



Doing More with Less

Voluntary Impact
Northamptonshire

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Doing more with less – A solution

Engaging and aligning the capacity of communities through Community organisations

Community based groups and organisations in Northamptonshire have an estimated income of c£300m per annum. In 2016/17 around £9m of this was from formal contracts with local authorities and c£800,000 from grants from local authorities¹.

The capacity of the sector is added to by volunteers across the 2,500 formal and informal community organisations and groups with 150,000 –200,000² people in Northamptonshire volunteering once a month. The value of time committed from volunteers is at least £411m. Volunteers regularly give an average of 12.6 hours³ over a 4 week period, examples of roles include:

- Trustees, who undertake tasks such as finance, planning and director roles
- Volunteer car drivers, who often do a number of days each week
- Trained qualified advisors (e.g. Samaritans, Citizens Advice Bureau)
- Trained mentors and bereavement counsellors (e.g. MIND, Bridge, Cruse)

The reach of the sector into communities, provides a way to engage through those supported, the volunteers and carers (Northamptonshire Carers support c15000 carers).

Engaging and aligning this capacity

Engagement of the sector can be achieved through a number of means

SHARED VISION

Developed jointly, to engage the variety and community reach of the sector.

INVESTMENT

Small grants given to deliver services and support for specific activities or building community capacity and resilience, that support the Shared Vision using the Shared Impact and Outcome measures.

SHARED IMPACT AND OUTCOMES

A framework of shared measures, for example using Public Health outcomes as has been developed by the Community Foundation⁴.

CONTRACTS FOR SERVICES AND SUPPORT

Existing contracts can be weighted using the Social Value Act to give greater opportunities for organisations who are local and can add value through volunteering and drawing in other sources of income. The required impact and outcomes measures embedded in the contracts will lead to community-based organisations moving towards these as an alternate to having multiple measures in an organisation.

OUTSOURCING

Using the sectors lower cost base to do new roles instead of a Unitary recruiting internally (a lower cost base is due to a lower infrastructure and pension burden).

Assurance for community organisations and the services they deliver has in the past been by organisation, as needed, and now supplemented through consortiums such as Commsortia. A more broadly available framework of assurance being developed by VIN as part of work with the CCG, Public Health and others will be part of the countywide Social Prescribing model,

¹ State of the Sector report 2016/17

² NCVO Almanac: data.ncvo.org.uk

³ <http://timebank.org.uk/key-facts>

What is needed?

- The development of the two Unitary model provides an opportunity to have a shared strategy to engage the sector in achieving more reach and impact than either Unitary can achieve with their budgets alone. This can be achieved by using the above measures and through outsourcing to the community sector, which provides investment, engagement and a lower cost option.
- Community organisations need to engage in the development process of the new Unitary structure to develop and prepare their organisations, with the support of local infrastructure organisations and using existing mechanisms to manage grants and their impacts e.g. Community Foundation.

Doing More with Less –context

Although there are probably many reference documents that give context to strategic and commissioning decisions the current ones identified here specifically reference working with the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector (VCSE).

The Care Act calls for:



Improving Health and Care through the home⁴ is a Memorandum of Understanding bringing together key organisations, decision makers and implementers across public and voluntary sectors to maximise opportunities to embed joined up action to improve health services & outcomes.

The Local Government Association in its recent ‘Green paper’ ‘The Lives we want to lead’⁵ states that ‘we work imaginatively with provider & third sector (VCSE) organisations and that changing the model in this way requires an equal partnership between local political, clinical, professional and community leaders in which each area develops its own vision and range of services to suit their own unique local circumstances.

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/improving-health-and-care-through-the-home-mou>

⁵ <https://www.local.gov.uk/lives-we-want-lead-lga-green-paper-adult-social-care>

Doing More with Less – practicalities

The VCSE, as a provider of services, has a range of organisations and consortiums that can provide commissioners with access to service provision that is already in place, can be built on or developed.

The consortiums and infrastructure support organisations in the county can support the building of a market place, assurance frameworks and common impact measurements. A strategy involving a mixture of grants, to test options and build capacity and long-term contracts give the stability and opportunity to grow and develop services using impact measures, milestones and key indicators to retain a measure of control and direction for commissioners and for providers to be innovative.

Both provide a route to engagement on what can be done differently and at a lower cost, which is possible due to the lower infrastructure and pension burden in relation to statutory bodies, and in respect of the private sector these organisations tend to be local and not for profit.

The recent 'Civil Society strategy'⁶ and 2012 Social Value Act (Public Services act)⁷, provide some detail of the building blocks that could be used in commissioning to identify the added value that achieves the Civil Society strategy objectives of



Enabling a lifetime of contribution



Empowerment and investment for local communities



Supporting charities and social enterprises



Ensuring collaborative commissioning

The Social Value Act asks commissioners to consider economic, environmental and social benefits when procuring, using these to get best value rather than lowest cost. However, we believe that a lower cost and added value can be achieved using the following ways of measuring best fit for a potential delivery organisation when procuring contracts and in achieving the added value wanted to build local communities capacity, networks and resilience.

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/civil-society-strategy-building-a-future-that-works-for-everyone>

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-value-act-introductory-guide>

ECONOMIC BENEFITS

- Procuring organisations with a local base, keeps money in the local economy and supports communities
- Multiplier effect of commissioning money circulating in the local economy
- Builds the skill base, particularly where organisations, staff, management and senior managers are all locally based
- Volunteers provide added value through their equivalent work value
- Volunteering provides a route into work or back into work through experience adding to the skill base and the workforce

ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFIT

- Charities bring in additional funding for communities
- Charities working locally travel locally
- Charities ethos re-uses resources
- Local charity shops 're-cycle' goods

SOCIAL BENEFIT

- Building local community networks
- Setting up community groups – particularly self-sustaining
- Volunteering in local communities contributes to those communities and personal value for the volunteer
- A route to engagement for decision makers and commissioners through the existing and new networks
- The additional activities achieved by volunteers (this should not replace statutory services but supplement)
- Impact through qualitative stories and quantitative through shared metrics across all stakeholders (see countywide Social Prescribing development)

The development of shared metrics, assurance frameworks for VCSE organisations and developing capacity is part of the work already underway for the Social Prescribing model for the County, but can also be used in contracting for services.

To create maximum value for money, we believe that there should be an internal challenge within statutory organisations, asking why services, and there are no doubt quite a number, need to be delivered by statutory teams, and if they could not be delivered by external teams, to achieve more for less, and to get the added value as described in the Civil Society strategy and Social Value Act.

The control of contract delivery through key performance Indicators, targets and activity would give the oversight, and outsourcing and minimising the NCC family of organisations and local authority structures, would give an added benefit of flexibility moving towards the new Unitary arrangements.