

Surviving and Thriving in the Big Society

2nd November 2010
Ringwood Hall Hotel, Brimington

Event Report.

Compiled by C Thornber
Voice for the VCS Project Officer
12.11.10



Background

In November 2008 representatives of the voluntary and community sector met with the Culture Board of the Derbyshire Partnership Forum to identify issues affecting the operating environment for the third sector. This contributed to the development of an action plan to deliver against NI 7 of Derbyshire's LAA. A Steering group was established to oversee this delivery and has been working to address the priorities within the plan. The Steering Group felt that it would be timely to promote the achievements against the original plan and develop it further, taking account of the new economic and political climate.

Aims and objectives

The event aimed to;

- Feedback on achievements against the original plan
- Identify whether priorities have changed in a new economic and political climate
- Influence the development of the action plan
- Promote partnership working
- Support delivery of the NI 7 action plan

Event Report

The event was organised by the Voice for the VCS Project in partnership with 3D, Derbyshire's Voluntary Sector infrastructure consortium. Invites were sent to representatives of the Culture Board and from the voluntary sector across the county, with 48 people attending the event in total (see Appendix B).

There was a change to the planned agenda, as Pam Hough from GOEM was unable to attend. This gave Lorna Wallace the opportunity to give more detail in her feedback against the NI 7 action plan but meant that the context of the new climate and the government's Big Society agenda was missed. This was reflected in both the workshop discussions and evaluations where people were still clearly confused about the coalition's agenda and what it means for the VCS. To address this, Voice proposes to stage another, shorter event to inform the VCS about the Big Society and to encourage a response to the 'Building a Stronger Civil Society' strategy and consultation. Nevertheless, evaluators gave the event an average overall score of 7.5 out of 10.

Delegates had a choice of two from four possible workshops, facilitated by members of 3D and the NI7 Steering Group (see Appendix A – event agenda). This report aims to pick out the key themes emerging from the workshops and to highlight which areas delegates prioritised for further action. It aims to inform the future planning of the NI 7 Steering group and across the wider Derbyshire Partnership Forum.

Key Emerging Themes

Marketing and Promotion

How does the VCS best market itself both as a sector and as individual organisations and groups? There was a recognition that the sector needs to get smarter at evidencing the outcomes of their work and the impact on society and to cost this in a context of the wider social return on funders investments.

Mapping activity

What is currently provided by the VCS? What activity will be at risk? What is the impact of potential cuts on the wide range of service users? The Countywide VCS database currently being developed by 3D will enable the sector to produce up to date statistics and monitor the changing sector and provision across the county.

The personalisation agenda

There was much concern from organisations currently delivering health and social care services that the personalisation agenda is affecting the stability of those groups and their ability to plan long term. Combine this with the proposed loss of personal care budgets for those with moderate needs and we can begin to see the potential affect on service users, organisations and wider society.

Working Together Better

Whether smaller groups collaborate to make joint funding applications or groups delivering the same kind of services join up to influence local priorities and decisions, there was a strong sense that the sector needs to work together better. Research has shown that medium sized groups are most at risk in the current climate and while 'localism' is the new agenda, funding and contracts are still being awarded to larger organisations with countywide coverage.

Don't re-invent the wheel

There has long been a tendency for funders and statutory partners to only offer financial support to new projects. Why, if a project is proving its worth, impact and value for money can existing activity not continue to be funded? New projects cost in time and money to establish and this may be better avoided in the current economic climate.

Influencing new structures

The statutory sector is currently planning significant structural changes and there is a risk that this will affect the VCS's ability to influence decisions. The VCS has committed considerable capacity to developing cross sector relations via the LAA and specific routes to commissioners. There is an ongoing need for up to date information in order that the VCS can be represented on and influence the new structures and be ready for new funding regimes such as GP commissioning consortia.

Prioritisation Exercise

Each of the workshop's facilitators highlighted the top five themes emerging from their workshops. Delegates were then asked to highlight their top 5 from this list of 20. Numbers on the right indicate how many people felt that the priority was one of their top five. Those that 'scored' higher than 10 have been highlighted.

Funding Arrangements

Match localism with local money	6
Mapping value and cost of our work and evidencing impact. What could be lost? Use to influence policy locally and nationally	19
Funding: not reinventing – fund good work to continue	14
Information about different funding – different sources and types – not just grants or setting up social enterprises	0
Simple accessible information about where we are going and the new language, i.e. CSO	3
Support for collaboration within and between sectors	9

Support for the Sector

Relationships with central government	0
Funding in a similar position now as 2002 /2003, lack of reserves	0
Leadership and campaigning role for 3D	16
Clarity on Big Society – is funding attached?	6

Influencing Decisions

Need information in a form we can understand (less jargon/ plain English)	3
Better understanding of structures and how decisions get made	2
Need to focus on outcomes to the people we serve (bottom up rather than top-down)	18
Evidence what we do well (based on what we think is important not government targets / buzzwords)	15
Be proactive rather than reactive	14

Partnership working

Hustings events to be held in each district prior to local elections	2
Derbyshire Partnership Forum	1
Get smarter at demonstrating outcomes	14
Lobbying sub-group of 3D	5
Compact – merge with NI 7	2

Surviving and Thriving in the Big Society

November 2nd 2010

Ringwood Hall Hotel, Brimington.

Agenda

- 10.00 Welcome, housekeeping and outline of the day**
Claire Thornber, Voice for the VCS Project Officer
- 10.10 Presentation: NI 7, then and now**
The background to NI7, achievements against the action plan to date.
Lorna Wallace, 3D Vice Chair and VCS rep at the Culture Board
- 10.20 The Big Society, localism and the Comprehensive Spending Review**
Pam Hough, Senior Policy Adviser, Stronger Communities, GOEM
- 10.35 Choose one of the following 4 workshops**
- Funding arrangements
 - Support for the sector
 - Ability to influence decisions
 - Partnership working
- 11.05 Break for refreshments**
- 11.20 Choose one of the following 4 workshops**
- Funding arrangements
 - Support for the sector
 - Ability to influence decisions
 - Partnership working
- 12.10 Prioritisation exercise**
- 12.30 Plenary – next steps in the new scenery**
Robert Gent, Assistant Director, Cultural and Community Services
Derbyshire County Council
- 12.45 Lunch**
- 1.30 Close**

Appendix B

Attendance list – frontline organisations

NAME	ORGANISATION
Adrian Dewhurst	Umbrella
Adrian Rimington	Rethink MASH
Angela Parnell	Age UK Derby & Derbyshire
Audrey Booth	North Derbyshire Forum for Mental Health Carers
Emma Ashley	Peak District National Park Authority
Carol Evans	EAPN
Charis Shaw	Home-Start Amber Valley
Christopher Hill	Rethink MASH
David Botham	Volunteer
Dot Inger	SPODA
Elaine Hill	High Peak Volunteering and Advancement Project
Mary Campbell	High Peak Volunteering and Advancement Project
Heather Fawbert	Fairplay
Jackie Hughes	Faith, Hope and Enterprise
Jackie King-Owen	Enable Housing Association
Jane Bellamy	Rethink
Jane Parsons	Chesterfield Care Group
Janice Cooper	SNaP Development Project
June Griffiths	Older People Forum Bolsover and District
Karla Capstick	Derbyshire County Council
Kath Sharpe	Langwith Society / Acres
Kerry Dungavel	P3
Larry Waller	Barnardo's Belper Family Support Services
Leonie Martin	Volunteer - Multiple Sclerosis Society
Sylvia Hawkins	Older People Forum Bolsover and District

Attendance list – infrastructure agencies

Claire Thornber	Voice for the VCS Project
Daphne Row	Bolsover CVP
David Timcke	NDVA
Diane Scott	3D
Diane Sheppard	Links
Eric Clayton	South Derbyshire CVS
Jacqui Willis	NDVA
Joyce Cupitt	NDVA Volunteer
Kerrie Fletcher*	3D
Kevin Skingsley*	High Peak CVS
Les Millington	Amber Valley CVS
Lorna Wallace*	Bolsover CVP
Neil Moulden	Derbyshire Dales CVS
Pete Newby*	Volunteer Centres Derbyshire
Roger Kerry	NDVA
Stella Scott	Erewash CVS
Sylvia Green*	RAD

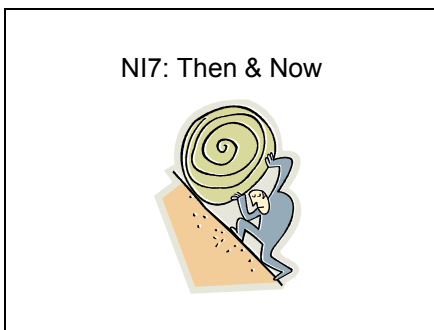
*Facilitators

Attendance list – public sector

Amanda Bradley	Derbyshire County PCT
Ian Hey	South Derbyshire District Council
Jude Wildgoose	Derbyshire County Council
Maurice Neville	Head of Derbyshire Adult Community Education Service, DCC
Michael Davie	NHS Derbyshire County Trust Headquarters
Stuart Batchelor	South Derbyshire District Council

Appendix C

Presentations



Lorna Wallace
Chair of NI 7 Steering Group
Vice Chair of 3D

How we got to where we are

- December 2007 DPF/LAA Workshop to prioritise NIs
- April/May 2008 Final LAA NIs agreed, signed off & signed up to
- November 2008 Culture Board/Voice joint NI7 event: NI7 Steering Group established to draft NI7 Action Plan
- April 2009 NI7 Action Plan drafted
- May 2009 Voice workshop to prioritise NI7 work
- November 2009 1st meeting of the NI7 Action Group – work commences on implementing the action plan

It's taken 3 years to get to where we are today – started in 2007 with the LAA Workshop to prioritise NIs and a VCS push to get NI7 adopted – NI7 being 'Create an environment for a thriving 3rd sector' indicator. Why NI7? Because, unlike NI6 which was solely concerned with volunteering, NI7 meant improving relations on a number of different levels with the effectiveness of NI7 implementation being measured against baseline information produced by a national survey conducted by MORI in 2009 & 2010

The Voice/Culture Board joint event in 2008 laid the foundations on which the NI7 Action

Plan was based - 47 VCS representatives met with 18 members of the Culture Board and made positive suggestions for action – Partnership, Funding, Influence & Support to frontline organisations.

The issues raised at this event have formed the basis of a draft action plan which, once finalised was taken back to frontline groups for them to ratify and prioritise.

The key priorities identified were - Baseline Research, understanding the nature of the VCS and its impact across the County; establishing a Funders Forum to address strategic funding issues and concerns; Raising the Profile of the VCS

From November 2009 the NI7 Action Group has been meeting regularly to implement the NI7 Action Plan and has been reporting to the LAA/DPF Culture Board

What have we achieved?

Partnership Working

- Voice project worked on a training programme & other publicity/promotional materials
- Bid to BIG Lottery to establish VCS impact baselines
- County wide Database of VCOs



The key aspects of this work have centred on raising the profile of the VCS and awareness amongst the Public Sector and key decision makers of the VCS' role and impact

In particular the Voice project has played a key role in developing training materials and publicity & promotional materials and Claire has made a number of presentations to local LSPs and the the DPF in order to promote the VCS and improve partnership working

An important element in promoting the role of the VCS and its importance as a partner is having a baseline which measures our impact across the County. Unfortunately the bid to the Big Lottery was unsuccessful so this baseline research has been delayed.

3D (the County Infrastructure Consortium) has recently secured funding to develop a countywide database of VCO's. Once in place we will use this as a vehicle for undertaking a countywide survey which will give us a picture of the 'state' and nature of the sector and provide us with a baseline to measure the health of the sector.

Influencing decisions

- Joint working protocol signed up to
- LAA report back mechanisms implemented
- Voice LAA Newsletter
- Voice project training for LSP reps
- LAA Reps Network



The key areas of work on this theme have centred around ensuring effective representation throughout DPF and its thematic boards and ensuring that there is proper and effective feedback.

A joint working protocol has been developed and adopted by DPF and all of the thematic boards ensuring that VCS representation is present in all areas of LAA work and activity.

Report-back proformas are now used by all LAA reps and fed back to 3D (County Infrastructure Consortium) and from their to front line organisations.

The Voice project has played an important part in ensuring that information about the LAA work is shared with the wider VCS and frontline groups through the Voice newsletter, website and local events.

The Voice project has also played an equally important part in facilitating a network of LAA reps so that information and ideas/issues can be shared and in delivering training & workshops to LSP reps

Funding relationships

- Funding forum established
- Mapping of funding distribution
- Email bulletin re funding events & activities accross County
- Funding & Contracts Advice services and training



Funding is of course a key issue for the VCS and a key contributor to whether the VCS thrives or not, so no surprise that this was a priority area for the NI7 Action Group.

In May 2010 an initial meeting between the NI7 Action Group and key funders in the County took place where we were able to agree membership, aims & objectives and terms of reference of a funding forum. The 1st full meeting of this forum took place in July.

The funding forum is currently mapping the distribution of funding across the County – to see whether distribution is fair and equal or whether there are areas missing out. The initial picture is quite promising and, whilst there is still some work to do, it does appear that funding is reasonably fairly distributed

Through the funding forum 3D, the Infrastructure Consortium, is co-ordinating the production of an email bulleting detailing funding events and workshops across the whole of the County – this information is also available from 3D's website

The funding forum is also mapping out funding opportunities and availability and then disseminated locally through the funding advisors who attend.

Derbyshire Contracts Advice Network continues to provide advice, information & support to groups looking to secure public sector contracts.

Supporting frontline organisations

- Protocol agreed & signed up to by support organisations
- All Volunteer Centres signed up to quality mark



At the original NI7 workshop held in November 2008 a number of frontline organisations had expressed concerns about the impartiality of some of the advice they received from VCS support agencies when those same support agencies could be competing against them for work. Concerns were also expressed about the quality and consistency of services provided by VCS support agencies across the different districts.

A protocol has been drawn up and signed by all VCS support agencies who are members of 3D. This protocol gives assurances that, where there is any potential for a conflict of interest between the frontline group and the VCS support agency, the frontline group will be referred to an independent and impartial advisor.

Across the County all of the VCS support organisations strive to deliver the highest quality service their resources allow – for the CVS' this means adherence to the NAVCA minimum standards and for the Volunteer Centres this means signing up to a meeting Volunteer England's quality mark.

Where to next?



Whilst many of the things that we considered important in creating an environment for a thriving 3rd sector remain the same 3 years on it seems timely to re-visit the NI7 Action Plan given the changed environment in which we operate.

As a VCS we are not only facing new policy priorities but also a very different economic environment. There can't be any escaping the fact that we are all – public sector & VCS - facing huge challenges, how we respond to these will determine how well we survive and whether we thrive.

Re-visiting the NI7 Action plan at this time enables us to reset our priorities and, to a large extent, determine our own future and the role we will play in the future of our communities and Derbyshire as a whole.

Pam Hough, Government Office East Midlands
Pam.hough@goem.gsi.gov.uk



GOEM have much stronger local intelligence about institutions, people, challenges and history to help the national level understand exactly how to make national policies work in a local area;

We consistently work with and through regional and local partners to maximise the effectiveness of policies and investment and exploit synergies;

We are tasked to assessing how well policies are working together (or not) as they impact on place and identifying and removing obstacles to implementation;

A particular strength is our direct link to Ministers advising Ministers and speaking for central government departments in the region, giving a clearly distinct role among local organisations.



This was the vision for Big Society – part of the manifesto

What is the Big Society? And why bother?
No agenda – no guidance
Central interventions – standard models rolled out nationwide – have offered no greater protection against failure and innovation doesn't really spread and governments are traditionally risk averse
Bottom up approach has advantage of resilience

Giving people rights –

- the right to know what public money is being spent on – applies to anybody disbursing public funds
- the right to challenge – consumers (and potential producers) of public services should have the right to change how resources are deployed locally - communities taking control
- duty of public bodies is to facilitate the decentralisation of power – by the time they reach down to local level various branches of central government too specialised to meet the range of needs of communities

Decentralisation is key – transferring money, knowledge and power

Office for Civil Society (OCS) published "Building a Stronger Civil Society" on 14 October – "a strategy for voluntary and community groups, charities and social enterprises"

"Through a radical transfer of power and information we want to inspire more people to come together and drive local solutions to our social problems" – Nick Hurd

Focuses on the 3 core components of Big Society policy

- EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES – giving Local Authorities and neighbourhoods more power to shape their area
- OPENING UP PUBLIC SERVICES – enabling charities, Social Enterprises, private sector, co-ops to compete to offer high quality services
- PROMOTING SOCIAL ACTION – encouraging and enabling everyone to take a more active part in society, promoting volunteering and philanthropy

OCS is Looking for your thoughts on its role in ensuring that civil society has the advice support and influence it needs to help build Big Society in England.

....but

- **Recession**
- **Comprehensive Spending Review**
- **Commitments**
- **Years of top-down control/target frameworks/regional structures**
- **Changes to your local landscape**

3

- The longest and deepest recession since WW2
- Largest budget deficit in Europe (except Ireland).
- 1.4m on out of work benefits for 9 of last 10 years
- Income inequality at its highest since stats began
- Social mobility worse than in USA, France, Spain, Germany, Sweden, Canada, Finland, Denmark

- A higher proportion of children grow up in UK in workless households than in any other EU country
- State spending – a quarter funded by borrowing ...
- ... Increasing our national debt by £3bn per week
- Need debt to fall as proportion of national income
- And structural deficit to be in balance by 2015-16

Comprehensive Spending Review – where to cut: tests

- Is the activity essential to meet Government priorities?
- Does the Government need to fund this activity?
- Does the activity provide substantial economic value?
- Can the activity be targeted to those most in need?
- How can the activity be provided at lower cost?
- How can the activity be provided more effectively?
- Can it be provided by a non-state provider or by citizens?
- Can non-state providers be paid on the results they achieve?
- Can local bodies, not central Government, provide the activity?

And the Government has

- Pledged that health spending increases in real terms
- Ensured that 0.7 per cent of GNI goes on overseas aid by 2013
- Committed to limit, as far as possible, the impact of reductions in spending on the poorest and most vulnerable in society
- Limit as above the impact on those regions heavily dependent on the public sector
- Protect, as far as possible, the spending that generates high economic returns and take measures to support competitiveness
- Ensure a tax and benefit framework that is fair for all

...we asked what you thought: you said:

- Will LAs be capable of community development?
- why new community 'organisers' ?
- jobs will go and volunteers can't take up the slack
- Funding and capacity implications together with rapid programme of change
- Prime contractors only care about end results not helping communities
- Is BS merely devolvement of responsibility rather than 'power'?
- Disparity between articulate, affluent areas and disadvantaged – how to enable change in the latter if no investment and support
- shifting responsibility will turn into shifting the blame and "mistakes won't be tolerated"

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...and on the other hand

- ✓SE can do things better, not necessarily cheaper but in more organised way
- ✓Governance capacity needs to be, and can be, upped to take advantage of opportunities – Big Society will be motivated by economic success
- ✓“We have to make opportunities” – example, offender management, new style linked up services
- ✓Community organisers – consolidate what we already have. And we do have enough of those people
- ✓Come up with quick wins
- ✓use/share data and info effectively to help us improve delivery and stop relying on others to motivate action

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How do we make a Big Society?

Support will be needed – there are initiatives falling out of the policy:

- Big Society Taskforce
- Community organisers
- Community First Fund
- National Citizen service
- £100m Transition Fund (£10m this year)

Localism:

- Power of general Competence
- Community Right to buy
- LEPs
- White Paper on local growth

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Government is testing out how to encourage Big Society:

- National citizen service – providing 10,000 places for teenagers to learn new skills and make a positive contribution
- Pathfinder Mutuals – a Big society approach enabling development of employee led mutuals, providing better services for less
- Deregulation Task Force – looking at ways of reducing bureaucracy, and at the responsibilities of trustees etc.
- Vanguards – 4 pilot areas wanting to drive change towards a Big Society ethos – more to follow

- Big Society Bank – up and running April 2011
- Community Organisers – 5,000 trained individuals who will build networks, develop skills, and create higher levels of community action
- Community First – a grass roots grant programme for local areas to drive their BS activity
- Introduce a Power Of General Competence for Local Authorities -Gives Local Authorities the power to do anything that they consider would benefit, directly or indirectly, the whole or any part of its area, or all/any of the residents in its area. Can't be used to raise local taxes, or make laws. Object is for councils to feel safe to innovate – the Local Gov Act 2000 gave them a general Power of Wellbeing, which was similar but has been challenged in Court
- Community Right to buy –gives community organisations first refusal when assets come onto the market (social lenders working with Government to discuss how to support scheme)
- LEPs - 24 just announced; for the region – Lincolnshire/ Derby, Derbyshire, Nottingham & Nottinghamshire/ Leicester & Leicestershire - “a fairer and more balanced economy driven by the private sector” – £1.4bn Regional Growth Fund
- Directly elected mayors with additional powers
- Directly elected police 'commissioners'
- Directly elected individuals on PCT boards
- Free schools
- State schools may become academies
- Phase out the ring-fencing of grants
- Return decision-making powers to local councils

What does it mean for you?

What would a successful Big Society look like in your area?
 What are the opportunities for getting involved in service delivery – if you want to?
 What are the advantages of being, say, a social enterprise?
 What support will you and others need? How will it be provided?
 How do you spread the best ideas?

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Success depends on local action and local initiative – you are the Big Society
 The landscape won't be the same
 To be truly transformational people from all areas and all backgrounds need the impulse, skills, support and access to resource to make a difference

The Office For Civil Society wants your views!

How can central Government best work with national infrastructure to support and deliver the Big Society? **25 November**

How can online services for frontline groups be improved?
 What can Government do to forge more effective links between small civil society organizations and business/larger charities?
 What support might your organization need to become more resilient?
 Are there ways that expert intervention can support areas which are lacking social capital to improve local relationships and develop a stronger civil society? **6 January 2011**

0121 288 6559 info@strongercivilsociety.org.uk

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OCS published "Building a Stronger Civil Society on 14 October -
 "Through a radical transfer of power and information we want to inspire more people to come together and drive local solutions to our social problems" – Nick Hurd
 Looking for your thoughts on its role in ensuring that civil society has the advice support and influence it needs to help build BS in England

Principles for reform:

- Central investment must be a catalyst for driving greater efficiency and reducing dependence on the state
- Reform of support system must be driven by frontline needs
- Infrastructure organisations have a valuable role to play, not least in strengthening local networks
- To address inequality there is a need to ensure support is accessible by diverse organisations

Responses to Question 9 (the first question on the slide) by 25 Nov, or by 6 Jan to the other questions.