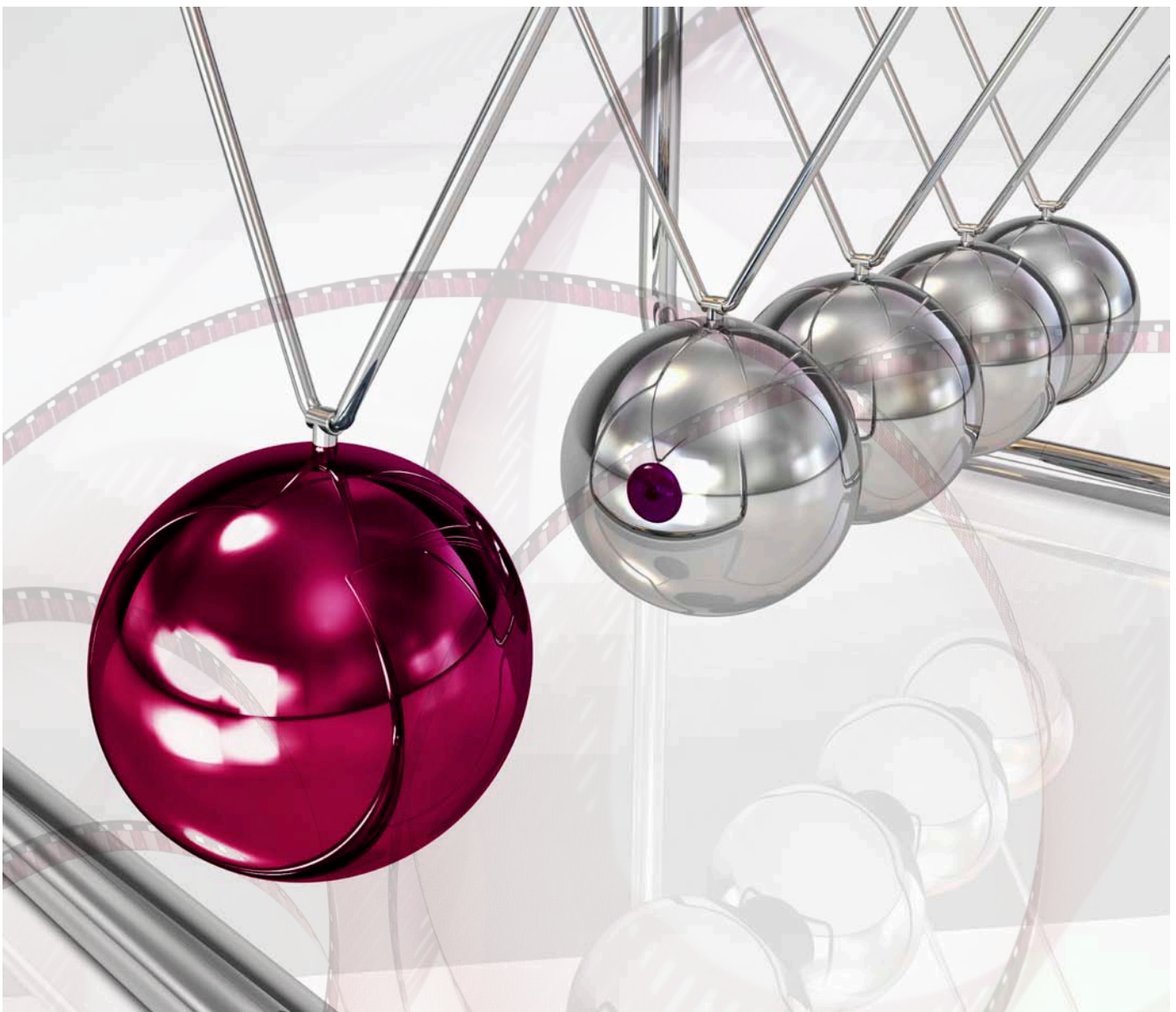


Every Contribution Matters

The Director's Cut

The VCS Contribution to the Delivery of Effective Outcomes for Children, Young People and Their Families in the East and South East Regions of England
(June 2010)



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1 Setting the Scene



1.1 Introduction

The voluntary and community sector (VCS) has a long and commendable history and continues to play a significant role in supporting the social and economic development of our modern welfare state. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the delivery of services and support to children, young people and their families.

The last decade has seen fundamental changes in the way that these services have been designed and delivered. Not least of which has been the implementation of the Every Child Matters agenda (see Appendix A). And with a new national government, an expectation of tight fiscal constraints and the likelihood of further legal and policy changes, the stage seems set once more for fresh thought and new directions.

All of this presents both challenges and opportunities for directors and commissioners in the statutory sector who are responsible for planning and co-ordinating the delivery of services to children, young people and families. But it is also a period of great uncertainty for the dedicated trustees, staff and volunteers who work within the VCS. For some, there could be difficult times ahead.

Whatever transpires, it is clear that the VCS must continue to contribute and add value to the work of statutory sector bodies and other partner agencies in delivering effective outcomes for children, young people and their families. Outside of mainstream and universal services, it is often the diverse, localised and targeted programmes and projects of the sector that best meet the needs of the many unheard and hard to reach individuals and groups in our society.

Some views from the frontline...

'I question whether the VCS do get a genuine look-in. Too often, they are still overlooked...'

Statutory Sector Manager

'Commissioners need to talk to the sector before developing the tender, so the VCS can be more prepared...'

VCS Representative

But herein lays a problem. Despite the intentions of the politicians and policy-makers who championed the Every Child Matters agenda, it is by no means clear that the VCS is sufficiently represented in all of the strategic and commissioning mechanisms that have been built up around Children's Trusts in different local authority areas. Without an appropriate 'seat at the table' it is likely that the distinctive voice - and some of the considerable experience and expertise - of the sector will fail to be recognised. Should the policy backdrop change, the same risks would apply.

A further difficulty is the nature of the contributions that VCS organisations make in the delivery of the strategic plans of local authorities and other statutory partners. What gets measured and monitored most in the implementation of Children and Young People's Plans, for example, are the broad

targets, statutory national indicators and generalised performance indicators that are most closely aligned with the delivery of universal and mainstream services. All too often, the specialised, targeted and preventative services pioneered by the VCS appear to be 'off the radar' in terms of their visibility and quantitative contribution to the outcomes, targets and measures of the statutory sector.

In recognising these problems, some research was commissioned in 2010 by Children England through its national and regional programmes and in collaboration with Children Matter East, COVER and RAISE. The five strands of the research were designed to identify the contributions that VCS organisations are making alongside Children's Trusts and their partners in working towards the achievement of the five outcomes in Every Child Matters.

1.2 The areas of focus

The research included a desk-based literature review and consultation with a wide range of VCS and statutory sector organisations in the East and South East regions of England in the early months of 2010. In tracing the impact of the VCS, the research sought to identify:

- A range of best practice case studies that could provide evidence of the sector's contributions.
- Examples of the sector's inclusion and collaboration in the delivery of specific programmes aimed at children, young people and their families.
- The extent to which the sector is engaged in the commissioning arrangements to deliver effective outcomes and its ability to influence statutory sector strategic decision making.
- Changes and emerging practices that could help to maximise the sector's contribution in the future.

This report presents the key results from this research for VCS managers and statutory sector directors and commissioners. It is, essentially, The Director's Cut.



2 An Outline of the Plot



2.1 Introduction

This section provides an executive summary of the key messages from the research. Some of the detailed findings in relation to each of the five strands of work are set out in Section 3.

2.2 The case studies generated by the research

The research generated over 50 case studies which provided evidence of the invaluable contributions that VCS organisations are making in delivering effective outcomes for children, young people and their families in the East and South East regions. These are featured on a dedicated area of the Children Matter East website - <http://www.childrenmattereast.org.uk/CaseStudies.asp>

The case study research also identified a number of consistent themes:

- There is often a divergence of views between commissioners and providers of service over the nature and detail of reporting required for monitoring performance. While most existing performance monitoring frameworks have evolved to focus on outcomes, many of the organisations required to submit information believe that these are too heavily focused on quantitative data. Streamlining the data gathering might also help to release resources into frontline service delivery.
- There is a need to identify ways of including some softer, and more qualitative, outcome measures within these performance monitoring frameworks. This would help to better recognise many of the contributions that VCS organisations make in delivering effective outcomes.
- The work of the sector needs to be viewed and measured more on the basis of its holistic 'Total Place' contribution, than the narrow range of existing national indicators. Some VCS organisations feel that they are having to adjust their methods of service delivery purely to meet statutory sector reporting requirements.

2.3 Inclusion and collaboration in the delivery of specific programmes

The research found a mixed pattern of partnership and integrated working taking place between the main agencies involved in Children's Trusts. In some cases, the VCS appeared to be sufficiently included and engaged in the roll-out of these initiatives across the different Trust areas, e.g. the Aiming High for Disabled Children programme.

In other cases, the sector appears to have experienced some problems around its inclusion and engagement, e.g. expectations in some Trust areas that VCS organisations will assist with developmen-

tal work – such as facilitation or consultation to identify needs – for no extra funding and where there is no certainty that the sector will be asked to provide the services required following the needs analysis.

The sector was found to be working closely with its statutory sector partners in developing and embedding collaborative working practices that should help to keep children and young people safe, e.g. supporting the delivery of safeguarding training and tailoring this to suit the diverse and wide-ranging needs of the VCS. In continuing this momentum, there needs to be further work undertaken to establish just how widespread and embedded these safeguarding principles and practices are across the sector.

While there were many – albeit patchy and inconsistent - examples identified of close working and inter-agency collaboration in adopting other new working practices, like those associated with the Common Assessment Framework, some problems were also noted, e.g. the time and associated costs of dealing with the increasing complexity of case work in many professional areas. Whereas statutory sector providers have the capacity to absorb these additional demands many VCS organisations feel that the extra work is outside of their contractual obligations and evidence that commissioners are consistently expecting ‘more for less’.

Similarly, there is a particular need to further clarify and demystify the Lead Professional role for some VCS managers and staff to enable them to better understand its purpose and to overcome their apprehension in working in teams with others who take on this role.

2.4 The engagement in commissioning and ability to influence decision making

Despite clear improvements in many areas, the existing arrangements for commissioning appear to be a consistent barrier to the sector’s ability to contribute further towards the achievement effective outcomes for children, young people and their families. While the research did not set out to quantify its effectiveness, the evidence suggests that since the publication of Clear Expectations (Children Matter East, 2009) there has been little, if any, acceleration in commissioning and little consistency in intentions or procedures.

The research identified concerns among both commissioners and providers. Most of the individuals who contributed their views, believed that all Children’s Trust partners should be subject to the same processes for developing service provision, whether statutory, independent or VCS. They also recognised the value of effective and consistent support – with areas like Thurrock, Essex, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire being cited as good examples of where there has been beneficial support in the early stages of many developmental processes.

From a commissioner’s perspective, there were concerns expressed about the variable nature of VCS tender submissions. For VCS managers the concerns included the apparent lack of understanding by commissioners of the sector’s cost base and the need to recover much of this through tendering and bidding processes. Many of the better performing Trusts were found to be offering a

mix of investment streams and the research provided evidence of both large and small funding packages being used to support the achievement of outcomes for children, young people and families.

Those involved in the case studies pointed out that they cannot always provide the range of design and delivery options commissioners are seeking. This might be the result of the excessive paring-down of VCS-led services, which can remove the capacity and ability of organisations to respond and can prove to be counter-productive to commissioner's aims. There was also anecdotal evidence that some Trusts appear to be keener to commission from in-house services or to seek the 'most appropriate external service', without this necessarily meaning that it would come from the 'mixed economy' that includes the VCS.

Despite these messages, there was evidence that cultural change is beginning to take root in the VCS, with some providers taking a more bullish approach and working to the sector's strengths in terms of responsiveness and reach. In one Trust area the sector is proposing to develop its own Children's Plan that will identify the services it offers, its priorities, costs and - most importantly - the outcomes it achieves.

Outside of commissioning, 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. However, the research also identified that attendance at all the strategic boards, forums and planning meetings is difficult to achieve even for large VCS organisations as a result of the time and resource requirements, e.g. one 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.

Positive feedback was received on the role of the various VCS umbrella organisations in representing the views of the sector on decision making groups/boards. One of the strengths was seen to be their inherent understanding of the issues affecting the sector.

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 this to be truly influential. The approach adopted by the Cambridgeshire Children's Trust in developing its Children and Young People's Plan – referred to as the 'Big Plan' – was cited as a model of good practice in engaging the VCS in strategic development. Many felt that this had been carried out in an open and transparent way.

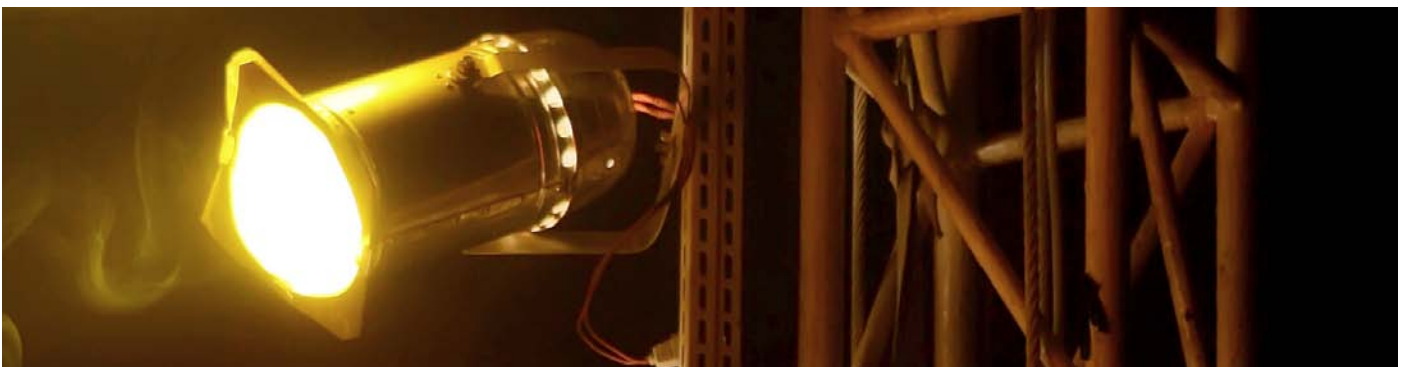
2.5 Changes and emerging practices

The research identified a number of key factors that appear to be helping VCS organisations to work successfully in delivering effective outcomes for children, young people and their families. 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.
- **Close integrated working** – some organisations are making best use of the opportunities around integrated working, e.g. Joint Housing Panels involving all of the key agencies. These allow for greater sharing of expertise and knowledge and can enable VCS organisations to pool or ‘barter’ for 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 can often deliver more than they have been tasked to do at little extra cost. This adds value to the VCS offer.
- **Service delivery** – the independent and non-stigmatising approach of many VCS organisations can enable them to sustain the engagement of hard to reach and disaffected young people. Some are able to deliver a mix of formal and informal approaches to cater for individual needs and enable support workers to build an effective two-way dialogue that can make a real difference to any challenges faced.

2.6 The way forward

Section 4 of this report sets out the key improvement opportunities identified by the research. This includes recommendations in relation to commissioning, the engagement in strategic planning, improved performance monitoring and the embedding of integrated working practices.



3 Scene Selection



3.1 General

All five strands of the research conducted in 2010 provided evidence of the invaluable contributions that VCS organisations are making in delivering effective outcomes for children, young people and their families in the East and South East regions.

Many of the case studies demonstrated, most strikingly, that individual VCS organisations are contributing and adding value to a multiplicity of outcomes, targets and performance measures. Some of this work is closely aligned with the delivery of universal and mainstream services and can be seen to be contributing directly to the outcome targets and performance measures identified by the statutory sector. However, it is fair to say that many other VCS programmes, projects and initiatives cannot be viewed in this way.

In fact, the nature of many of the specialised, targeted and preventative services pioneered by the VCS often makes it difficult to identify or align their contributions neatly with the prescribed bandings of outcomes, targets and performance indicators that have built up around the Every Child Matters agenda and set down in Local Area Agreements and Children and Young People's Plans, e.g. the established targets and performance indicators for the Enjoy and Achieve outcome are based predominately on the acquisition of educational qualifications and credits with a strong focus on participation in education. There are few measures in place for broader educational attainment - including personal and social development and enjoyment - which the VCS makes the greatest contribution to. As a result, many sector-led activities and initiatives can be seen as dipping effectively 'under the radar'.

There are some risks with this. Whatever outcome-monitoring, target-setting and performance management frameworks are used in the coming months and years, it will be important to build in some mechanisms for identifying and measuring the largely qualitative contributions made by VCS organisations which underpin the delivery of effective outcomes. A good example would be the identification of clear measures for preventative work. Without these – in an era of tight fiscal control and potential cost-cutting - there is a risk that commissioning will focus predominantly on universal and mainstream service delivery. In effect, many services based around early intervention and prevention may be seen as less of a priority at a time when, arguably, they are likely to be needed most in helping to deliver long-term service improvements and budget reductions. Only by reducing levels of need can the statutory sector hope to keep pace with increasing service demands and spiralling service costs.

The remaining paragraphs of this section outline some of the particular contributions that VCS organisations are making in helping to deliver effective outcomes.

3.2 Stay safe

Early intervention and prevention is central to any work that is focused on protecting children and young people from harm and keeping them safe from bullying and anti-social behaviour.



Case study – LINX Programme

Hampton Trust delivers a LINX Programme in Hampshire, the Isle of Wight, Devon and Gloucestershire. The programme is aimed at young people aged 12 – 18 years who are showing signs of escalating violent behaviour, who may have committed offences or are at risk of doing so.

The basic principles of LINX, is looking with young people at their life experiences to understand why they are resorting to violent or risk taking behaviours. They may have experienced bullying, bereavement or more commonly domestic abuse.

LINX aims to break cycles of violence and abuse by involving young people in a programme that educates and explores the issues. Sessions focus on topics such as domestic violence, the impact this has on young people, their relationships, anger management, peer pressure, respect and responsibility. Participants are invited to reflect on their personal experiences, how this has made them feel and the impact of this on their offending behaviours.

Young People are empowered to develop strategies for coping with violence in the home alongside personal safety strategies for outside the home.

The VCS delivers a wide range of early intervention and preventative services, some of which include working with young people to prevent their engagement in harmful and anti-social behaviours, e.g. the research identified examples of VCS work designed to help young people to break the cycles of domestic violence and abuse. These projects provide support to families so that they can continue to provide safe and stable homes for their children in times of crisis. As significantly, the VCS also supports young people to work through some of the challenges they face, make positive decisions and lead safer, healthier and active lives.

The sector was also found to be working closely with its statutory sector partners in developing and embedding collaborative working practices that should help to keep children and young people safe, e.g. the research identified that a number of organisations have been supporting their Local Safeguarding Children's Boards in delivering safeguarding and child protection training and tailoring this to suit the diverse and wide-ranging needs of their VCS colleagues. In continuing this momentum, there needs to be further work undertaken to establish just how widespread and embedded these safeguarding principles and practices are across the sector, particularly among the smaller, community, faith and volunteer-based organisations that are working with children and young people.





Case study – Supporting Community Cohesion

Aik Saath supports community cohesion and works with young people from all communities, faiths and backgrounds to promote and encourage peace and racial harmony by teaching conflict resolution and anti-racism skills. It was set up following a mediation process that successfully prevented gang violence escalating between young people from the Hindu, Muslim and Sikh communities of Slough and Southall during the mid-1990s.

Aik Saath delivers training in a multitude of settings, including primary and secondary schools, colleges and young people's centres. Its training is delivered by a core team of young volunteers, who are referred to as the peer training team. The work focuses on conflict resolution, peer mediation and mentoring, anger management, anti-racism skills, preventing violent extremism and territorialism workshops. The organisation has also led 'Say no to knives' campaigns and creative art workshops to explore peer pressure. Its peer training team is made up of 50 to 60 highly-skilled volunteers aged 12-25. Young people attend volunteer training for two and a half hours each week. Their volunteering is accredited by V-Inspired and their learning is accredited through the Open College Network.

In a similar vein, the sector is being encouraged to participate in the roll-out of a number of initiatives aimed at promoting more integrated working between organisations working with children and young people, e.g. the implementation of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and adoption of the Lead Professional role. While progress has clearly been made in these areas, many of those consulted during the research reported that the roll-out has been inconsistent across the two regions. Some Children's Trusts appear to be much further ahead than others and it would be helpful to see a greater sharing of best practice in this area to help overcome some of the obstacles that others are facing, e.g. the research pointed to a particular need to further clarify and demystify the Lead Professional role for some VCS managers and staff to enable them to better understand its purpose and to overcome their apprehension in working in teams with others who take on this role.

3.3 Be healthy

The VCS delivers a significant range and diversity of services aimed at improving the physical and mental health of children and young people and enabling them to live healthy lifestyles. However, while identifying the importance of these in the delivery of a multiplicity of outcomes, the research found that many of the programmes, projects and schemes concerned were difficult to align with the statutory sector targets and indicators contained within Children and Young People's Plans and other high-level strategies. VCS organisations also reported finding it difficult to get their voices heard and contributions recognised in an arena dominated by larger NHS provider-led services and schools.

The VCS contribution was found to be more clearly identifiable in relation to specific target areas - such as disability and emotional and social well-being - and in relation to specific programmes, e.g. the roll-out of Aiming High for Disabled Children. In other areas, such as child and adolescent mental health services, the existing performance reporting frameworks went some way in acknowledging the contribution only status of VCS service delivery.



Case study – Embrace

Embrace supports the emotional and social well-being of young parents in Norwich and King's Lynn. Initially, the project was set up to prevent teenage pregnancy and to support teenage mothers in Norwich. All of its work is outreach on a one-to-one basis. Part of the organisation's activity is focused on enabling its service users to access community provision, e.g. allowing teenage parents to make links, be introduced to and access the services of their local children's centre. Many of these live independently and the project specifically targets those who are hard to engage and vulnerable. As well as supporting their social and emotional well-being, the project is helping to tackle some of the specific issues related to pockets of deprivation in Norfolk, e.g. worklessness, poor housing, low aspiration/school attainment and the long-term costs of economic inactivity. It also reports to health funders on improvements in smoking cessation, immunisation take-up and breastfeeding.

One of the particular strengths of many of the VCS services examined during the research, was their role in improving the engagement and participation of children, young people and families. This reflects the wider history and traditions of VCS organisations in providing advocacy for many of the unseen or unheard in our society and in placing service users at the heart of their service design, development and performance management systems.

Alongside this, the sector was found to be making a significant - but often unheralded - contribution to the capacity building, training and development of the children's workforce, e.g. providing professional development on disability awareness, mental health and transitions. While this work is likely to contribute to the improvement of life chances for children and young people it often appears to go unacknowledged at Children's Trust board level.

The overarching message that came from the consultation with the twenty-one VCS organisations and thirty statutory agencies that contributed to this strand of the research was that the work of the sector needs to be viewed and measured more on the basis of its holistic 'Total Place' contribution, than the narrow range of existing national performance indicators.

In tacking this, Children's Trusts could do more to foster a better co-production of services that recognises the more explicit participation of VCS organisations in adding value to the work of their statutory partners. Particular emphasis could be placed on the building of quality partnerships between NHS providers and the VCS and ensuring that the lessons learnt in the roll-out of the pilot phase of the Targeted Mental Health in Schools programme are applied in the wider implementation across both regions, e.g. ensuring that the sector is involved in the early planning stages before budgets, plans and allocations are agreed.

3.4 Enjoy and achieve

The VCS delivers many programmes and projects across the East and South East regions that assist children and young people in fulfilling their potential and developing broad skills for adulthood.

Sadly, much of this good work gets overlooked with the predominant focus on targets and performance indicators linked to participation in education and the acquisition of educational qualifications and credits.

The research identified that although some Children's Trusts and Children and Young People's Plans do prioritise the achievement of both educational attainment and enjoyment, there were fewer measures in place for broader educational attainment – such as personal and social development and enjoyment – the very areas in which VCS organisations often make the greatest contributions.

As with other aspects of the VCS offer, some of the support here is preventative in nature and the research identified the significant concerns of many providers that these types of services might be cut in any period of budget reductions.

The VCS delivers a range of universal services and a number of targeted intervention and preventative services that address some of the underlying and root causes of poor educational attainment. These encourage and facilitate sustained school attendance which can increase the potential for improved educational attainment and enjoyment. The case studies generated by the research also provided evidence of VCS organisations improving the engagement of hard to reach children, young people and families in a wide and diverse range of positive activities, e.g. volunteering and training schemes which enable young people to develop their skills and broaden their horizons in preparation for future employment.



Case study – Self Managed Learning

Self Managed Learning (SML) runs a learning centre in Brighton that supports 12 young people each year between the ages of 11–16. Those that attend the centre require home education for a number of different reasons. This may be as a result of bullying, exclusion and/or not be academically inclined or prefer this way of learning. Some young people through their experience at school may feel neglected, have poor self-esteem and low confidence in their abilities. Each student determines his/her own curriculum and is taught differently from a classroom setting. The centre provides the structure and support necessary for them to take control of their own learning by setting and working towards personal goals. Young people receive a Certificate with a Record of Achievement when they have completed the SML programme and these achievements have reference to practical and specific skills - such as art or the use of technology – and interpersonal abilities. There is also a facility for students to gain Arts Awards in music, art, journalism/writing, drama and crafts.

3.5 Make a positive contribution

The VCS provides a wide range of innovative universal, preventative and targeted services which assist children and young people in their personal development and enable them to contribute fully and positively to their communities within the East and South East regions. Many of these services are based around the effective engagement of young people in positive activities.

Much of the sector's success in this area is based around its flexibility in service delivery – often in being able to apply a mixture of both formal and informal approaches based on the particular needs of individuals – and its long history of operating in local areas with clear knowledge and expertise in engaging with hard to reach groups. Other factors include the sector's independence 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.



Case studies – Positive Activities

Essex Boys and Girls Club delivers sporting, outward bound activities and night exercises, where stretching but achievable challenges are set for young people, 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.

The WAY Project in Cambridgeshire has supported a group of young people to successfully apply for funding from the Youth Capital Fund to build a community hall in Waterbeach. With a suitable venue, the project will be able to increase the number of positive activity sessions available for young people in the area.

Despite this, some of the VCS contributions in this area are overlooked when considered within the existing framework of performance targets and indicators adopted by Children's Trusts and their partners. The predominant focus of Children and Young People's Plans was found to be on survey measures, participation targets and indicators linked to reductions in offending and re-offending behaviour.

The research also identified other problems in demonstrating the contributions made by VCS organisations, e.g. some of the smaller and community-based organisations appeared to be struggling to monitor robustly the progressive impact that their services have on young people. In part, this is due to the informal and flexible nature of the services being delivered and the fact that many are insufficiently funded to allow for anything other than 'at a glance' monitoring.

In improving matters for the future, Children's Trusts could do more to promote awareness of the wide range and diversity of services in the VCS marketplace and assist in maximising the opportunities for greater partnership working. For their part, commissioners could improve the ways that decisions around future funding streams and notifications of tender awards are communicated to the sector. Delays here can significantly impact on the ability of VCS organisations to effectively plan and sustain service delivery.

3.6 Achieve economic well-being

While VCS organisations provide many services that help young people and their families to achieve

economic well-being, the research identified that the sector is particularly effective in assisting young people who are vulnerable - due to physical, mental or social disadvantage – in acquiring the skills and knowledge needed for employment, which can, in turn, support them in becoming more economically independent.

Many of the services identified in the case studies were based around developing the self-confidence, enterprise and team-working skills of young people through developmental activities, training and advice, e.g. providing access to work experience and work-based learning.

Despite the plethora of services and activities being delivered to support the entry of parents and young people into employment, it is clear that in the current economic climate more needs to be done to create paid employment opportunities, e.g. messages from some of the Children and Young People's Plans in the South East suggest that the number of young people claiming benefits is rising.

Other VCS services in this area include support to disadvantaged families which helps them to address issues related to their poverty, although many of these services are not necessarily recognised or defined as child poverty initiatives.

The ability to engage and sustain the participation of hard to reach groups and the holistic, flexible and non-stigmatising approach offered by many VCS organisations can be seen as a key factor in helping the sector to offer a continuum of services to meet the needs of young people and their families in this area.

One of the major challenges identified by the research was the availability of sustainable funding to support the longer-term changes in families' lives that can lead to economic well-being. Much of the available funding from the public sector is short-term and while VCS organisations are often proactive in obtaining alternative funding from other sources, frontline service delivery in this area remains resource-intensive.



4 The Finale



4.1 Some areas of focus

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

- It is imperative that the VCS is more closely 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 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 of power for partnership working to be truly effective.
- The work of the sector needs to be viewed and measured more on the basis of its holistic 'Total Place' contribution, than the narrow range of existing national performance indicators.
- 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 contribute to, including those who are not funded by the statutory sector. Improvements here will help to better inform future strategic commissioning approaches.
- There is a need to identify ways of including some softer, and more qualitative, outcome measures within existing performance monitoring frameworks. This would help to better recognise many of the contributions that VCS organisations make in delivering effective outcomes for children, young people and families.
- There is a need to promote greater awareness of the smaller and 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 key practice development areas, e.g. the roll-out of individualised budgets and demystification of CAF-led integrated working and the Lead Professional role.
- More needs to be done to understand the consequences of cutting preventative VCS services in the current economic climate and the impact this may have on vulnerable children, young people and families over the longer-term. Impact assessments should be undertaken to support decision making and appropriate measures put in place to prevent the needs of children and young people escalating.
- The VCS needs to seize the opportunity to flag up its contribution to Children’s Trusts and other statutory sector partners in terms of preventative service delivery. Statutory sector commissioners need robust market information in this area, e.g. what specialist services are being offered by whom and where, how many young people are accessing these services and what positive outcomes are being achieved. This information would be a powerful message to broadcast and would better reflect the sector’s contribution. Ideally, it would be best in the form of an annual report on the contribution of the VCS to outcomes for children, young people and their families within our civil society.
- Consideration needs to be given to developing support that helps all partners, but specifically the children and young people’s VCS in key areas, e.g. developing partnership bids, consortia and joint working proposals.



5 Closing Credits – A Cast of Thousands



5.1 Acknowledgements

Without the dedication of the many thousands of trustees, staff and volunteers who work for the wide variety of VCS organisations operating in the East and South East regions, there would not be much of a story to tell in this report. To them, we say a big thank you.

The research team is indebted to the significant numbers of people from these organisations and their statutory sector partners who contributed the comments, insights and information which helped to shape this report. Each of the detailed research reports which sit alongside this document contains a full list of the people consulted in relation to the five strands of the research. Their inputs are gratefully appreciated.

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Appendix A - The Backdrop

The legislative and policy planning context

The publication in 2003 of the Green Paper Every Child Matters signalled major changes in the way that services for children and young people were to be designed and delivered. Following a period of consultation, Every Child Matters: The Next Steps was published and underpinned by the passing of the Children Act 2004. The aim of the agenda was for every child and young person - whatever their background or circumstances - to have the support they needed to:

- Stay safe – to be protected from harm and neglect and to be safe from bullying and anti-social behaviour.
- Be healthy – to enjoy good physical and mental health and to live a healthy lifestyle.
- Enjoy and achieve – to fulfil their potential and to develop broad skills for adulthood.
- Make a positive contribution – to support the community and environment and engage in law-abiding behaviour.
- Achieve economic well-being – to live in households free from low income and to not be disadvantaged by poverty.

These became the five desired outcomes of Every Child Matters and were designed to be consistent with the General Principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

At a local level, it is Children's Trusts that have overseen the production and implementation of Children and Young People's Plans – the key local strategies that have been used to deliver outcomes for children, young people and their families. They have been responsible for bringing together and co-ordinating all of the relevant statutory and non-statutory agencies that contribute to these plans. The intention was for all of the agencies and organisations that provide services to children and young people - from hospitals and schools, to police and VCS organisations – to team up in new ways, share information and work together to protect children and young people from harm and to help them achieve what they want in life - to meet their full potential.

The statutory guidance issued in the wake of Every Child Matters identified and reinforced the message that the VCS has a significant contribution to make in improving outcomes for children and young people – especially in reaching the wider

'As the third sector has an essential contribution to make, every Children's Trust Board should include third sector representation. Third sector organisations often work with marginalised and vulnerable groups who do not engage positively with statutory organisations....'

Children's Trusts: Statutory Guidance, 2010

community, identifying unmet needs, involving users in service delivery and developing innovative practice. In particular, the Third Sector Strategy and Action Plan published in July 2009 recognised and valued the importance of the VCS and was committed to taking account of the potential of small local organisations as well as large national players in the sector.

Despite the extensive legislative and policy framework which aimed to ensure that local authorities and their partners extended their co-operation on service delivery to encompass the VCS, there are still concerns about the extent to which the sector has a genuine 'seat at the table'. Equally, given the performance reporting frameworks and national indicators that have been used to date, it has often been difficult to identify and measure the contributions that the VCS makes in working with its Children's Trust partners to achieve effective outcomes.

It was against this backdrop that the research for this report was commissioned. And while the legislative and policy planning context may be about to change, it is hoped that the majority of the messages in this report will still be relevant in helping to improve the VCS contribution to the delivery of effective outcomes for children, young people and their families well into the future.

