

talking trusts



Recommendations for children's trusts working with voluntary and community organisations

The partners

The Community Sector Partnership for Children and Young People

The children and young people's services working group mainly consists of member organisations of the Community Sector Coalition¹. This working group brings together some of the main national infrastructure organisations that support the development of local and community infrastructure.

The working group reviews children and young people's policy developments for their implications on community groups and organisations. The working group aims to influence the children and young people's policy and practice agendas, both nationally and through its members locally, to ensure that community sector organisations are able to play their full role in the local planning and delivery of services for children, young people and their families.

Member organisations are:

- Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE)
- bassac
- Community Matters
- National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA)
- National Council for Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS)
- National Council of Voluntary Child Care Organisations (NCVCCO)

(Most of the above organisations are members of the Community Sector Coalition.)



Community Sector Coalition

The Community Sector Coalition (CSC) is a UK umbrella network representing over 30 national membership organisations that are active within the community sector. The aim of the CSC is to promote the interests and values of the community sector. The CSC brings together independent community sector organisations to share information and knowledge, influence policy, undertake joint initiatives and provide leadership for the sector. It promotes a community development perspective based on the experiences of its members. Members of the CSC are organisations that operate across England (or the UK) and that are involved in supporting, developing, representing and lobbying for the community sector at national level².

© Copyright is held by NCVYS 2006



1. A full list of working group members is at the end of this document
2. For contact details, see the end of this document

Foreword

Children's trusts are more than just local government bureaucracy restructured; they form an ambitious programme that represents a fundamental shift in the way services for children, young people and their families are devised, designed, developed and delivered. The voluntary and community sector (VCS) welcomes this programme, as it places the needs and aspirations of children and young people at the centre of the planning and strategic process and is in line with established values and practices across the VCS.

This document has been written by a consortium of national infrastructure organisations that support a diverse range of local voluntary and community sector organisations working with children and young people. Whilst many VCS organisations are well placed to contribute to children's trusts and are already significantly involved in the change process, there are many smaller organisations that, for a variety of reasons, have not been able to engage satisfactorily.

Children's trusts can be seen as a significant learning project with solutions being developed nationally and locally. Smaller VCS organisations, alongside larger VCS organisations, can make a significant contribution to ensure new local arrangements work well.

This document has been designed to inform discussions about the structure of partnerships and how they affect VCS organisations' ability to deliver work with children, young people and their families. We hope that this document, with its broad and wide-ranging recommendations, will be used to stimulate and inform local conversations about how children's trusts can create the best environment for VCS organisations to work as part of those partnerships.

Feedback would be very welcome, particularly from regional directors of children and learners; the directors and lead members of children's services; partner organisations within children's trusts; VCS board members and VCS representatives on other decision-making groups within children's trusts; large and small voluntary and community organisations; and voluntary and community infrastructure organisations.

Through this publication, we hope to begin a national dialogue about local engagement and involvement of the VCS within children's trusts, and thus generate learning that will aid the development of more resources to support the involvement of the VCS organisations within the work of children's trusts.



Susanne Rauprich
Chief Executive
National Council for Voluntary Youth Services



David Tyler
Chief Executive
Community Matters
Chair of the Community Sector Coalition

Executive summary

Introduction:

talking trusts is a document produced by a consortium of national infrastructure organisations that support local networks for voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations. The document is intended to inform the discussion about how children's trusts can best involve the VCS especially smaller organisations. Attaining better outcomes for children and young people will depend on effective partnerships with a wide range of VCS organisations. *talking trusts* sets out some straight forward recommendations which if implemented will have far reaching implications for the way that children's trust work with the VCS. The recommendations are presented in these five subsequent areas.

1. Active engagement

The need for active engagement and involvement of the VCS during both the development and subsequent management of children's trusts leads to a series of recommendations. Central tenors include the need to work strategically with VCS partners at all levels, developing and sustaining strong partnerships, engaging with a wide range of partners at all levels, and supporting all partners to build capacity. A clearly identified key to success is the need to deploy resources at an early stage in the development of the trust to enable engagement of the VCS.

2. Representation

The report recommends that open and transparent representative processes are put in place by all partners within the trust and that these are regularly reviewed in partnership with the sector. It is also argued that all work undertaken between partners must be Compact compliant. Moreover, it is recommended that the independence of the VCS to act as a voice, to challenge and campaign must be recognised by all partners. And that consultative processes are a minimum of twelve weeks and that the impact of policy and operational activity on VCS partners and those that they serve is considered prior to implementation.

3. An effective funding environment

To develop an effective funding environment it is recommended that funding codes (that apply to all those delivering work for children's trusts) should be developed with the aim to create a 'level playing field' for all partners. A key theme is the need to establish fair and transparent commissioning processes which are reviewed on a regular basis. To create real opportunity, a series of recommendations argue for the need to minimise the bureaucracy associated with application, monitoring and audit of funding, to establish multi-year funding streams with payment in advance of expenditure, and to agree outputs and outcomes that are fair and measurable and that capture the added value of delivery through VCS partners.

4. Operational coordination

The report recommends joint strategic planning for the development, dissemination and implementation of local agreements; such planning will ultimately lead to operational coordination between partners. There is a need to ensure that operational commitments are clarified and that all operational processes are fully costed and resourced. The report also recognises the need to support the skills development of all partners and meet the workforce development needs of both employees and volunteers of VCS organisations to provide a sound base from which operational coordination can take place.

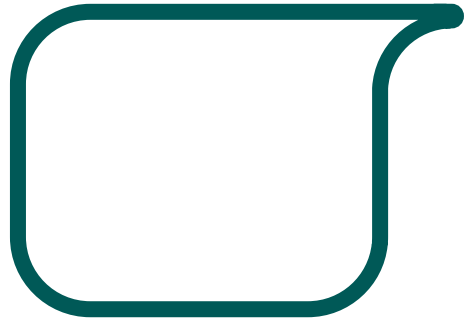
5. Infrastructure development

The report recognises the importance of infrastructure support. It is argued that there is a need to ensure that generic local infrastructure development plans need to be aware of, and take account of, the needs of VCS organisations working with children and young people. Further, there is a need to plan strategically the development of infrastructure support for those VCS organisations working with children and young people whilst at the same time supporting the development of partnerships of infrastructure providers in a way that brings together generic and specialist support.

Conclusion

These recommendations set out a positive agenda for children's trusts working towards the effective engagement of VCS organisations. *talking trusts* will help to facilitate a national conversation about these local processes in order to support the development and sharing of good practice. This will result in better outcomes for children and young people everywhere.





Contents

Introduction	6
1. Active engagement	8
2. Representation	11
3. An effective funding environment	14
4. Operational coordination	18
5. Infrastructure development	21
Conclusion	25
The Community Sector Partnership for Children and Young People members	26
Contact information	26
Case study contact information	26



Introduction

The establishment of a children's trust in every local authority in England by 2008 necessitates new local arrangements and structures that will result in a comprehensive and integrated system of support for children, young people and their families. These structures will aim to reflect the need, history and priorities within each local authority area.

This guide highlights some essential principles and their practical implications for children's trusts. It aims to achieve best practice in the way children's trusts work with the VCS. It sets out the critical factors and important steps children's trusts can take to ensure that smaller VCS organisations work effectively within the new arrangements for delivering services to children and young people.

The recommendations fall into the following categories:

- active engagement
- representation
- an effective funding environment
- operational coordination
- infrastructure development

These recommendations have been developed within the VCS and envisage the involvement of local infrastructure organisations. VCS infrastructure organisations are well positioned to foster the involvement of a diverse range of organisations working with children and young people, including smaller VCS organisations with less resources and capacity.

Voluntary and community organisations work with the young people that the public sector struggles to reach

Sidley young people's centre

Sidley young people's centre in East Sussex is a purpose-built centre developed by Sidley Community Association in 1997 with National Lottery funding.

It currently supports 112 young people aged 11 to 19 years. It opens four evenings per week, offering various services and resources for young people.

Many of the young people are excluded or in danger of being excluded from school and are at risk of offending. The association works in partnership with the Youth Offending Team and the Rother Crime and Disorder Partnership. Sidley young people's centre will need to secure long-term funding if it is to continue. With 50% of young people in Sidley living below the poverty line, such provision is much needed.

Involving smaller VCS organisations in the development of services for children and young people is essential. Such organisations are often well placed to work with the more difficult to reach, and they create opportunities for children and young people to develop special interests.

The agenda set out in *Every Child Matters* sought to build on the preventive approach of the Children's Fund. Early intervention is preferable to allowing problems to become entrenched and more difficult to resolve. It improves the outcomes for children, young people, families and communities. Effective preventive work also reduces the need for much more costly crisis interventions. Local voluntary and community organisations are particularly good at working creatively with children and young people about whom there is a level of concern, but not enough to warrant the intervention of statutory agencies.

Smaller VCS organisations can be vulnerable to changing policy and funding environments; and during this transitional period children's trusts need to guard against inadvertently reducing the opportunities for children and young people generated by the sector. It is important to recognise that VCS organisations are presently subsidising much of their work with children and young people. Decisions about relatively small amounts of money can impact significantly on smaller VCS organisations' ability to deliver their services and, ultimately, this could impact on the lives of children and young people.

VCS organisations also add value. By using community development approaches, VCS organisations enhance the environment in which children and young people develop and enable individuals and families to better access public services.

With the right policies and a commitment to creating good working relationships, children's trusts could contribute to an increase of provision and a more diverse range of activities and opportunities for children and young people.

Many of the recommendations in this publication are informed by the document *Strengthening Partnerships: next steps for Compact*³, which at the time of writing is in a post-consultative stage. *Strengthening Partnerships* sets out a robust model for improving government relationships with VCS organisations.

1. Active engagement

The voluntary and community sector can enhance the way other professionals work with children and young people

Relationships Without Fear

Relationships Without Fear is a school prevention and support project that takes a cross-curricular approach to domestic abuse. The programme starts in year four of primary school and runs through to year eleven in secondary school. Each year has a different programme, covering key domestic issues such as: why victims stay in violent relationships, the different forms of abuse and how to leave a violent relationship safely. The project was set up in 2003 by the Staffordshire Housing Charity, Arch North Staffs Ltd.

The programme aims to prevent further domestic abuse in young people's relationships by giving them the knowledge, skills and advice they need to recognise an abusive relationship and leave it or seek the appropriate help, thus contributing to the long term overall reduction in domestic violence. The project aims to safeguard the welfare of children by identifying, protecting and supporting children and young people affected by domestic violence.

The Relationships Without Fear project aims to meet three of the *Every Child Matters* outcomes: Be Healthy, Stay Safe and Make a Positive Contribution. This is the first schools' resource of its kind in the country and offers an age-appropriate programme for each year group. The programme manual and training package is an excellent resource which helps teachers to recognise and understand the effects of domestic violence on children and young people and enables them to provide more appropriate support.



'We believe that local people working together with government at every level have the imagination, talent and common sense to solve problems. But more than simply fixing what's wrong, we believe that local people have the capacity to innovate, improve and enhance local services and facilities. The best ideas often come from the people at the sharp end.'

Charles Clark and Hazel Blears, *Together We Can*⁴

Fostering the active engagement of smaller VCS organisations in local areas will mean services are much more effective in meeting the needs of children and young people. VCS engagement in children's trusts should mean that the VCS is fully involved in decision-making processes. Effective engagement requires planning and the provision of resources at the earliest possible stage of the process.

As with statutory services, VCS organisations that provide services to children and young people will be used to working in silos, for example youth work, social care or educational development. VCS organisations need to be empowered and resourced to form new partnerships well beyond their traditional silos. This will ensure that a joined-up approach to delivery is not just a bureaucratically driven exercise, but a creative and dynamic reshaping of services around the needs and aspirations of children and young people.

In addition, special measures will need to be taken to ensure that smaller VCS organisations are able to engage with children's trusts. They will have particular capacity issues, so measures such as fostering partnership arrangements and ensuring information is jargon free will be crucial to ensure they are able to participate.

4. *Together We Can*, Home Office 2005. This is an action plan published by the Civil Renewal Unit Communities Group to promote the active involvement of citizens and public bodies in working together to improve people's quality of life.

Recommendations:

- 1.1 Identify and deploy resources to engage the VCS as early as possible, ideally ahead of the establishment of the children's trust.
- 1.2 Develop an overall strategy in partnership with the VCS. This could be part of, or run concurrently with the Children and Young People's Plan.
- 1.3 Develop the means for effective participation in strategic and operational decision-making.
- 1.4 Work with the breadth of VCS organisations, including social enterprises and small community organisations, such as: black and minority ethnic, faith, disability, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender, women's and rural groups. A mapping exercise may be required to identify the breadth of local services.
- 1.5 Create multiple routes for engaging the VCS. This could mean creating opportunities for organisations with volunteers who are not available during the day to participate in consultations or contribute to local decision-making processes.
- 1.6 Support organisations to build their capacity. Some smaller VCS organisations might be best placed to work with a particular group of children or young people but may not be ready to manage the demands of a substantial contract, e.g. hiring staff for the first time. However, one full time post could result in more work being delivered through an already committed group of volunteers.



2. Representation



Representation is a complex activity. Infrastructure organisations will often be best placed to ensure fair representation of the breadth of organisations working with children and young people. Infrastructure bodies can coordinate and publicise activities, ensuring the transparency of representation at the many levels necessary to give the sector a voice they can trust to maintain an overview.

Recommendations:

- 2.1 Where a decision is likely to affect the VCS, consult widely and early enough to make a difference, allowing a minimum of 12 weeks.
- 2.2 Feed back to the sector on how its involvement has influenced decisions.
- 2.3 Respect the independence of VCS organisations, including their rights made explicit in The Compact, e.g. organisations can campaign and challenge policies whether from central or local government or connected agencies even if they are in receipt of funding.
- 2.4 Test all policy and operational decisions for their impact on the VCS.
- 2.5 Ensure that representation at all levels is accountable and reflective of the broad range of interests within the sector. Infrastructure networks are often the best mechanisms to ensure that representatives are mandated.
- 2.6 Ensure that issues which could affect smaller VCS organisations are highlighted and that quality consultation processes are established.
- 2.7 Enable organisations to respond to the most relevant issues by targeting information effectively.
- 2.8 Work with VCS infrastructure organisations and sub-sector lead bodies to ensure that representative processes are transparent and subject to regular review and evaluation (led in partnership with the sector).
- 2.9 Consider the impact of all activity on communities and in particular the effects on children and young people in multicultural and rural settings.

The voluntary and community sector can work effectively together to provide quality, joined-up services for children and young people

Nexus Network: joining up young people in Salford

In Salford, organisations that work with young people are supported by the Nexus Network, a project of Salford Council for Voluntary Service. Open to any voluntary and community sector group that works with young people, this network provides training, information, support, and networking and representation opportunities. Nexus brings together groups and enables them to share resources and best practice and to develop a more joined-up approach to working with young people. The network has also identified gaps in provision and is currently developing initiatives with partners to fill them.

This development has also had a positive impact on local statutory bodies, as it is now easier to link with voluntary sector services, particularly those smaller community and volunteer-led groups. Funders have been able to target resources and partnership initiatives at a broader range of voluntary youth groups. Services for young people have improved as there is better use of resources. Local organisations are also supported to engage more effectively with children and young people and gain support and recognition for their work.

The representative structures give groups access to strategic decision-making processes, therefore ensuring that services are improved and better focused on the needs of children and young people. Nexus acts as the secretariat to VOCAL, the Salford Children and Young People's Voluntary and Community Sector Forum. VOCAL aims to provide broad-ranging representation of the interests and views of voluntary and community organisations working with children and young people in Salford. VOCAL elects representatives to the Salford Children and Young People's Partnership Board (which is responsible for the development of the children's trust in Salford), the Partnership Executive and the Local Safeguarding Children Board. VOCAL also coordinates and supports voluntary sector representation within Locality Partnerships. Representatives must sign up to a protocol which outlines their responsibilities to the VCS and the forum.

Nexus is jointly funded by the Youth Service and Connexions. VOCAL has applied to the Partnership Board for funds to support cover for representatives and to meet the costs of the secretariat role.

VOCAL's launch in January 2006 was attended by 38 voluntary and community organisations and 21 statutory partners. Participants at the launch commented:

'Great to meet and hear real examples of voluntary sector projects'
'Great for networking. I got lots of information and I feel a part of what's going on'
'I realised how our service links to others'

“Great for networking. I got lots of information and I feel a part of what's going on”

3. An effective funding environment





It is envisaged by the Government that the joint planning and commissioning process will be at the heart of children's trusts. This process will have a single unit to implement the joint commissioning strategy. The Government also believes that for some children's trusts it will take up to five years to fully implement the process set out in the Department for Education and Skills and Department of Health's *Joint planning and commissioning framework for children, young people and maternity services*⁵.

'Different sectors currently bring different approaches to commissioning, different languages, and different cultures. The joint commissioning unit will need to bring together diverse sectors and be inclusive of different approaches.'

Joint planning and commissioning framework for children, young people and maternity services, 2006

This framework has an expectation that children's trusts will need to shape a market for children and young people's services which is not only efficient but diverse, sustainable and secure. These markets should be responsive to changing needs and open to new quality providers. When commissioning services from the VCS, children's trusts must recognise that there are a number of different approaches which can be used. Children's trusts should develop an appropriate range of commissioning and procurement arrangements that best suit the diversity of the VCS. This may include consortium or large/small partnership bidding. It may also include alternatives to contracts and competitive tendering and different funding arrangements (including grant-aid).

'Children's trusts should consider all viable options for delivery. Smaller providers such as the voluntary and community sectors, small and medium enterprises, and social enterprise models can be well placed to deliver services that are competitive, responsive, efficient and effective. Children's trusts should follow the 'Compact' and 'Small Business Concordat' to help develop relations with range of market providers.'

ibid, 2006

Children's trusts should also recognise that new funding arrangements may disadvantage smaller organisations that are more familiar with applying and benefiting from multiple small pockets of funding. Rationalising the many streams into children's trusts will mean they have only one stream to access, consequently becoming very dependent on their relationship with the children's trust.

VCS organisations respond to the needs that are presented to them as they work within communities. This often means that they produce innovative work. Creating funding environments that allow for flexibility and risk taking are essential if children and young people's needs are to be met.

5. *Joint planning and commissioning framework for children, young people and maternity services*, Department for Education and Skills and Department of Health 2006

Voluntary and community groups are the source of innovative work with young people, children and families

Fathers Matter

South Kingsland Youth (SKY) Partnership, based in east London, works with young fathers in partnership with a national programme called Fathers Matter (run by the Family Rights Group). Whilst good support has been given to teenage mums in the area, teenage dads have been neglected. There are many ways in which government policies can unwittingly result in marginalising young fathers and creating barriers to young men fulfilling their parental roles, for example through the work of agencies and the benefits systems.

Most work through statutory agencies is planned on a case-by-case basis around the needs of the individual and against the objectives of the agencies or departments. Whilst patterns may emerge through the rigorous analysis of data and team management systems, these patterns take some time to become apparent. Community-based organisations are in a good position to recognise patterns as they emerge in communities because they are usually more integrated within those communities. SKY saw from the community perspective the issues generated by the lack of fathering and the consequent loss for children and mothers. They took the initiative in developing a challenging project which not only has long-term benefits for the community and the children but also has helped to raise the self-esteem of these young men, as both fathers and young adults, enabling some of them to return to employment, education or training.

An important aspect of this programme is that these young men have the opportunity to feed back to other agencies about how best to support them to be positive fathers.

This is just one of the innovative programmes developed by SKY. They use their local knowledge, coupled with their can-do creative and social entrepreneurial approach, to develop work that meets very particular needs of young people.

“They use their local knowledge, coupled with their can-do creative and social entrepreneurial approach, to develop work that meets very particular needs of young people.”

Recommendations:

- 3.1 Establish commissioning processes that are fair, transparent and regularly reviewed with VCS involvement.
 - 3.1.1 Build fair and equitable funding codes that cover not only primary contractors but all subcontractors delivering work for children's trusts.
 - 3.1.2 Implement multi-year funding models, make payments promptly and offer payments in advance of expenditure.
 - 3.1.3 Share risks fairly between funder and provider, ensuring they fall on those best able to bear them.
 - 3.1.4 Create a level playing field for public, private and VCS organisations.
 - 3.1.5 Social, environmental and community development outcomes should be taken into consideration when comparing contractors for the tendering process.
- 3.2 Minimise bureaucracy associated with application, qualification, monitoring, reporting and audit processes by, for example, introducing joined-up monitoring and audit arrangements.
 - 3.2.1 Develop regional and sub-regional arrangements that streamline the commissioning process.
 - 3.2.3 Agree outputs and outcomes which are fair, measurable and able to be captured without disproportionate burdens on capacity.
- 3.3 Develop a funding and commissioning culture that encourages the VCS to achieve full cost recovery.
 - 3.3.1 Public sector organisations should demonstrate the full cost of the services they provide, even if the full charge for the service is not being made to the children's trust.
 - 3.3.2 Agree outcomes that capture the added value of services when they are delivered by the VCS.
 - 3.3.3 Treat VCS providers with the same level of respect as a provider from the private sector, for example by not requesting information on management fees and overheads.
- 3.4 Develop resources that help build the capacity of VCS organisations and assist organisations to be contract-ready.
- 3.5 Ensure that full funding for the universal aspect of children's trust delivery is available, thereby enabling the VCS to play a stronger preventive role.
- 3.6 Design funding programmes for smaller VCS organisations that have simple and non-burdensome application and reporting processes.
- 3.7 Ensure that variations in the cost of delivery are taken into account when setting budgets, for example the increased costs of service delivery to rural communities.

4. Operational coordination

The move to integrated services will require a radical culture change. The process for managing this must be developed in partnership with the VCS rather than imposed on it. The diversity of the sector should be recognised as their diverse specialist expertise could make significant contributions to ensuring these new structures are truly centred on the needs of children and young people.

The voluntary and community sector has pioneered holistic and joined-up approaches and has also provided niche development opportunities for children and young people. Furthermore, VCS organisations are instrumental in building the capacity of communities to support the children and young people's development.

The planning of workforce development, safeguarding, information sharing and common assessment frameworks are all interlinked and interdependent and have an impact on VCS organisations. However, it is important to have an overview of these different areas as well as to explore the implications for administration coordination and practice for the different types of VCS organisations. It is important that conflicting priorities, more easily managed by big organisations and departments, do not create a bureaucratic overload for smaller organisations.

Simple, consistent, flexible, responsive and outcome-focused arrangements will improve the environment for VCS organisations. Involving the VCS to effectively help shape these arrangements could result in a better operational environment for all children's trust partners.

The key post for operational coordination within children's trusts will be the lead professional. Principles should be established locally for cases where the VCS lead professional may, for example, work part time or not have recognised qualifications.



Recommendations

- 4.1 Work with the VCS to develop an integrated map of VCS work with children and young people. This should include how the work is funded and supported.
- 4.2 Clarify the operational commitments for VCS organisations. Uniform protocols for this may not be appropriate; rather, children's trusts should aim to develop protocols with each organisation on the basis of agreed principles. This should be facilitated by an appropriate infrastructure organisation. Government agencies will have established written operational protocols, while many VCS organisations may not have articulated the ways in which they work. It is important to recognise the VCS approaches and protocols, as they could be crucial when working with particular children, young people or families. It is important that those approaches and the integrity of services are respected in order to ensure that the added value of the VCS is not undermined and depreciated.
- 4.3 Provide training for officers to develop the skills to build and facilitate better partnerships. Work collaboratively with VCS organisations; this is particularly important for those in the lead professional role.
- 4.4 Establish clear processes with lead professionals with regards to the voluntary and community sector. Lead professionals must have access to information about services provided by VCS organisations the provision of VCS organisations. Establish clear and appropriate referral processes, and also review the effectiveness of these arrangements.
- 4.5 Ensure that workforce training is accessible to VCS organisations and people working part time or on a voluntary basis. The training should particularly focus on the Common Core of Skills and Knowledge, the Common Assessment Framework, local safeguarding arrangements and associated information processes and protocols.
- 4.6 Clarify pathways by which volunteers can become incrementally qualified to professional status.
- 4.7 Develop a VCS overview of operational processes and review them in partnership to assess their impact on the sector, whether they achieve their stated objectives and if there are unintended outcomes.
- 4.8 Make sure that operational processes are fully costed and resourced to ensure that VCS organisations receive appropriate support in the implementation of new arrangements.
- 4.9 Link operational planning to other processes such as regeneration or community development initiatives.
- 4.10 Plan for joint strategies for the development, dissemination and implementation of local agreements such as information sharing.

5. Infrastructure development

“Participants are encouraged to identify the specific types of work and localities in which they are interested. This will enable effective, targeted communication without causing information overload.”

Infrastructure organisations can enable voluntary and community organisations to play an effective and dynamic role within children’s trusts

Voluntary Youth Services (Devon)

Voluntary Youth Services (Devon) is the local infrastructure body for organisations working with young people and plays a key role in ensuring the voluntary and community sector is effectively engaged with children’s trusts.

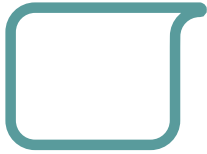
Voluntary Youth Services (Devon), working in partnership with the Devon members of the National Council for Voluntary Child Care Organisations (NCVCCO):

- supports the VCS representatives at board and executive levels;
- coordinates participation of the sector in the children’s trusts themed development groups;
- disseminates regular information; and
- maintains a web page on children’s trusts information.

There are many operational issues that will affect different VCS organisations in different ways. Yet sustainable involvement in children’s trusts means that those organisations need to be engaged within their areas of concern at a level they can manage. Voluntary Youth Services (Devon) have developed a process that allows VCS organisations to indicate their preferred level of involvement with the children’s trust.

Participants are encouraged to identify the specific types of work and localities in which they are interested. This will enable effective, targeted communication without causing information overload.

This complex work is undertaken by the network in a transparent way which is independent of the children’s trust and does not compete with VCS organisations. Thus VCS organisations can trust the information, representation and participation processes within children’s trusts.



Many of the above recommendations centre on resourcing effective infrastructure. This should be congruent with the national framework for VCS infrastructure set out in *ChangeUp*⁶.

By infrastructure we mean the networks, systems and resources which provide support to frontline organisations, in this case those working directly with children young people and their families. Infrastructure organisations would provide some or all of the following services:

- practical help (advice, information, training, consultancy, capacity building);
- facilitating the voice of the voluntary and community children and youth sector;
- promoting and disseminating standards and good practice;
- acting as an interface with funders and local decision-making processes;
- providing coordinating and networking opportunities;
- supporting the development of effective, equitable and sustainable partnerships;
- supporting the development of new and innovative work that meets unmet needs; and
- coordinating and supporting the development of a skilled a workforce including the recruitment and retention of volunteers.

In a local authority area there might be a number of infrastructure organisations, such as a council for voluntary youth services, Rural Community Councils and generic councils for voluntary services. There might also be organisations that could provide relevant infrastructure functions for organisations working with children, young people and their families. These organisations will need to work together to provide effective support.

At a neighbourhood level, there are often lead organisations, sometimes referred to as 'community anchor organisations', which give support to those who work with children and young people. They could be community associations, development trusts or multi-purpose organisations. By incubating and building the capacity of emerging groups they bring value to neighbourhood provision for children and young people and should also be included when planning for and evaluating infrastructure support.

It will be important that children's trusts play their role in ensuring that VCS infrastructure support is coherent, accessible and well resourced. Smaller VCS organisations can only fully participate if children's trusts fulfil their responsibility to ensure that the support needs of the sector are matched with appropriate resources.

The smaller the organisation, the more crucial is support from a well-resourced infrastructure partnership.

6. *ChangeUp: capacity building and infrastructure framework for the voluntary and community sector*, Home Office 2004

Recommendations

- 5.1 Develop a plan for supporting the development of infrastructure for the voluntary and community children and youth sector that is fit for purpose and reflects the diversity of the sector.
- 5.2 Support the development of a robust infrastructure providers' partnership that encourages the bringing together of specialist and generic providers of support.
- 5.3 Ensure that those responsible for developing, funding and approving generic local infrastructure plans are aware of the needs of VCS organisations working with children and young people, especially in regards to children's trusts.
- 5.4 Encourage infrastructure networks to be proactive in engaging with the full range of organisations working with children and young people. By creating an environment for open dialogue about the difficulties in accessing some communities, a genuinely shared commitment to finding appropriate solutions can be developed.
- 5.5 Facilitate the ability of the VCS to network beyond its traditional silos and form new partnerships and ways of working with children and young people.
- 5.6 Assess the implications of plans for infrastructure provision and budget for resources in partnership with the infrastructure providers' partnership and the VCS.



Conclusion

Children's trusts sets out a positive agenda for children's trusts working towards the effective engagement of voluntary and community sector bodies. This guide should be seen as a starting point for a dynamic process that will evolve as the children's trust model itself evolves.

Children's trusts that have already established processes and protocols can use the recommendations to help develop an appropriate framework for evaluating and reviewing the processes that relate to the voluntary and community sector.

Creating a positive environment which encourages and supports the involvement of the voluntary and community sector requires action at many levels, from active engagement and transparent representation to effective funding. It requires the willingness of all parties to change attitudes and approaches as well as a significant effort to move beyond assumptions held about different sectors. It requires a willingness to take risks and a commitment to learning from the experience of developing partnerships.

Voluntary and community sector infrastructure organisations have a responsibility to develop and strengthen their own processes in relation to the needs of organisations working with children and young people. Structures and services should be improved to enable smaller organisations to participate in networks and access the support they need. Children's trusts have a responsibility to partner the sector as they respond to the challenges of reconfiguring local services for children and young people. Investing in building the capacity of the children and young people's VCS infrastructure will enable the sector to be involved positively in the development of effective local structures and processes.

Ongoing dialogue needs to take place at all levels and will be critical to ensuring that processes become effective in fostering the involvement of the voluntary and community sector, especially smaller organisations. This will enable them to contribute to the achievement of positive outcomes for all children and young people.



The Community Sector Partnership for Children and Young People members

ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England)
Sarah Fishbourne

bassac
Carole Macqueen

Community Matters
Veronica Karrinton, Mukesh Solanki, David Tyler

National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA)
Peter Horner

National Council of Voluntary Child Care Organisations (NCVCCO)
Ian Vallender

National Council for Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS)
Stephen Quashie

Contact information

Community Sector Coalition (CSC)
Naomi Alexander
naomi@communitysectorcoalition.org.uk

John Routledge
john@communitysectorcoalition.org.uk

The Community Sector Partnership for Children and Young People
Veronica Karrinton
veronica.karrinton@communitymatters.org.uk

For more information about this publication contact:
Stephen Quashie
stephen@ncvys.org.uk

Case study contact information

Fathers Matter – South Kingsland Youth (SKY) Partnership
Alice Phillips
alicephillips@skypartnership.org.uk

Nexus Network – Salford Council for Voluntary Service
Louise Murray
louise.murray@salfordcvs.co.uk
www.salfordcvs.co.uk

Relationships Without Fear – Arch North Staffs
Julia Goodwin
julia.goodwin@archnorthstaffs.org.uk

Sidley young people's centre
Margaret Lea
sidleyca@btconnect.com

Voluntary Youth Services (Devon)
Mark Goodman
admin@vysdevon.org.uk



Members of the Community Sector Partnership for Children and Young People

ACRE

Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE) is active in promoting the interests of rural communities. It also acts as the national umbrella organisation for 38 Rural Community Councils throughout England.
www.acre.org.uk



bassac

The national network of multi-purpose community based organisations, dedicated to tackling the causes and effects of poverty, exclusion and discrimination.
www.bassac.org.uk



Community Matters

The UK federation of community organisations with over 1,150 member organisations across the UK. We play a key role in promoting and supporting action by ordinary people in response to social, educational and recreational needs in their neighbourhoods and communities.
www.communitymatters.org.uk



NAVCA

The national voice of local voluntary and community sector infrastructure in England. Our 360 members work with 140,000 local community groups and voluntary organisations which provide services, regenerate neighbourhoods, increase volunteering and tackle discrimination, in partnership with local public bodies.
www.navca.org.uk



NCVCCO

The umbrella body for children's charities in England; working with central regional and local government to strengthen relationships and cross sector working for the benefit of children, young people and families.
www.ncvcco.org



NCVYS

The independent voice of the voluntary youth sector in England; working to inform and influence public policy, support members, and raise the profile of the voluntary and community sector's work with young people.
www.ncvys.org.uk

