and environment.
- Engage in law abiding and positive behaviour in and out of school.
- Develop positive relationships and choose not to bully and discriminate.
- Develop self confidence and successfully deal with significant life changes and challenges.
- Develop enterprising behaviours.

Organisations consulted during the research for this report expressed the need for a clearer definition of the MPC outcome which would place young people at its centre. The emphasis was on all young people being seen as valued members of their community and having a sense of belonging, with their achievements recognised and celebrated. Alongside this, those consulted wanted the MPC outcome to be linked closely with the other four ECM outcomes and not defined in silo. Taking account of this, the following definition is proposed for the MPC outcome:

Children and young people should be encouraged and supported to participate in a range of positive activities within their community, where they can have fun, learn, lead healthy lives and develop their social, emotional and economical well-being. They should be valued members of their community and have their achievements recognised. Children and young people should resist engaging in crime and anti-social behaviours and aim to make a positive contribution in society.

### 3.2. The National Indicators for MPC and the Performance Reporting Frameworks for Children and Young People’s Plans

The CYPPs of nine of the eleven Children’s Trusts within the Eastern Region were mapped out to gain an understanding of what their priorities and objectives were for supporting children and young people to make a positive contribution. The CYPPs reviewed were those available at 1 February 2010 – it is recognised that a number of Trusts are currently updating these plans. The results of the subsequent case study analysis are set out in Appendix 1. The analysis includes the various reporting frameworks for MPC, i.e. the Local Area Agreement (LAA) National Indicator (NI) set, the ECM Outcomes Framework Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets and other NIs being used within CYPPs.

The results of the subsequent case study analysis are set out in Appendix 1.

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

The analysis identified that there were a total of eighteen NIs recorded for the MPC outcome in the CYPPs of Children’s Trusts in the Eastern Region. Of these, nine were not linked to either the LAA NI set or the ECM Outcomes Framework indicators for measuring the MPC outcome.

The Youth Crime Action Plan NI was found to be the most commonly reviewed performance measure and was in eight of the nine CYPPs reviewed. This indicator measures first-time entrants to the Youth Justice Service aged 10–17 years of age (NI 111). Participation in positive activities (NI 110) was the second most commonly cited indicator, with seven of the nine CYPPs reporting on this target. The third most frequently used indicator was the rate of proven reoffending by young offenders (NI 19), with five of the nine CYPPs including this.

There were only a few underlining preventative performance measures cited in the CYPPs for MPC. The most commonly cited measures were Under 18 conception rates (NI 112) and substance misuse of young people (NI 115). The VCS delivers a wide range of preventative and support services to young people to help them make a positive contribution in society. Some of those consulted during the research felt that there were risks in not reporting preventative measures in more depth, especially at a time when the sector is moving towards a more performance-led environment. In the current financial climate - with budgets being cut and investment being prioritised – there is also a risk that this will hamper the sustainable delivery of preventative services, at a time when they are needed most.

### **3.3. Overview of the Case Studies Generated by the Research**

This section of the report highlights the range of services that the VCS delivers across the Eastern Region in supporting Children’s Trusts and their partners in working towards the achievement of their targets and objectives for MPC. The fifteen referenced case studies are set out in specific Every Contribution Matters area of Children Matter East’s website <http://www.childrenmattereast.org.uk/CaseStudies.asp> . The paragraphs below summarise some of the key themes arising from these.

#### **3.3.1. The VCS Role in Supporting Young People to Participate and Engage in Positive Activities (NI 110)**

In Youth Matters it was identified that one of the core problems for young people was having a place to go and things to do. This has now been made a statutory requirement for all local authorities, with national standards being applied in the Education and Inspection Act 2006: DFES Bulletin on Positive Activities 10/06.

Local authorities are required to consult with young people on the activities available, to publicise these and to use a wide range of providers to support the delivery of these activities. VCS organisations have a key role to play alongside their statutory sector partners in delivering these services to young people.

The English Outdoor Council reported that VCS organisations currently deliver two-thirds of positive activity programmes nationally on a voluntary basis.

Nine Children’s Trusts in the Eastern Region were identified as having prioritised the need for young people to engage in positive activities within their CYPP and seven Trusts had reported on this as a performance measure.

There is a wide range of positive activities being provided by the VCS across the region, such as sports programmes, creative and recreational activities and leisure and educational programmes, outward bound activities and special interest groups to list but a few. There are exemplars of creative and innovative approaches being taken e.g.

*Essex Boys and Girls Club (case study 3), which delivers sporting, outward bound activities and night exercises, where stretching but achievable challenges for young people are set, either individually or in groups, such as climbing or night navigation. This enables young people to develop their confidence, communication skills, resilience, stamina, mental and teamwork abilities and self esteem.*

*SexYOUality in Cambridge (case study 6), which supports Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual (LGB) young people, who have undertaken a research projects into the history of LGBT. This was done in conjunction with the LGBT history month held in Cambridge each year.*

The VCS also offers positive activities as a means to engage hard to reach young people and it was found that staff and volunteers had extensive experience and knowledge in delivering youth work and use various techniques to engage difficult and disaffected young people. Positive activities allow for work with young people to be carried out on a more informal basis and help to uncover some of the underlying causes of their behaviour. As a large number of VCS organisations work within universal service settings, they often have a greater ability to identify and support children in need at an earlier stage than statutory agencies.

The VCS not only delivers positive activity programmes, but acts as the conduit for young people to access positive activity funds and programmes, e.g.

*Young Lives (case study 9), which has been commissioned by Cambridgeshire County Council to work alongside young people to administer the Youth Opportunity and Youth Capital fund and has received applications from hard to reach young people who have put forward innovative and creative proposals for positive activities, such as offering horse therapy and rebuilding old bicycles and reselling them, showing enterprising behaviours.*

*The WAY Project in Cambridgeshire (case study 7), which has supported a group of young people to successfully apply for Youth Capital funding to build a community hall for young people in Waterbeach, Cambridgeshire. As a result, the project will be able to increase the number of positive activity sessions for young people at the community hall.*

### **3.3.2. The VCS Role in Supporting the Reduction in First-Time Entrants to the Youth Justice System (NI 111)**

As a result of the *Youth Crime Action Plan 2008*, tackling crime and anti-social behaviour was placed at the centre of the previous Government's approach to making our streets safer.

The vast majority of young people make a positive contribution to society, but a minority of young people continue to blight their communities by breaking the law and behaving in an anti-social way. The Youth Crime Action Plan emphasised prevention in its 'triple track' approach. It recognised the importance of providing services to young people and their families at an early stage to prevent their behaviours escalating into offending activity and highlighted the need for a consistent approach to assessment, early identification and targeted support.



The VCS has created safe, equipped and accessible environments where young people can access a range of positive activities and opportunities which can have a significant impact on reducing anti-social behaviour and help in creating safer and stronger communities, e.g.

*YMCA Central Hertfordshire (case study 1), which set up 'a Living Room on the High Street', called The SPACE Youth and Community Centre, in Welwyn Garden City. The centre was set up in partnership with 29 other organisations and delivers a range of programmes for young people. The Police Joint Action Group no longer considers Welwyn Garden City to be a hotspot for anti-social behaviour and sees this as a direct result of the initiative.*

There were a number of examples of VCS organisations delivering targeted and intensive intervention programmes which prevent young people entering the Youth Justice System. This includes the case studies for East Potential/Harlow Foyer, NARCO and YMCA Cambridge & Peterborough. These case studies provide evidence of how the sector supports Children's Trust and their partners to achieve NI 111.

In addition to these case studies:

*Anglia Care Trust (ACT) in Suffolk (case study 9) were commissioned by Ipswich Anti-Social Behaviour Network and Ipswich Borough Council to deliver a Family Intervention Project (FIP). The FIP supports a small number of families with complex needs and inappropriate behaviours, who are willing to change their lives around but lacked the skills to do so on their own. . The FIP supports the whole family using a solution-focused approach, building on the families existing strengths. Intensive support is given within the home, facilitating a range of interventions aimed at addressing the underlying causes of inappropriate behaviours that can lead to anti-social behaviour. Practical help is given to the families enabling them to consider and amend behaviour leading to sustained tenancies, a move away from crime and anti-social behaviour and re-integration within the local community.*

### **3.3.3. The VCS Role in Supporting Reductions in the Rate of Proven Re-offending by Young Offenders (N1 19)**

The third most prioritised indicator in the CYPPs was NI 19. Five of the nine CYPPs had this as a performance measure and six CYPPs cited this as a key objective to achieve. Examples of VCS services in relation to this include the following:

*Harlow Foyer working in conjunction with East Potential and Time for Youth (case study 4), helps to resettle young people from custody into foyers through the provision of accommodation and support to not re-offend. Intensive support services are delivered that engage young people in a range of group activities to develop skills, provide new experiences and address issues such as self esteem and anger management. These positive activities give young people a focus and help them to avoid trouble. There are also some specific programmes to address particular illegal activities such as car crime, fraud, anger management and weapon-related crime.*

*An individual case study from the WAY Project (case study 7), where a young person came to the scheme as a care leaver, having been in care since the age of 4. She had a history of fighting, drinking and anti-social behaviour. She had previously been arrested and taken up a lot of local police time. Since accessing the project, her life has been transformed and she is now working as a volunteer and actively looking to further her education and training. This young person attributes being able to turn her life around due to having the consistent support from her youth worker and feeling valued, cared about, listened to and supported by a positive role model.*

### 3.3.4. The VCS Role in Supporting Children and Young People to Engage in Decision Making

Since the 1990s, central government has been concerned about the political participation of young people. This resulted in a number of policy initiatives being introduced that aimed to tackle the problem. Youth Matters was based on a policy programme that aimed to increase young people's participation in decision making processes. This was in line with Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. As a result, more resources were made available through the Transforming Youth Work Development Fund set up in 2002 by the then DfES. It helped to create representation structures across the whole sector of youth services, including a UK Youth Parliament which sought to actively involve young people in decision making by giving them a voice and an ability to influence services and policies that impact on their lives.

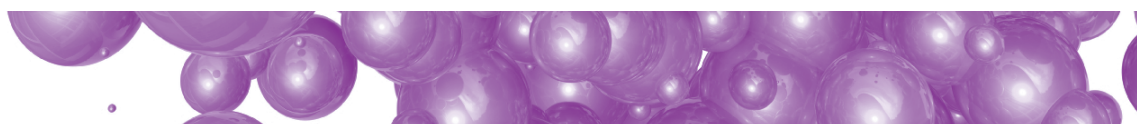
Regionally, there are VCS services that aim to support young people in engaging in decision making, e.g.

*Speak Up (case study 14), which is a charitable organisation that delivers Cambridge and Peterborough's Youth Parliament initiative. The Young MPs adopt a fun, creative and interactive approach to running the Youth Parliament, such as a 'Youth Parliament X Factor' and use postcard pledges to record the preferred actions to be taken that are agreed at the meeting. These decisions affect them, their peers and their community.*

Most of the Children's Trusts in the region placed children and young people's engagement as a high priority within their CYPP. One Trust reported on this as a performance measure (NI 4). The VCS was found to be instrumental in supporting young people to engage in decision making at all levels and there are a number of examples cited in the case studies of VCS organisations placing young people at the centre of decision making. This is done in a variety of ways, e.g. setting up Youth/Young People's Forums, where young people elect one or more of their peers to speak up for them in influencing decision making and determining positive activity programmes such as outings and special events. One charity reported that it engages a young person to act as a spokesperson for young people on their Board of Trustees. Young Lives supports young people to manage the YOF/YCF decision making process in Cambridge. Similarly, YMCA Central Hertfordshire engaged young people to ascertain what their views and needs were prior to setting up The SPACE Youth and Community Centre.

### 3.3.5. The VCS Role in Supporting Enterprising Behaviours

Developing enterprising behaviours is an MPC aim within the ECM Outcomes Framework. The research found that there was little evidence of this being cited as a key aim for Children's Trusts within their CYPPs. Despite this, there were examples of VCS work being undertaken to encourage the enterprising behaviour of young people, e.g.



*Southend YMCA (case study 11), supported a group of young people to apply for funding of £15,000 through the YCF to develop a temporary concept store called ETC, which gave young people the chance to learn real business skills, to have fun and actively participate in positive activities. ETC was a shop, set up as a social enterprise project, and operated as a real business for young people. The idea was to give young people aged between 16 and 25 hands-on experience of all areas of business from retail and customer service, including marketing, design, promotion, PR and stocktaking. As an initiative it aimed to nurture and facilitate entrepreneurialism and creativity in young people and help equip them for employment, while building their self-confidence. YMCA approached a commercial landlord to let the shop on Southend's High Street for free. A number of young people volunteered to run the shop, host a fashion show, run the coffee shop and sell vintage clothing. ETC was a pilot project. This pilot project is going to be incorporated into two new projects that YMCA is presently working on developing which allow for the project to run on a more permanent and long term basis.*

### **3.3.6. The VCS Role in Supporting Young People to Successfully Deal with Significant Life Changes/Challenges**

Many of the young people who access VCS services are facing significant challenges within their lives, e.g. changes in school, leaving care, homelessness, bullying/abuse or peer pressure related to drugs, alcohol or coming to terms with their own sexuality.

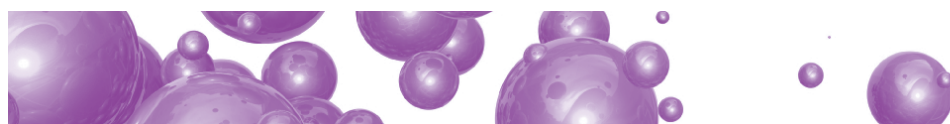
One of Norfolk's commissioning objectives for MPC within its CYPP is to improve support to children and their families at significant points of transition, e.g.

*Family Action in Swaffham (case study 2), which is working in partnership with statutory sector partners to deliver a 'Moving Up' transitions programme to support children who are feeling anxious about the change in leaving primary school and the move into secondary school. The programme helps to increase the ability and resilience of children to deal with change at an early stage in their lives.*

Other VCS initiatives supporting young people include:

*Open Door in Thurrock (case study 12), which delivers a mentoring service to young people who are in care or leaving care and provides one to one support to help them through this transitional period. A mentor supports them to find employment or access further education and helps them to engage and participate in social and community activities which can assist the young person in achieving their goals and aspirations. The service supports the Thurrock Children's Trust to achieve its broader MPC priority to engage disadvantaged groups in positive activities.*

*YMCA Cambridge & Peterborough (case study 5), which delivers an Intensive Intervention Project in Peterborough that works with a number of young people who have a mixture of complex issues such as substance misuse, unemployment, homelessness and abuse. The young people who access the service often have different perceptions towards anti-social behaviour and pregnancy. The programme helps them to address the underlining causes of their behaviours and challenges their perceptions. Peterborough's Youth Offending Service and YMCA have set stretching performance targets for the programme which is delivering against these.*



*SexYOUality (case study 6), which supports LGB young people aged 14 – 25 years. Many of the young people who first access the charity are in crisis situations having been exposed to verbal abuse, discrimination and bullying, or being kicked out of home or excluded from school. Often, they are facing significant internal conflict in coming to terms with their identity and sexuality. The charity supports them to turn their lives around, come to terms with their identity and sexuality and become more confident.*

### **3.3.7. The VCS Role in Supporting Young People to Choose Not to Bully and Discriminate**

MPC measures for tackling bullying and discrimination were included within two CYPPs. One of these (NI 69), is an indicator that is mainly used to measure achievement of the Stay Safe outcome of ECM, although it clearly has links to MPC.

YMCA Cambridge & Peterborough found that a number of the young people who were accessing their Intensive Intervention Project had racist perceptions towards certain groups of people. This was also compounded by the number of reported accounts of bullying and discrimination. As a result, YMCA set up a pilot project called 'Diversity Days'. This involved taking a group of young people to homeless shelters, to meet religious groups and disabled people. It was a preventative approach to address stereotyping and perceptions towards inequality. The project co-ordinator reported that this pilot had proved to be a humbling experience for the young people who attended, many of whom were very silent and reflective following the visits.

Similarly, SexYOUality has worked with the Youth Service, County Council, Police and schools to improve the image of LGB young people and to tackle both hate crime and homophobic discrimination. Some of the young people who have accessed SexYOUality have attended the young trainers' programme to become volunteers and lead workshops at schools to tackle issues around labelling and stereotyping. The project can be aligned to supporting Cambridgeshire Children's Trust to meet two of its MPC performance measures around promoting a positive image of young people and tackling bullying and discrimination.

### **3.3.8. The VCS Role in Supporting the Achievement of Other NIs Linked to ECM Outcomes**

As identified earlier in this report, some of the indicators cited in the CYPPs under MPC can also be seen as contributing to the measurement of other ECM Outcomes such as Be Healthy, Stay Safe and Economic Well-being. All assist in helping young people to make a positive contribution in society.

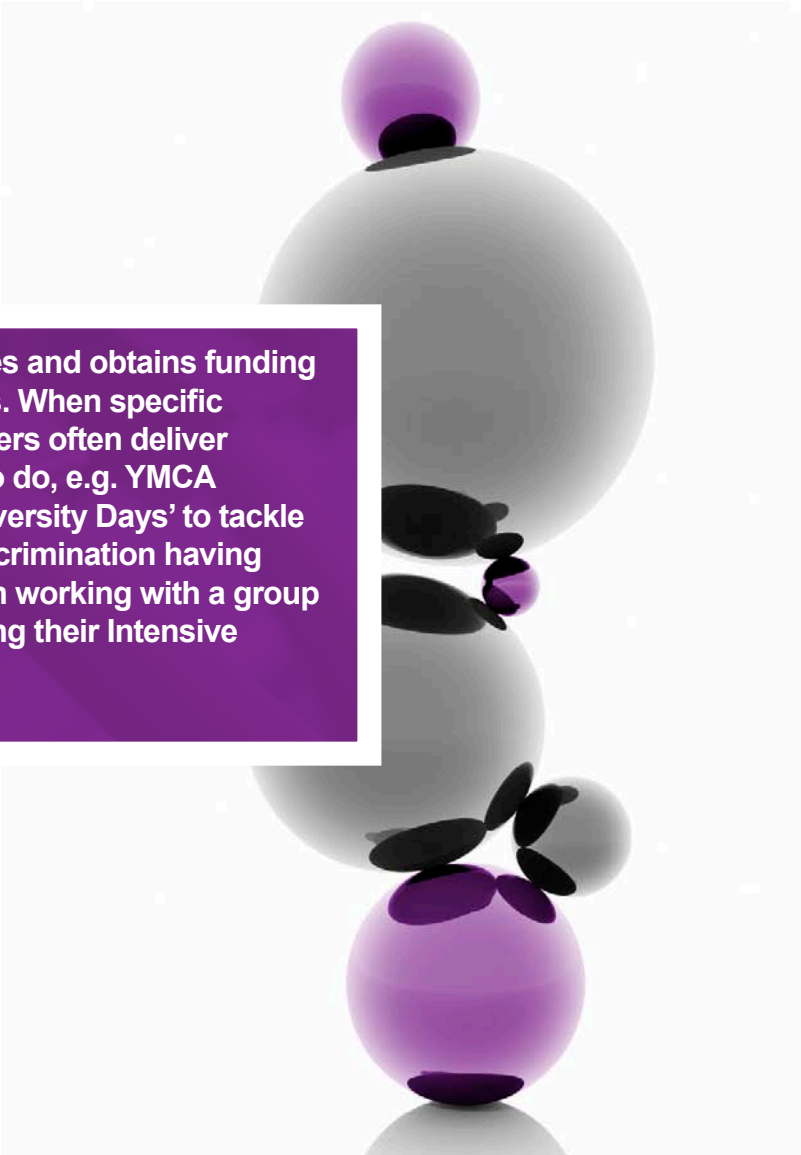
Two CYPPs included NI 117 (reducing the number of young people not in education, training or employment) as an MPC measure. Although it is one of the national indicators attributed to Economic Well-being, it is also key to achieving MPC.

Active citizenship is often cited in the relation to MPC and is about the employability of young people, with volunteering being seen as a good way for them to gain job skills and confidence in order to move into the labour market. In most of the case studies presented in Appendix 2, VCS organisations were found to be delivering training and volunteering opportunities for young people. Seeking employment is seen as the next step for many young people to follow this. The case study summarised below provides evidence of the VCS role in helping to create employment opportunities:

*The Prince's Trust (case study 15), worked in partnership with Essex & Suffolk Water to get young people into employment. The organisations offered a three week intensive programme aimed at young people aged 16 to 25 years to learn skills to get employment. Over three weeks of the programme, participants were given on the job training and practical work experience in three key areas of the Water Industry: Maintenance, Leakage and Meter Field Services. Eleven young people attended the taste day sessions and nine participated in the course. Of these, eight ended by being employed directly by Essex & Suffolk Water.*

As part of the ECM Outcomes Framework there is one aim to narrow the gap between disadvantaged children and their peers. Children with special educational needs are seen as one such group of disadvantaged children. The research identified one VCS programme that is supporting young people in this area:

*Youth Matters in Bedford (case study 13), which is delivering an educational programme for young people with learning difficulties and disabilities who would not be able to attend mainstream college education. The programme supports young people to engage in a wide range of positive activities to learn the skills and techniques to equip them in their adult lives and make a positive contribution to society. As a result of this programme, three young people have entered into further training and employment.*



**The VCS delivers a range of services and obtains funding to do so through a variety of means. When specific services are commissioned, providers often deliver more than they have been tasked to do, e.g. YMCA Peterborough delivered its pilot 'Diversity Days' to tackle perceptions around racism and discrimination having identified this was a key issue when working with a group of young people who were accessing their Intensive Intervention Programme.**

## Section Four – Other Findings from the Research

### 4.1. The Ability of the VCS to Influence Statutory Sector Strategic Decision Making

There has been a significant shift towards the statutory sector involving the VCS in strategic decision making. Many of the medium to larger-sized VCS organisations reported having representation on one or more of the strategic decision making boards and/or voluntary sector forums. The research also identified that attendance at all the strategic boards, forums and planning meetings is difficult to achieve even for larger VCS organisations as a result of the time and resource requirements. One VCS organisation reported having been invited to some thirty-two different meetings/boards that are held periodically throughout the year in just one local authority area. Smaller organisations often do not have the resources to do this and are therefore not getting represented.

Mixed feedback was given by VCS organisations in response to questions about their ability to influence strategic decision making. Some felt that a shift had been made in opening up pathways for the sector's views to be expressed on many levels, but more work needed to be done for the sector to be truly influential. Three examples were given as to how the VCS has been able to influence and bring about effective change. Harlow Foyer, NACRO and a Supporting People Officer gained agreement to set up a Joint Housing Panel in Harlow, which as a result of its success has been rolled out to other parts of Essex.

In Hertfordshire, Pro Action put forward a proposal to Watford's District Children's Trust Partnership to undertake a mapping analysis of those smaller community organisations which were not known or represented, so that improved communication links could be made especially around the Youth Offer. This proposal was approved and has resulted in Pro Action finding a number of providers delivering a wide range of services in Watford that were previously unknown.

VCS organisations expressed the view that the approach taken by the Cambridgeshire Children's Trust in developing its CYPP - referred to as the 'Big Plan' - was a model of good practice in engaging the VCS in its strategic development. They felt it was carried out in an open and transparent way and that all VCS organisations within Cambridgeshire had an opportunity to comment and give feedback. The lessons learnt from developing the first plan were embedded into developing the second plan, although it was felt that further engagement in its implementation was needed.

Some VCS organisations reported that they have good working relationships with some of their statutory sector partners and it is often through informal links that their views are sought to inform statutory sector service planning. One VCS organisation stated that the processes in place for two-way communication with smaller local authorities were better than those in larger local authorities, despite the fact that the latter have more resources to support this.

Positive feedback was received on the role of VCS umbrella organisations representing the views of the sector on decision making groups/boards. This was particularly apparent in Cambridge which is supported by Young Lives. The research highlighted that one of the key benefits of having a VCS umbrella organisation to represent the sector in strategic planning was the inherent understanding of the issues affecting the sector that the organisation had.



One VCS organisation reported that on many occasions it is asked to represent the VCS sector at various sub-groups and meetings with statutory partners. Alongside the resources required to do this, the organisation emphasised that it takes time to capture a 'whole sector' view and, in many cases, VCS organisations have different perspectives on certain issues. All of which presents a challenge in terms of effectively representing the sector, especially when they are not specifically funded or supported to do so.

Another VCS organisation questioned the potential conflict of interest arising when a VCS umbrella organisation has a role to represent the sector, but is also being commissioned to deliver a service on behalf of a particular local authority.

## **4.2. Commissioning Arrangements to Deliver Local MPC Priorities General**

Of the fifteen case studies set out in Appendix 2, seven organisations had competitively tendered to deliver services on behalf of local authorities. None of these tenders were specifically to deliver services under the MPC outcome. Six organisations had received grant funding, once source of which was the Youth Opportunity Fund. The two remaining VCS organisations had not been in receipt of any funding and had no contractual arrangements with any of their statutory sector partners to deliver services at the time the research was undertaken. Two of the organisations concerned had been funded through the Supporting People programme.

### **Commissioning and Contracting Arrangements**

There was mixed feedback on the commissioning and procurement approaches being adopted across the region. One provider saw the procurement process as helpful, as it made the organisation take a hard look at the quality of its service delivery, its policies and procedures and the improvements that could be made to improve its operational efficiency.

The main point of contention was around the VCS not getting sufficient or advanced notification about contract renewals and the availability of further funding. It was reported that this prevents the VCS from effectively planning services. Organisations sometimes run the risk of losing staff, which can have a negative impact on the young people who access their services.

Some VCS organisations felt that the commissioning and procurement process was too prescriptive and needed to be more outcome-focused. Some tender processes were felt to be unnecessarily lengthy, bureaucratic and resource-intensive, especially for smaller organisations. One organisation said that tendering allowed little room for innovative practice and expressed the view that competitive tendering every two to three years did not support integrated working and strategic relationships. In one case, it was reported that the tender documentation used by a local authority did not appear to be relevant to the services being procured and there was no needs analysis to inform the development of the service.

In the present economic climate there is likely to be an increased scrutiny of budgets and consideration of the scope for greater savings and efficiencies to reduce the level of duplication and any waste of public funds. Against this backdrop, commissioning and procurement practices will need to be demonstrably efficient and effective. Commissioners

will need to become more acutely aware of the services that VCS organisations are delivering on the ground and involve them much earlier on in the commissioning process to identify how services could be run more efficiently and effectively, to explore where there could be greater capacity for joint working and to ascertain where services need to be expanded or diversified to meet the gaps in need and provision.

Significantly within all of this, there appeared to be little evidence of the statutory sector complying wholeheartedly with the aims and objectives of any local compact agreements.

## **Performance and Outcome-Monitoring**

Another key point expressed by VCS organisations was around the need for effective performance and outcome-monitoring arrangements. Most respondents confirmed that the performance reporting frameworks used by local authorities and Children's Trusts were based on monitoring key statistics. In some cases, the organisations felt that they were not clear about the usefulness or purpose of such reporting frameworks. Many reported getting little or no feedback on the data they were required to submit, which would have been helpful to them.

Those VCS organisations that were grant-funded (or not receiving any funding from statutory sector partners) wanted to see more evidence of the contribution they were making in helping to achieve outcomes for children and young people. Some form of reporting process that highlighted to statutory sector partners the full range of services that the VCS carries out was felt to be essential. This would require commissioners to place a greater emphasis on collating performance data around preventative services to help to inform future strategic commissioning approaches. Clearly there would need to be some revision of the existing performance and outcome-monitoring frameworks used by commissioners.

There is also the difficulty of capturing performance data on behalf of some small and community-based organisations that struggle to robustly monitor the progressive impact that their services have on young people. This is partly due to the informal and flexible nature of the services being delivered and the fact that funding is often only in place for short periods. In other cases, the funding involved is insufficient to allow for any robust monitoring to take place. Some initiatives identified during the research may help to improve the arrangements in this area, e.g. NACRO in Peterborough is leading a project with its statutory sector partners to develop an evaluation, performance and outcome-reporting framework, having recognised the issues faced by both delivery and commissioning organisations in establishing and monitoring outcomes.

### **4.3. Reasons for Success in Achieving the MPC Outcome**

The research identified a number of factors which respondents felt had helped them to work successfully towards the MPC outcome. These are set out below:

- **Effective leadership** – it was clear that many VCS organisations had a strong grasp of the legislative and policy changes affecting them. Most had responded opportunistically to these changes, looking for solutions to the challenges faced and adapting their services quickly and expediently to meet any new requirements. Some VCS organisations had not wished to become overtly reliant on statutory sector grants or commissioned funds and had been proactive in raising funds from other sources to sustain existing services (where possible) and to address unmet needs.

- **Integrated working** - there were good examples of integrated working, especially with Youth Offending Teams, Supporting People services and other VCS organisations, e.g. Joint Housing Panels involving all of the key agencies. These allow for greater sharing of expertise and knowledge, helping to improve the services delivered to young people. They can also enable the partner agencies to 'barter' or share resources in the delivery of services (e.g. premises and training) to reduce costs and maximise the quality of services being delivered.
- **Added value** - the VCS delivers a range of services and obtains funding to do so through a variety of means. When specific services are commissioned, providers often deliver more than they have been tasked to do, e.g. YMCA Peterborough delivered its pilot 'Diversity Days' to tackle perceptions around racism and discrimination having identified this was a key issue when working with a group of young people who were accessing their Intensive Intervention Programme.
- **Service delivery** - some VCS organisations attributed their success to the nature of the services they deliver – their independent and non-stigmatising approach enabling them to sustain the engagement of 'hard to reach' and disaffected young people. Many are able to deliver a mix of formal and informal approaches to cater for the individual needs of young people and enable support workers to build an effective two-way dialogue that can make a real difference to any challenges faced.

#### 4.4. Early Messages Around Personalised/Individualised Budgets

The research found that there was generally little understanding or knowledge of how personalised or individualised budgets would work in practice and few organisations that had any experience of the Budget-Holding Lead Professional (BHLP) approach.

One organisation felt that individualised budgets would be a positive challenge for VCS organisations to up their game as it will place them in a competitive market. It was felt that the whole sector must be committed to gaining and using the right information with the focus being on the young person, not the organisation.

Difficulties were reported around the use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF), with some VCS organisations not getting CAF assessments sent across to them from other agencies. Other problems included budgets not being pooled and lead organisations not having access to resources when needed. The latter is particularly important where there is little infrastructure in place to support service delivery, e.g. transport arrangements in rural areas. Faced with these problems and the lack of ongoing and sustainable funding, there is a risk that many VCS organisations may be ill-equipped to respond to immediate referrals.

Concerns were also expressed about how the wider community would be advised of the availability of VCS services, with some respondents suggesting that a comprehensive marketing strategy was required and regular administration to support this in practice.

Other suggestions arising from the research around the greater personalisation and individualisation of budgets included:

- The need for more intensive support programmes and training to prepare the VCS and increasing its ability to deliver.
- Greater marketing of the availability of start-up grants to raise awareness and support training and delivery at grass roots level.
- Scope to disseminate the lessons learnt from Adult Social Care in the roll-out of BHLR.

#### **4.5. Key Messages for Moving Forward**

This section summarises the key improvement opportunities identified by the research and the steps necessary to take these forward:

- It is imperative that the VCS is more involved at an earlier stage in the development of commissioning strategies in order to share expertise, maximise the potential for integrated working and to develop new and innovative service solutions. Such an approach could help to achieve sustainable efficiencies by reducing duplication and encouraging the sharing of resources. It could also help to minimise some of the negative impacts that re-tendering can have on the market and address earlier some of the risks and challenges associated with service transition.
- The VCS engagement in statutory sector strategic decision making needs to move beyond consultation and into service planning and implementation. Service planning should be determined over a longer period and include appropriate exit strategies or contingency arrangements. In order for this to happen there must be a greater balance in power for partnership working to be truly effective.
- More needs to be done to capture the successes of preventative and support services delivered by the VCS and the outcomes being achieved. This will require the establishment of simple, robust and effective reporting systems that the VCS can report against, including those who are not funded by the statutory sector. Improvements here will help to better inform future strategic commissioning approaches.
- There is scope to provide training and workshops for commissioners and the VCS to look at how more robust, simplified and effective performance and outcome-monitoring measures can be developed and piloted, recognising that one model will not fit all.
- There is a need to promote greater awareness of the smaller and more community-based voluntary organisations within each Trust area and to ensure that any direct support to these is targeted to where it is needed most.
- There is scope to deliver more training and increase awareness around individualised budgets and to share lessons learnt from the roll-out in Adult Social Care.

**Appendix 1 - Overview of plans targets and impact**<http://www.childrenmattereast.org.uk/TheReports.asp>**Appendix 2 - Detailed Case Studies via Children Matter East website**<http://www.childrenmattereast.org.uk/CaseStudies.asp>**Appendix 3 - Acknowledgements**

Below is a list of all the VCS and statutory sector partners who kindly contributed to the research:

No.	VCS Organisation and Statutory Agencies (*)	Contact Name	Location
1.	Family Action	Clare Peak	Swaffham, Norfolk
2.	Speaking UP	Katherine Vigus	Cambridge, Peterborough and Suffolk
3.	Youth Connexions*	Jonathan Jack	Hertfordshire
4.	Young Lives	Lia Howlett	Cambridge/Peterborough
		Katie Low	Cambridge
		David Radford Parker	Peterborough
5.	Indigo Dyslexia Centre	Jenny Parsonage	Norfolk
6.	Princes Trust	Andrew Cawthorpe	Regional
7.	YMCA Southend	Syrie Cox	Southend
8.	Open Door	Mike Kelly	Thurrock
9.	Essex Boys and Girls Club	Ron Buckley	Essex
10.	Anglia Care Trust	Keith Whitton	Suffolk
11.	Voluntary Action Luton	Lorna Brown	Luton
12.	Way Project	Suzie Kay	Cambridge
13.	SexYOUality	Lara Jaffery/Miriam	Cambridge
14.	One Voice for Travellers Limited	Janny Cadona	Cambridge/Peterborough
15.	Cambridgeshire County Council*	Steve White	Cambridge
16.	YIPEEE Network	Yannick Auckland	Regional
17.	East Potential (Harlow Foyer/ Time for Youth)	Judith Lathey	Harlow, Essex
18.	YJB Eastern Region Senior Performance Advisor	Debbie Carrie	Regional
19.	YMCA Cambridge and Peterborough	Lara Brettell	Cambridge
20.	YMCA Cambridge and Peterborough	Lisa McLean	Peterborough
21.	English Outdoor Council	Randall Williams	National
22.	Youth Matters	Dough McWilliams	Bedfordshire
23.	NARCO	Balwinder Gill and Claire Brimble	Peterborough and Luton
24.	Pro Action	Nicole Williamson	Hertfordshire
25.	YMCA Central Hertfordshire	Andrew Ginn	Hertfordshire



**Some VCS organisations attributed their success to the nature of the services they deliver – their independent and non-stigmatising approach enabling them to sustain the engagement of ‘hard to reach’ and disaffected young people. Many are able to deliver a mix of formal and informal approaches to cater for the individual needs of young people and enable support workers to build an effective two-way dialogue that can make a real difference to any challenges faced.**



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