

MAPPING THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR IN BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

FINAL REPORT

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ABSTRACT

The main points to come out of this research are that:

- the voluntary and community sector in B&NES is much larger, and far more significant in social and economic terms, than was previously believed;
- it has the potential to make a greater contribution to meeting community needs and delivering Council priorities and programmes than it does at present; but
- it is currently hampered by a lack of information, poor communication between its members, patchy support services and an absence of leadership and strategic thinking.

Government policy is driving a new vision for the role of the VCS in strengthening communities, delivering public services and developing new forms of enterprise. In B&NES, the LSP is intended to set the local agenda and then bring together public, private and VCS resources to deliver it. But the Council and its partners have not yet thought through in what ways the VCS should play its part or whether the sector as it currently exists has the necessary capacity or the resources to deliver. A long-term approach to developing the sector and the environment in which it works is needed, organised around a VCS development partnership with a shared vision, an agreed strategy and good business planning. The starting point for this project is a joint Statement of Intent from all the leading partners.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

About the study

The study profiles the voluntary and community sector (VCS) in B&NES, and answers questions about its contribution to community outcomes based on existing sources of information and interviews with VCS and Council managers. There is both a national and a local context for the study. Nationally, the Treasury and Cabinet Office review of the role of the Third Sector in social and economic regeneration, the Quirk Review of public asset transfer, and the ongoing ChangeUp programme to support VCS development with better infrastructure services are all relevant. So too are the B&NES Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), the Community Strategy, the Local Area Agreement (LAA), and discussions within public sector agencies about the best way of commissioning appropriate services from voluntary and community organisations (VCOs).

It was accepted from the outset that there might be gaps in the information about the VCS that would make it difficult to fulfil every aspect of the study brief. The study was successful in compiling data about VCS characteristics, but it would also be true to say that information about the VCS in B&NES is fragmented and of variable quality. Where there is no hard data, we have made 'best estimates' of the current position. Some of these estimates are based on assumptions. Wherever possible, these assumptions have been validated by reference to comparable data taken from other studies. However, in some cases we have made an estimate which is itself based on another estimate. These should be considered as 'speculation' rather than 'fact'. We have tried to make it clear in the text how reliable we think each figure is.

Profile of the VCS in B&NES - Headlines

There are around 2,000 voluntary and community organisations in B&NES. More than half these organisations are involved in five main types of activity:

- sport and exercise;
- health and social care;
- social and leisure activities;
- grants and funding; and
- arts, culture and media.

A further quarter of these organisations are involved in:

- education and training;
- children and young people;
- community development;
- environment and conservation; and
- faith and religion.

We estimate that more than 20,000 people act as volunteers. That is 12% of the B&NES population. Of these, around 5,600 people act as charity trustees; and as many as 12,000 people are possibly involved with the management of VCOs.

According to Council research (Voicebox 12) more than 6,500 volunteers are likely to be aged under 35. This runs counter to the common perception that volunteering is in decline among younger people.

We estimate that volunteers working with VCOs contribute more than 5 million hours of their time every year. On this basis, the annual value of volunteering in B&NES is around £29 million.

The total number of people employed on a full-time or part-time basis in the VCS is around 12,500, or 15% of the economically active population in B&NES.

Our best estimate of the sector's income is around £25 million per annum. Based on regional averages,

- around 1,000 VCOs (half of all local VCOs) probably have an income of less than £10,000 per annum;
- 600 (30%) have an income of between £10,000 and £100,000 per annum;
- 250 (12%) have an income of between £100,000 and £1 million; and
- possibly as many as 180 (9%) have an income of more than £1 million per annum.

B&NES Council and PCT funding for the voluntary and community sector was £5.25 million in 2006/2007. This is 20% of our estimate of all VCS funding.

Based on our estimates of income and the value of volunteering, we calculate that the gross value added to the B&NES economy each year by the VCS is around £50 million. This makes the VCS contribution to the local economy greater than that of the advertising sector, for example, and comparable with other elements of the creative services industry which is particularly significant in B&NES.

Commentary on the VCS in B&NES

There is a very large voluntary and community sector in B&NES given the size and population of the local authority area. It is diverse, and involved in a wide range of activity. It involves large numbers of volunteers; and it makes a very substantial contribution to local community life. Yet little is known about the sector and about the large number of small, local groups in particular.

There have been no previous mapping studies in B&NES of any note; therefore existing knowledge about the VCS is incomplete. Previous estimates of the size of the sector are two- to three-times lower than our own count. Interpreting the information that we have been able to collect about the B&NES VCS in comparison with data from studies we have conducted elsewhere¹, it seems likely that at least half of all B&NES VCOs are small, have very little funding, and are likely to have a very localised base for their activities. For this reason they are sometimes hard to identify, yet they play an important role in communities.

Evidence from our other studies also suggests that these small groups need a regular flow of volunteers, plus access to information, advice and support to keep them going if they do not receive public or charitable funding. This means that they need to know where to get support, and good quality support services need to be readily available. This is not the case in B&NES, where the majority of frontline groups are not in contact with either the VCS organisations that lead and provide support for the sector, or with the Council. This finding has thrown into prominence the role of VCS support organisations, and the Council's involvement with and funding for the sector.

There are two generic support providers - B&NES CVS and the Volunteer Centre.

- The CVS is doing good work and is well regarded by its peers and by Council officers. While it is clearly meeting all its contractual obligation and sets out to provide services for the whole VCS in B&NES, some observers suggest that its coverage across the B&NES area is uneven. (This is not just a problem for the CVS in B&NES - CVSs elsewhere experience similar issues of lower service take-up in rural areas). Resources, as well as the sheer volume of catch-up work that the CVS is attempting, are underlying issues.
- The Volunteer Centre is also doing good work and is well regarded by most of those we spoke to. However, the Volunteer Centre is not a member of the Voluntary Sector Steering Group which coordinates activity among the leading support and network VCOs. We think it should be.

There are five other specialist support organisations which are significant in particular areas of activity:

- Community Action (the rural community council for the West of England area);
- Bath Racial Equality Council (BREC);

¹ We have completed or been involved with mapping studies in the following areas: Brighton and Hove; the Alton district in Hampshire; Oxfordshire; Surrey; the Hampshire sub-region including Southampton, Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight; Portsmouth, Isle of Wight

- the Care Forum, that works with health and social care providers;
- The West of England Council for Independent Living (WECIL) that focuses on support for disabled people; and
- Envolve, advocating the sustainable use of resources.

Taking an overview of these organisations and the services they provide, it is clear that while there is good work taking place, the sum of the various parts does not add up to a coherent whole. VCS support services are patchy across B&NES. Some groups are plugged in to support services and others - possibly a majority of VCOs - are not linked in at all.

Our conclusion is that infrastructure and network support for the VCS in B&NES are fragmented. There are three reasons for this:

- the basic mapping of 'who needs what' and 'who does what' has not been carried out, so there is no evidence base on which to build a coherent strategy for developing and supporting the sector;
- there are divisions between some of the leading VCS support organisations, caused partly by their focus on their own priorities and concerns, and partly by their reluctance to collaborate with one of the key organisations;
- there is an absence of overall leadership when it comes to developing a vision and strategy for the way the VCS should develop, and for the kind of support services that the sector as a whole will need as it moves forward.

B&NES Council and the VCS

The Council is seen by VCS managers and some of its own officers as departmentally-driven in the way that it works with the VCS. Each department has its own network of relationships, and these are not joined up internally. This makes it difficult for the sector to collaborate with the Council; difficult for support and network organisations to advise front-line VCOs on Council priorities and programmes; and difficult for the Council to engage with the sector at a corporate level. This has immediate implications for the Council's ability to engage the VCS in strategic partnerships around the LSP and LAA. In the longer term it means that neither the VCS support organisations nor the Council are in a position to promote the kind of development within the sector that is envisaged in government policy and that will be needed if the Council's own aims are to be achieved.

In many ways the disjointed approach to working with the sector within the Council mirrors the fragmentation of the VCS itself. Just as the VCS and its lead bodies do not have a clear identity or a vision for their future; so the Council, whilst being generally well-disposed towards the VCS, does not have a corporate strategy for how it sees the VCS and what its own role should be in developing and supporting the sector.

Conclusion

The VCS in B&NES is large and very active. It involves large numbers of volunteers; it makes a very substantial contribution to local community life; and it has a significant impact on the local economy. Yet very little is known about the sector, and about the many smaller groups within it. There is a significant lack of coherence in the way that it is organised and presents itself to the wider world. It is several years behind VCS networks in some other parts of the South West Region in terms of its organisation and ability to engage as a sector with changing social needs and public programmes. The sector needs to develop a clear identity and purpose. To do this it needs leadership and high quality support. And as a starting point all those involved with the sector need to have much better information about its characteristics and activities, and there need to be better systems for communicating with front-line VCOs. Taken together, these point to the need for a new strategy for VCS development in B&NES.

Recommendations for the VCS

The key headings under which a strategy for VCS development programme would be assembled are similar to those around which the current programme of investment in support services by CapacityBuilders² is being organised:

- vision for the future;
- leadership;
- strategy and planning;
- identity and structure;
- programme delivery and coordination;
- resourcing the development programme.

Vision

Social change and policy change are making new demands on the VCS. To meet these challenges head-on, it is essential for the VCS in B&NES to develop a shared understanding of its role in the area and a vision for its future. Given the sector's fragmentation, it is not viable for a vision to be developed in the short term in a way that involves the sector as a whole in democratic debate. The infrastructure and network organisations, in consultation with their public sector partners, have a responsibility to start the process by outlining a vision of what the VCS will look like in ten years time, and a strategy for promoting change. They should then work through the existing networks to develop this and embed it within the sector's thinking whilst starting an initial programme of work.

Leadership

The only agencies that are currently in a position to start the process of change are the VCS support organisations plus possibly a small number of other significant VCOs, such as Somer Housing, which might have an important role in facilitating asset transfer from public bodies to the wider VCS. These lead agencies need to do two things. They need to think about the role and contribution of the VCS in the twenty-first century; and given the weak track record of Avon-wide VCS development in the post ChangeUp era, they need a common agenda for VCS development, support and promotion.

² Capacitybuilders is a non-departmental government body set up in 2006 to take over the management of the ChangeUp programme and to work with other funders to build capacity in the voluntary and community sector.

Strategy and planning

The B&NES infrastructure and network organisations should pool their existing knowledge to carry out three inter-related tasks over the next three to six months:

- consider what kinds of change are needed within the VCS in response to the community cohesion, community capacity-building and public service delivery agendas;
- identify the main information and support needs that B&NES front line groups have now, and will increasingly have as they respond to these new demands; and
- assess the extent to which the support services that are needed can be delivered within the current framework, and what changes are needed.

Out of this initial profile, it will be possible to develop a strategy for the development of the sector locally, and in its sub-regional and regional context; and a business plan for the way in which the sector would meet these developmental and support needs.

Identity and structure

The sector needs an identity that is lacking due to its fragmentation at present. It also needs some form of organised structure. At the core of this is the need to have contact information about frontline groups and a reliable method of communicating with them. The contacts database that we have assembled is a starting point for this process, but the information is still incomplete.

We recommend that a partnership of leading VCOs and the Council should subscribe to the Guidestar UK data sets³ on charities and companies limited by guarantee. Even with this information, it will still be necessary to find a way of obtaining information on the many small unconstituted groups that are neither charities nor companies. Information of this kind would form the basis for communicating with the sector on a one-to-one basis, and through a range of different media including web-based and other electronic media. It would also allow more detailed mapping that builds on the foundations of this study.

Programme delivery and coordination

Evidence from ChangeUp work in other parts of the country is that a VCS development programme cannot be sustained by one organisation acting alone, or by a number of different organisations working separately from each other. It is therefore essential that, as part of the visioning and strategic planning exercise that we are recommending, the question of programme delivery and coordination is addressed.

³ Guidestar UK has been contracted by the Charity Commission in England and Wales to make available data on all registered charities. In the near future, Guidestar UK will also make available data on companies limited by guarantee.

Our recommendation is that:

- an expanded and more inclusive Voluntary Sector Forum should become the consultative user body for inclusive VCS development;
- delivery should be entrusted to a formal partnership of VCS support organisations working in close collaboration with B&NES Council and the LSP - a 'VCS Development Partnership' - that would include all those organisations that provide support services for front-line VCOs;
- the VCS development partnership should form an executive committee to drive forward the work programme;
- this executive might be built around an augmented Voluntary Sector Steering Group whose terms of reference already give it a line of accountability to the Voluntary Sector Forum;
- there should be a lead support organisation coordinating day to day work (but not undertaking the whole work programme);
- the partnership should have agreed terms of reference that incorporate
 - o a 'code of conduct' governing matters such as conflict of interest;
 - o terms of reference for the executive committee; and
 - o protocols governing accountability of the partnership to the user forum, and of individual support agencies to the partnership.

Resourcing a VCS development programme

One of the principles underlying government policy for the VCS is the view that the sector needs to become more 'sustainable'. That means five things:

- using whatever public and charitable funding is available to pump-prime activities;
- maximising the use of voluntary effort and community resources in support of VCO objectives;
- generating income wherever possible through activities (e.g. sale of goods and services, development of new not-for-profit enterprises);
- strengthening the sector's asset base; and
- redeploying existing resources to meet future needs rather than perpetuating historical patterns of spending.

These same principles apply to a VCS development programme. Resources for this programme would probably come from four main sources:

- local authority and other public sector funding focused around regeneration, corporate programmes such as the community strategy and LAA, and bespoke funding for VCS development to pump-prime change in the sector;
- funding from national agencies (CapacityBuilders, FutureBuilders, Big Lottery/Basis) and charities with an interest in VCS development;

- reprioritising current activities, refocusing existing money for service delivery by infrastructure bodies into a more strategic approach to VCS development;
- appropriate asset transfer to support new enterprises and activities; and
- a greater emphasis on joint working and the avoidance of duplication between agencies.

Successful negotiation of new money and redeployment of existing resources will depend on the ability of the sector to make a strong business case for support. This case would be based around the vision, development strategy and business planning that we advocate.

Recommendations for the Council and LSP

The role of the Council and LSP

B&NES Council and its partners in the LSP have an important role to play in assisting the development of a vibrant and dynamic VCS in its area. We believe there are three ways they need to respond to this challenge:

- they need to support the development of a strategy for VCS change, initially via the leading support and network providers, and in the medium term through inclusive structures that involve the sector as a whole;
- they have an important commissioning role to play in clarifying the leadership role of the main support and network organisations; and to achieve both of these objectives,
- they need to clarify their corporate policies for the sector, and achieve greater consistency of approach between individual departments within the Council, and between members of the LSP.

Statement of Intent

A statement of intent is needed from the Council and its partners as a first step. This should set out a vision for:

- the kind of VCS that they wish to see in B&NES;
- how they see the sector's role in strengthening communities through developing community capacity and assets, improving public services, and being involved in new forms of enterprise;
- how they will help to support a VCS development programme, and the place of this programme within the Community Strategy and the LAA.

Developing the framework

The Compact Board is the ideal forum in which to discuss how the Council and its partners can work with the VCS to achieve a future-orientated development strategy and business plan for the VCS in B&NES.

It is essential that all the key players - including important VCOs, public sector organisations such as NHS Trusts and the Police - are involved in some way in influencing the VCS development programme, either through the Compact Board or the LSP. This means that there must be strong links between the LSP and the Compact. We envisage that the LSP should take on responsibility for overseeing the Compact, and become its guardian.

Commissioning infrastructure development

It is desirable for the commissioned services agreements for VCS support organisations to be centred on their role in developing the sector and in facilitating VCS involvement in key programmes such as the LAA. The outcomes on which funding would be based should be linked initially to the development of an agreed development programme for the VCS, and subsequently to the delivery of this programme in accordance with the business plan.

Local accountability

The Volunteer Centre and Bath Racial Equality Council have management boards and terms of reference that focus all their energies on the B&NES area. Other organisations such as B&NES CVS, Community Action, the Care Forum and WECIL have governing bodies and aims that by their very nature cover a wider area than B&NES. In terms of service delivery and where contracts are involved there this is not necessarily a barrier to effective service delivery. However, in the case of infrastructure services this lack of co-terminosity in the areas being served by key organisations could potentially weaken the B&NES focus of third sector development activity unless the delivery of the different organisations is very well planned and coordinated. The absence of a well thought out Changeup infrastructure development plan suggests this issue needs to be addressed.

A requirement to work together

The Council should consider whether it should continue to fund or support any organisation that is unwilling to play a part in sector-wide development in some form, or to work collaboratively with other infrastructure and network organisations in the interests of developing the voluntary sector as a whole.

A Third Sector Development Agency for B&NES?

One possible way forward that would deal with issues of delivery and local accountability would be for the Council to commission a 'Third Sector Development Agency' for B&NES. This could either be a single organisation or a hub of organisations working to a common purpose. Either approach would fit easily into the structures for programme delivery and coordination that we have suggested above.

Funding VCS development

The Council and its LSP partners have a key role in funding VCS development. In 2006/2007, just over £220,000 (4% of the Council's total VCS funding) was allocated specifically to four VCS umbrella organisations.

Looking forward, there is a need for the Council and its partners to support better leadership and a higher level of VCS infrastructure capacity and delivery by the VCS support bodies. That probably carries with it a requirement to consider new ways of funding infrastructure support. The options might include:

- achieving a greater return on existing investment in infrastructure organisations by the Council and its partners;
- increasing the proportion of total expenditure on support for the VCS which is allocated to infrastructure support;
- helping the sector to lever-in funding from outside bodies such as CapacityBuilders, Big Lottery and FutureBuilders; and/or
- increasing total levels of funding in order to promote VCS development and improved infrastructure support.

This funding should be predicated on the development by the 'VCS development partnership' in consultation with the wider VCS of a vision and strategy for VCS development and a business plan for delivery.

Other recommendations

We further recommend that the Council should:

- ensure that all departments become signatories to the Compact within six months (i.e. not later than 31 March 2008) as a basis for a more consistent approach;
- standardise its commissioned services agreements; and
- review the continued use of discretionary grants as a basis for departmental funding and establish clear guidelines for when discretionary grants are and are not appropriate.

All members of the LSP should sign up to the Compact if they have not done so.

The Compact codes of practice need to be supported by organisational and departmental action plans that set out clearly in what way each of the LSP partners will foster the codes.

1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 The brief

In February 2007, Bath and North East Somerset ('B&NES') Council commissioned North Harbour Consulting to profile the voluntary and community sector ('the VCS') in its area. The study set out to describe the voluntary and community sector in B&NES, and answer questions about its contribution to community outcomes based on existing sources of information and interviews with VCS and Council managers. There is both a national and a local context for this study. Nationally, the Treasury and Cabinet Office review of the role of the Third Sector in social and economic regeneration, the Quirk Review of public asset transfer, and the ongoing ChangeUp programme to support VCS development with better infrastructure services are all very relevant. So too are the B&NES Local Strategic Partnership ('LSP'), the Community Strategy, the Local Area Agreement ('LAA') and the internal review of commissioning arrangements for voluntary and community organisations ('VCOs') involved in the provision of public services.

Two options for carrying out the profiling study were considered:

- a bespoke survey of the sector; or
- mapping based on existing sources of information.

The second option was chosen because there was no comprehensive source of contact information about VCOs held by the Council and its VCS partners that could form the basis for a survey. The first option was also rejected on grounds of time and cost.

The brief finally agreed in March 2007 was as follows:

"Based largely on information that is currently available within the Council and its statutory and voluntary sector partners, augmented with a series of interviews ... the study is intended to collect whatever information is currently available locally and from similar studies elsewhere as a basis for analysis and recommendations on five related subjects:

- *the profile of VCOs working in the area, and any perceived gaps in VCS activity that are significant for the Council's Local Area Agreement and Community Strategy;*
- *the capacity of the sector to contribute to the aims and objectives of the LAA work programme, and its current position in respect of the commissioning and/or procurement of services by the Council and its statutory partners;*
- *the sector's infrastructure support needs generally and in respect of the LAA and public service delivery roles;*
- *the financial and organisational capacity and sustainability of the local sector's infrastructure and support organisations, and their ability to meet the needs of front-line organisations; and*
- *a broad look at the significance and contribution of the sector to local community life and the local economy."*

1.2 Methodology

Overview

The information on which this report is based has been derived from a number of sources:

- a desktop and online review of documents and reports provided by B&NES Council and voluntary sector support organisations or available on the BE: Online Communities website;
- compilation and analysis of a number of data sets provided by Council departments and VCOs, augmented by online research into the data on charities working in B&NES held by Guidestar UK⁴;
- cleaning and consolidation of this multi-source data into a single Access database, which formed the basis for further analysis and which we hope will provide the foundations for follow-up work by the Council and its VCS partners; and
- information provided in the course of interviews with, or through the completion of an electronic copy of the interview pro forma by, managers in leading VCOs and Council departments. These interviews provided information about the current state of the VCS, and the links between the sector and key Council departments.

Compiling the database of VCOs

Data sets containing names, contact and in some cases other details about VCOs working in B&NES were provided by the following organisations:

- Guidestar UK online listing of charities referenced to B&NES - information extracted one charity at a time and compiled into a consolidated listing;
- B&NES CVS;
- B&NES Council partnerships list;
- B&NES Council LSP contacts list;
- B&NES Council Equalities Team contacts list;
- B&NES Council list of residents associations;
- B&NES Council clubs contacts list;
- List of suggested additions supplied by Policy and Partnerships Team.

This information was then matched, consolidated into a single database, and cleaned to remove duplicates.

Interviews

Our preference was to interview as many people as possible on a face to face basis. However, in a number of cases this did not prove possible due to their diary commitments. As an alternative, we offered either a telephone interview or an opportunity to complete an electronic version of the interview pro forma.

⁴ Guidestar UK is a commercial company contracted by the Charity Commission in England to publish statistics about individual registered charities and profiling information about groups of charities derived from charity registration documents, annual returns and financial accounts. Later in 2007, Guidestar UK will also publish statistics about companies limited by guarantee derived from registrations and annual returns to the Registrar of Companies in England. The information about individual charities can be accessed from the following website: <http://www.guidestar.org.uk/>

In total, 18 people were interviewed face to face - each interview lasting about one and a half hours; two interviews together with a number of follow-up conversations with interviewees were completed on the telephone; and nine responses to the interview pro forma were returned electronically, including a response from a group of officers in one Council department.

The following individuals were either interviewed face to face or by telephone, or completed the electronic pro forma:

Voluntary and Community Sector

- Janice Fortune and Meryl Hequet (Bath and North East Somerset CVS - joint interview, plus a number of follow-up telephone calls to MH);
- Helen Morrison, Volunteer Centre
- Vanessa Collier and Dick Whittington (Community Action - joint interview, plus follow up telephone calls);
- Ronnie Wright (Care Forum, plus follow up telephone calls);
- Rosco Jones (Bath Racial Equality Council);
- Rachel Williams-Lock (WECIL);
- Cathy McMahon (Somerset Housing);
- Chris Head (Envolve);
- Jilly Edwards (Quartet); and
- Patricia Webb, (Compact Board).

Bath and North East Somerset Council

- Andy Thomas, Sara Dixon, David Trethewey (Policy and Partnerships - various meetings and interviews);
- Basil Wild (Voluntary Sector Funding Coordinator, Adult Social Services);
- Eddie Hale (Council Procurement Officer);
- Pam Richards (Strategic Planning Officer, Social Services);
- Liz Price (Children's Planning and Review Manager, Children and Young People);
- Sarah Shatwell (Group Manager, Housing);
- Emma Coates (Policy and Projects Officer - Rural);
- Philip Frankland (Early Years Team, Children and Young People);
- Stephen Bird (Heritage Services);
- Jane Briggs (Environment and Heritage);
- Alison Baker (Sport and Active Leisure);
- Beth Nelson (Community Safety and Drugs Partnership);
- Martha Cox (Regeneration Capacity Building, BCP); and
- Nick Lacey (Education)

Bath and North East Somerset Primary Care Trust

- Derek Thorne (Assistant Director, Corporate Affairs)

People were selected for interview largely on the recommendation of officers in the Council's Policy and Partnerships team. However, the list of possible contacts provided by the Council contained more than fifty names. Some people who were approached did not take part either because they said that they had very little knowledge of the VCS or that they did not have time to spare. This still left more names than could be accommodated within the timetable and budget for the study.

We therefore selected those VCS organisations that were providing infrastructure or network support for other VCOs on the grounds that they might be expected to have a good overview of the VCS in B&NES; and Council officers with strategic or commissioning responsibilities rather than an operational role. This approach meant that the contribution of some significant front-line service providers such as advice agencies - and the CAB in particular - whose work is well known through existing reports and prior knowledge has been incorporated into the study without the need for an interview.

1.3 Extent to which the study aims were achieved

As a result of this work, we have been able to give a broad description of the VCS in B&NES, the way it is organised, the role of the leading support and network organisations, the contracting links with Council departments, the way the Voluntary Sector Compact is being administered, and the sector's role in relation to the Local Area Agreement and other Council priorities. There are interesting findings under each of these headings, and we make recommendations at the end of the report.

It was accepted from the outset that there might be gaps in existing information about the voluntary and community sector that would make it difficult to fulfil every aspect of the study brief. While the study was successful in compiling data about the VCS's characteristics, it would also be true to say that information about the VCS in B&NES is fragmented and of variable quality. This limited our ability to construct a more detailed profile of the sector. For example, no-one has a comprehensive database for the VCS that identified groups and where they are based. This is one of the tasks that we have completed that has allowed us to make a reasonably accurate estimate of the number of VCOs working in B&NES.

We have been less successful in forming judgements about gaps in VCS activity that are significant for the Council's Local Area Agreement and Community Strategy other than the general conclusions incorporated in Part 4 of the report. However, we have made some suggestions about the commissioning of services by the Council, and how the commissioning process could be used to achieve the Council's corporate aims and objectives generally, as well as the specific outcomes identified in the LAA.

We have looked at the sector's infrastructure support needs and the way they are being met, together with the capacity of the sector's infrastructure support organisations. Once again, there is a significant lack of information about VCS support needs across the sector. Although a start has been made by the VCS in organising a broadly-based VCS forum, this does not yet involve a significant proportion of B&NES VCOs.

Thus there is no inclusive forum for the sector in B&NES that could have formed a basis for a consultative or survey based approach to assessing future intentions or support needs.

In spite of these reservations, this study is breaking new ground in giving a profile of the VCS in B&NES. We hope the study and its recommendations will lay the foundations for further work that will establish a more comprehensive understanding of what the VCS in B&NES is and does, and what its future potential might be.

1.4 Comments on the interpretation of data

We set out at the start of the study to describe the number and characteristics of VCOs working in B&NES and how the sector's work is benefiting local communities and contributing to the achievement of Council policies and programmes. To remedy some of the shortcomings that we found in the data, we have augmented it with data taken from other studies to make assumptions about the shape of the VCS in B&NES. This means that some of our findings and conclusions need careful interpretation and we set out the main points for consideration in the following paragraphs.

The number of VCOs in B&NES

We have been able to establish in general terms how many VCOs there are in B&NES. The resulting count is between two and three times higher than previous estimates have suggested. Whilst it is evident from the data that there are many more VCOs active in B&NES than previously thought, the number of VCOs listed on the database we have constructed may not be the final number. For one thing, there is probably some turnover among the VCS population as new groups are formed and existing groups decline. In addition:

- our estimate includes a small number of national charities derived from the Guidestar UK data, not all of whom have local branches in B&NES or the surrounding areas but which may provide some level of service within the area;
- the list also includes VCOs who covered the County of Avon before it was abolished and which are still listed in the data sets we have been given, even though in some cases there is an equivalent local organisation based within B&NES.

There may be good reasons why the Council or one of the leading VCS support organisations might wish to have both national and sub-regional organisation on their databases, but these inclusions may exaggerate the number of B&NES VCOs although any distortion is probably marginal. An initial check has been made by Council officers, but further local knowledge is needed from the VCS to eliminate any that are listed for purely historical reasons, or that currently have no real connection with the B&NES area.

In spite of our efforts to clean the database, there may also be a small number of duplicates where the names are recorded differently in different data sources. Once again, local knowledge is needed to carry out a final check.

The Council and its VCS partners need to decide as a matter of policy whether to include projects that are subsidiaries of a lead VCO, such as a hostel for the homeless run by a charity. We have included projects of this kind where they were listed in one of the source databases.

There is also a possibility that a number of very small, unconstituted VCOs may not be listed on anyone's contact list and might therefore be omitted from the composite database that we have created. Examples might include local clubs and societies, or informal care networks. Studies elsewhere suggest that there are probably a number of these small groups that are not currently known to the main VCS support organisations or the Council. A definition of the categories of organisation that we have included or excluded from the database and analysis is given in Appendix 2.

Size of VCS organisations

'Size' can be measured in a number of different ways - number of service users, number of members, number of volunteers, number of employees or annual turnover. There is no readily available B&NES data on the number of service users or members⁵. However, there is regional data on the number of charity trustees, and the number of charity employees that can be used as a basis for some rough and ready estimates. The 2001 Census includes a count of the number of people involved in formal and informal volunteering.

VCS activity

We have made assumptions about the main activities in which individual VCOs are engaged from their names (e.g. Action for Pensioners). It is also possible to discern in some cases who their beneficiaries are. Because of variation in the way that organisations name themselves, however, or because different VCS infrastructure organisations use different classification systems in their data sets, we have had to adopt a hybrid list of headings that in some cases combines 'activities' and 'beneficiaries'. This is similar to that found in studies elsewhere, but does not fully conform to current best practice which is to separate 'activities' from 'beneficiary'. If we had not taken this approach, however, it would have been impossible to classify a significant proportion of the VCOs on the consolidated database by activity. A very small number of the VCOs listed in the VCS database we compiled (11 or 0.5% of the total number) have names that give no clue whatsoever on the type of activity that they are engaged in. Most of these are local charitable trusts (e.g. Charity of Revd Edward Charles Harrington) whose activities are most likely to be associated with the relief of poverty and sickness, or with education.

The value of volunteering

We have tried to make an estimate not only of how much time is given by volunteers in B&NES each year, but also what this is worth in monetary terms.

⁵ A number of VCS umbrella organisations hold some profiling data of this kind, but there are difficulties associated with the definition of categories, the format in which the data is held, the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998, and the view of some agencies that such data is their own 'intellectual property' and may not therefore be shared, which have meant that it is not practical to assemble such data for this study.

A background study for H M Treasury's cross-cutting review of the voluntary and community sector⁶ suggests that volunteering has social, economic and environmental value even where there is no monetary exchange. There may also be economic outputs in terms of jobs created, or training and services provided. The Treasury review looked at a number of ways of valuing volunteering. One conclusion was that volunteers provide services worth between 2x and 8x the cost of the volunteer to the organisation in which they are located. Overall, however, the study concluded that there is no general measure of the value of voluntary effort, and there appears to be no alternative to the use of wage rates as a proxy for the value of volunteers' time.

In this study, we have followed the method used in the Treasury review - calculating the amount of voluntary time committed, and then applying a wage value to this time. We have used two benchmarks to calculate a minimum and optimum value of volunteering in cash terms:

- The UK National Minimum wage at October 2007; and
- notional wage-equivalents for different types of volunteers published by the European Social Fund.

Economic contribution

We have also made an estimate of the value that the VCS adds to the B&NES economy.

National Statistics has developed standard ratios for converting total output into gross value added ('GVA')⁷ to the national GDP, and these ratios have been used in other studies to estimate the value added to the local economy by the VCS. To make this calculation, the gross turnover of the industry in the area is multiplied by the GVA ratio to give the value added to the local economy.

The activities carried out by the VCS in B&NES cut across a number of standard industry classes. For the purposes of this calculation we have combined and then taken an average across the ratios for the following industries: 'social work activity'; 'recreational services'; 'membership organisations'; 'research and development'; 'land and transport'; and 'other service activities'. The average GVA to Total Output ratio across these headings was 0.56. The B&NES VCS's total output value is multiplied by this figure to calculate its gross value added to the local economy.

Other VCS characteristics

Guidestar UK publishes information about the VCS as a whole in the South West of England which we have used as the basis for making assumptions about some features of the sector working in B&NES.

⁶ Active Community Unit (2000) Volunteering and community activity today: material assembled for the Active Community Cross-Cutting Review 1999 - 2000, Home Office

⁷ Gross Value Added measures the contribution to the economy of each individual producer, industry or sector in the UK.

We have also used data from the 2001 Census, and from a community survey carried out by B&NES Council in a similar way. Where assumptions of this kind are made, the source of the reference information is given in the table (see Appendix 3) or in a footnote.

1.5 Reliability of assumptions

Where there is no hard data, we have made ‘best estimates’ of the current position. Some of these estimates are based on assumptions of one kind or another. Wherever possible, these assumptions have been validated by reference to comparable sources of data and other studies. However, in some cases we have made an estimate which is itself based on another estimate. These should be considered as ‘speculation’ rather than as ‘fact’. We have tried to make it clear in the text how reliable we think each figure is. Readers should bear in mind this general advice when reading Part 2 of the report.

2: A PROFILE OF THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR IN B&NES

2.1 The number of VCOs in B&NES⁸

Registered charities in B&NES

Guidestar UK lists 922 registered charities that have identified Bath and North East Somerset (B&NES) as a place where they work in the registration documents and annual returns they submitted to the Charity Commission.

Compared with other local authorities in the South West Region, the B&NES area appears to have a higher than average number of charities. There are 20,407 registered charities in the region, and 46 district or unitary authorities. Assuming that there is a consistent density of charities across the region, this gives an average of around 443 charities in each local authority area. The number of charities in B&NES is therefore twice the average number for local authorities in the South West.

Total number of VCOs in B&NES

When non-charitable voluntary and community organisations identified in the other data sets⁹ that we have used are added to the Guidestar UK data on charities, the total number of VCOs in B&NES is 2,033. This is significantly more than in comparable local authority areas for which we have information, and between two- to three-times the number given in previous estimates.

2.2 VCS activity in B&NES¹⁰

Table 1 (Appendix 3) gives a profile of VCOs by their main activity, ranked by the number of organisations in each category. More than half of these organisations - around 1,100 groups - are involved in the top five activities:

- sport and exercise;
- health and social care;
- social and leisure activities;
- grants and funding;
- arts, culture and media.

A further 25% - around 500 groups - are involved in the next five activities:

- education and training;
- children and young people;
- community development;
- environment and conservation; and
- faith and religion.

⁸ These are reliable figures

⁹ The names of these organisations together with other information are contained in a MS Access database that we have supplied to B&NES Council.

¹⁰ These are fairly reliable figures

2.3 Size of the sector - numbers of people involved

Volunteers

A community survey commissioned by B&NES Council in the period October to December 2006 found that around 3 in every 10 respondents (28%) aged 18 or over are involved in some kind of volunteering. Half of them (14%) volunteer for 2 hours or more each week¹¹. The community survey also found that the proportion of people volunteering was higher in rural areas (32%) than in urban areas - Bath (28%); Keynsham (27%); Midsomer Norton (22%). Contrary to conventional wisdom which assumes that the level of volunteering is declining among younger people, 55% of those who volunteered were aged under 35; one third were under 24 years if age.

If these findings were applied to the adult population of B&NES as a whole¹² - 145,131 people - that would mean that up to 40,000 people could be involved in some kind of voluntary work, and 20,000 volunteer for two hours or more each week. This does not necessarily mean that they volunteer for a VCO, however. The 2001 Census found that more than 16,000 people in B&NES provide unpaid care to their family, friends or other people in the community - which might count as 'volunteering' - of whom:

- 75% undertake unpaid care for between 1 and 19 hours each week;
- 9% undertake unpaid care for between 20 and 49 hours each week; and
- 16% (2,500+ people) undertake 50 or more hours of unpaid care each week.

Where unpaid care is given to people in the wider community other than the immediate family it overlaps the count of volunteers given above.

Trustees and management committee members

Guidestar UK data also shows 112,400 trustees involved in the management of registered charities across the South West Region. Assuming that B&NES charities have the same proportion of trustees as their share of the region's total number of charities (i.e. 5%), that would give an estimated 5,600 trustees managing charities in B&NES. This total may include some people who are involved with the management of more than one organisation. Pro rata to the total number of VCOs in B&NES, the total number of trustees and management committee members associated with VCOs of all kinds in B&NES could be between 11,000 and 12,000. One again, there may be some duplication within this figure, although it does not appear high in comparison with other mapping studies of this kind that we have conducted.

The implications of these figures for the level of volunteering in B&NES are considerable. These people are a largely unknown resource that needs encouragement and support, but the support organisations have no means of getting in touch with a majority of them.

¹¹ Voicebox 12 results - [Summary Report](#)

¹² 2001 Census figures - Usual Resident Population aged 18 and over

Employees

Guidestar UK data on charities in the South West Region shows that there are more than 112,000 paid employees working for charities in the region. If 5% of the regional total are working for charities in B&NES¹³, the number of charity employees working in the area is estimated to be around 5,700.

The total number of people employed within the wider VCS could be as many as 12,500. This is approximately 15% of the economically active population in B&NES,¹⁴ and would be comparable with the manufacturing, retail and wholesale trades, health and social work sectors.¹⁵

2.4 The time given by volunteers and its monetary value

The amount of time given by volunteers

A national survey of volunteering¹⁶ showed that, on average, volunteers were committing 4 hours per week to formal volunteering, plus a further 1.7 hours per week in the form of 'informal volunteering'¹⁷ - the kind for activity measured in the 2001 Census as 'unpaid care', for example.

Using the B&NES community survey data which that showed 14% of B&NES' 18+ population volunteering for two or more hours each week, it is estimated that volunteers in B&NES may be contributing at least 1.9 million hours of volunteering each year. In practice the total is likely to be higher than this as the '2 hours' is a lower threshold for the time they spend, not an average.

Using the National Volunteering Survey findings which show a larger number of volunteer hours, B&NES volunteers may be contributing:

- more than 3.8 million hours of formal volunteering each year;
- 1.6 million hours of informal volunteering each year; and
- a total of 5.4 million volunteer hours each year.

Of this total, charity trustees and members of management committees may well be contributing 3.3 million hours of their time each year - that is 60% of the total. Translated back into terms that are comparable with the B&NES community survey, this would imply that the average number of voluntary hours per volunteer given each week in B&NES is around 5.5 hours per week.

¹³ i.e. pro rata to the percentage of B&NES charities in the South West Region

¹⁴ The 2001 Census gives the number of adults aged 16 - 74 in the B&NES population as 123,167; the proportion of adults in this age range who are economically active as 67.3%; and the economically active population therefore computes as 82,891 people.

¹⁵ 2001 Census Key Statistics, Table 11a, Industry of Employment.

¹⁶ BRMB International (1997) National Survey of Volunteering in the UK, Institute of Volunteering Research

¹⁷ For comparison, the Voicebox 12 study showed that 14% of the B&NES 18+ population were involved in volunteering for 2 or more hours each week; however, the survey does not ask for information about the average number of volunteering hours that volunteers commit each week, and that would be a useful question for future surveys.

¹⁸ Oxfordshire Infrastructure Development Consortium (2006), Oxfordshire Infrastructure Development Plan

Even this could be an underestimate. For example, a VCS mapping study carried out in Oxfordshire in 2005¹⁸ showed committee members giving an average of just under 10 hours per week, and other volunteers giving an average of just over 6 hours per week.

The value of volunteer time

The time that volunteers give to their groups is significant and has a value which needs to be added to the monetary value of cash income in order to gain an idea of the significance of volunteering to the VCS in economic terms.

There are a number of different ways of attaching a monetary value to volunteering. The most basic approach is to cost volunteer time at the October 2007 minimum wage level of £5.52 per hour. On this basis, the annual value of volunteering in B&NES is just under £30 million per annum¹⁹.

However, it is possible to refine this approach using earnings data suggested in 2003 by the European Social Fund which differentiates between the value of different kinds of volunteering. The input made by 'charity trustees and management committees' is valued at £15.30 per hour, and 'other volunteers' time is valued at £8.55 per hour²⁰. Based on these earnings figures:

- the value of volunteering by charity trustees and management committee members is around £46 million per annum;²¹
- the value of time committed by other volunteers is around £18 million per annum;²² and
- the total value of volunteering is around £64 million per annum.

2.5 Size of the sector - measured by income

The sector's income

Guidestar UK data for the South West Region gives the total annual income for all registered charities in the region as £3,160 million. On a pro rata basis (5% of the regional total), the total annual income for charities working in B&NES is estimated to be around £16 million.

Were non-charities to be funded at similar levels to charities, then the total income for the B&NES VCS as a whole could be in the order of £30 to £35 million. However, the rate of income generation for non-charities is likely to be well below that of the charity sector, and a more realistic estimate is probably around £25 million.

¹⁹ Calculated as 5,400,000 hours x £5.52 per hour - the rate that applies from 1 October 2007

²⁰ Indexed to 2007 prices

²¹ Calculated as 3,800,000 hours x £15.30 per hour.

²² Calculated as 1,600,00 hours x £8.55 per hour

Average income of charities in B&NES by income bands

The Guidestar UK data on charities in B&NES publishes summary statistics on the percentage of charities in each region whose income falls within prescribed bands. Again assuming that B&NES charities are typical of those in the South West as a whole, Table 2 (Appendix 3) shows the number and percentage of B&NES charities in each income band. On these assumptions:

- 54% of all B&NES charities would have an income of less than £10,000 per annum, and can be defined as 'small';
- 30% would have an income between £10,000 and £100,000 per annum and can be defined as 'small to medium';
- 13% of B&NES charities would have an income between £100,000 and £1 million, and can be defined as 'medium to large'; and
- 9% would have an income of £250,000 or more and can be described as 'large' or if their income is over £1 million, as 'very large'.

Average income of all VCOs in B&NES by income bands

If the percentage of charities falling into each income band in the South West were applied to our estimate of the total number of VCOs based or working in B&NES 2,033, there would be the following numbers in each size band (full data is given in Table 3, Appendix 3):

- around 1,000 VCOs would be defined as 'very small';
- around 600 would be defined as 'small to medium';
- around 250 would be defined as 'medium to large'; and
- around 180 would be defined as 'large', or 'very large' if their income was more than £1,000,000 per annum.

Sources of income

Guidestar UK provides a breakdown of the main sources of income for registered charities within the South West:

- 55% comes from 'sales'²³;
- 26% comes from voluntary giving;
- 5% is investment income; and
- 14% comes from other sources that include charitable grants (Big Lottery etc) and discretionary grants from the public sector.

Applying the same percentages to charities in B&NES, we estimate that:

- income from sales is around £8.7 million;
- income from voluntary giving is around £4.1 million;
- investment income is around £0.8 million;
- other income is around £2.2 million.

²³ Income from sales includes (a) trading activities and (b) 'sale of services' via e.g. contracting or SLA arrangements with local authorities. It is not possible to separate contracted services from other forms of trading due to the way in which the Charity Commission and Guidestar UK collects financial information from charities. Therefore, there is no basis on which to estimate what part public sector funding generally, and local authority funding in particular, plays in the total package of voluntary sector funding. This could only be established through a survey of B&NES VCOs.

If funded at a comparable rate, our estimate of the income from different sources for the VCS as a whole might be as follows:

- income from sales is around £14 million;
- income from voluntary giving is around £6.5 million;
- investment income is around £1.0 million; and
- other income is around £3.5 million.

Total income for the VCS as a whole would be around £25 million.

These income figures should be treated with caution as ‘possibilities’ rather than as ‘firm estimates’. Even so, the orders of magnitude that they convey suggest that the VCS in B&NES is economically very significant.

The Guidestar UK data do not allow us to make an estimate of the proportion of VCS income accounted for by public funding, and by local authority funding in particular. However, other studies suggest²⁴ that for every £1 of local authority funding for the VCS, somewhere between £4 and £7 is levered in from other sources. Information provided by B&NES Council shows that funding of the voluntary sector as a whole in 2005/2006 totalled £4.9 million. This is 15% of the estimate of total funding for the B&NES VCS, or £1 in every £6.75p. If these figures are broadly correct, this puts the ratio of B&NES Council funding to funding from all sources towards the top of the range suggested by other studies.

2.6 The economic contribution made by the VCS in B&NES

Economic contribution

Organisations within the voluntary and community sector and their public sector partners often see their contribution to their communities in terms of social benefit, and the improvements that they help to bring to the quality of life. What is less often recognised is the contribution that the VCS makes to the local and national economy.

A recent study of creative industries²⁵ in B&NES showed that the gross value added (GVA) to the local economy in 2000 was substantial - £415 million in 2000, or 18% of creative industries GVA in the region. This compares with a GVA for the B&NES retail sector of £178 million.

We calculate the GVA for the VCS in 2006/2007 at around £50 million per annum (see page 20 for method).

This makes the VCS’s contribution to the local economy greater than that of the advertising sector, for example, and comparable with the manufacturing, recreational services and other business services input to the creative services sector which is significant in B&NES.

²⁴ North Harbour Consulting (2003), Economic and Social Audit of the Community and Voluntary Sector in Brighton and Hove, Brighton and Hove Dialogue 50:50 Group set the figure at just under £1 to £4; Policy Research Institute (2000) Valuing the Voluntary and Community Sector in North Yorkshire and York set the figure higher at around £1 to £7

²⁵ Kate Jenner (2007) Creative Industries - Sector Profile, B&NES Economic Development, page 3. Creative Industries are based on individuals with creative arts skills; working in alliance with managers and technologists; making marketable products whose economic value lies in their cultural (or ‘intellectual’) properties. The industries included in this list are advertising, architecture, art and antiques market, crafts, design, designer fashion, film and video, interactive leisure software, music, performing arts, publishing, recreational services, software and computer services, TV and radio.

3: HOW THE VCS IN B&NES MEASURES UP - POLICY, IDENTITY, CONTRIBUTION AND SUPPORT NEEDS

3.1 The National Policy Context The VCS's future role

There is a growing recognition in government policy of the contribution made by the voluntary and community sector²⁶ and of its potential in helping to drive forward social and economic regeneration. One of the Cabinet Office's 'Departmental Strategic Objectives' linked to its departmental Public Service Agreements is to:

“ ... drive delivery of the Prime Minister's cross-cutting priorities to improve outcomes for the most excluded people in society and enable a thriving third sector.”²⁷

The significance of the VCS role in central government policy can be gauged by the attention given to the sector in a series of recent government reviews and policy statements. The most recent of these reports, and probably the most significant in terms of the direction it sets for the relationship between government and the VCS over the next ten years, is the final report of the Treasury and Cabinet Office review of the third sector's role in social and economic regeneration²⁸. We have set out below (Figure 1, over page) a summary of the main points from this report as a reference point against which to examine the role that the VCS is playing in B&NES.

²⁶ See, for example, Private Action, Public Benefit - A review of charities and the wider not-for-profit sector, Strategy Unit, Cabinet Office, September 2002

²⁷ Department for Communities and Local Government (2007), The New Performance Framework for Local Authorities and Local Authority Partnerships: Single set of national indicators, page 14

²⁸ H M Treasury and The Cabinet Office (2007), The future role of the third sector in social and economic regeneration: Final Report, Cm 7189.

Figure 1: H M Treasury/Cabinet Office Third Sector Review - Headlines from the Final Report

Policy Framework

- Third sector organisations are expected to influence policy and service development through research, campaigning and consultation;
- The sector can help to strengthen communities and will be funded to take on or develop community owned buildings, build relationships between local authorities and local organisations, and support community groups to achieve their aims;
- The Government will draw on the Third Sector in designing, developing and delivering public services, and sees the sector as a ‘catalyst for change’ in public service delivery;
- As part of this vision the Government will create conditions for the development of large numbers of social enterprises.

Cross-cutting themes

- Working with the full range of voluntary organisations and supporting a wider range of activities, especially community action and campaigning;
- Long term sustainability of the sector’s work;
- Focus on local partnership working.

Supporting environment

- Strengthening the Compact;
- Providing additional funding to CapacityBuilders for VCS support organisations to support and develop front-line groups;
- Creating a new centre for third sector research; and
- Addressing skills issues and setting up a Workforce Development Council for the third sector.

Creating a more sustainable VCS

The Treasury and Cabinet Office review of the third sector’s role in regeneration emphasises the importance of sustainability in both the way the VCS works, and in the way it enters into partnerships with government.

“In the past, too many partnerships and programmes have been short term. Future policies will put far greater emphasis on the sustainability of the third sector’s work, including by shifting more resources to investing in the underlying strength of the sector and by ensuring that specific partnerships are for a sufficiently long period. For example, some of the most important measures in the third sector review are:

- *building up the endowments of local foundations, to provide a long term income stream to small groups;*
- *promoting asset development, to give groups an independent basis for community action;*
- *enabling a growth in income generation by third sector organisations, particularly through social investment;*
- *investing in sector skills;*
- *investing in the evidence base; and*
- *ensuring that three year funding relationships between Government and the third sector become the norm.”²⁹*

²⁹ H M Treasury and The Cabinet Office (2007), op cit., page 14

These recommendations are intended to influence the way in which the VCS organises and pays for its work, and the way in which local government and other statutory partners engage with the sector. We will review briefly the thinking that underlies four of these headings: asset development, income generation, and three year funding.

Asset development: The third sector review's proposals for promoting asset development are supported by the Quirk review of community management and ownership of public assets³⁰. The fundamental conclusion that Quirk draws is that VCOs and social enterprises are seriously under-capitalised and therefore are constrained in their ability to realise their ambitions to heighten community and social benefit. The review focuses on how to optimise the community benefit of publicly owned assets by considering options for greater transfer of asset ownership and management by local government and other public bodies to 'community enterprises' (i.e. the VCS including not-for-profit social enterprises).

Income generation: One of the principles underlying government policies for the VCS is the assumption that organisations in the sector need to become more self-sufficient in terms of their ability to generate the resources they need to fulfil their mission. Drawing on successive government reports, that that means four things for the sector:

- using whatever public and charitable funding is available to pump-prime activities;
- maximising the use of voluntary effort and community resources in support of VCO objectives;
- generating income wherever possible through activities (e.g. sale of goods and services, development of new not-for-profit enterprises);
- strengthening the sector's asset base; and
- redeploying existing resources to meet future needs rather than perpetuating historical patterns of spending.

This requires more effective business development and business planning by VCOs, and better support for these activities than currently exists.

Three year funding: The Compact between the government and VCS set out to make three year funding the norm. However, the Quirk review found that:

"While there is some evidence of robust multi-year compacts between statutory and voluntary agencies at the local level, in too many instances the old orthodoxy of grant giving and rent subsidies has simply given way to a pseudo-contractual relationship based on annual service contracting. Too often this has produced unhealthily short-term horizons for councils and community groups alike".³¹

³⁰ Barrie Quirk (2007), op cit.

³¹ Barrie Quirk (2007), op cit., page 5

The evidence is that while many local authorities have now signed up to the principles of the Compact ideal, their practices have yet to catch up with their commitments. The implication is that public bodies are expected to develop longer-term, more sustainable relationships with the VCS through, for example, three year funding packages as a minimum. That means that the public sector will need to develop a more strategic and less ad hoc relationship with the VCS.

Building capacity in the VCS

Development of the VCS to meet the aims of government policy is critically dependent on leadership and the existence of a robust support infrastructure. Leadership is expected to come from two sources - from within the VCS itself, and from its partners in public services. The importance of leadership and infrastructure have been recognised in both policy and funding terms by central government from 2000 onwards. As policy has evolved, a series of national initiatives have been aimed at promoting the development of the VCS through better planning and delivery of its support needs.

The original H M Treasury Cross-Cutting Review of the voluntary and community sector in 2002³² set out a vision for the way that public services should be renewed with the assistance of the VCS. It initiated a programme of work designed to strengthen VCS infrastructure support. The review:

“ ... identified lack of capacity and patchy public investment in voluntary sector infrastructure as barriers to increasing the involvement of the VCS in service delivery, recommending that ... Government and the VCS should develop a coherent shared strategy to underpin capacity in the sector ... Such support must meet both the general and specialist development needs of the sector, and should be complemented by ... other related support services.”³³

The subsequent Home Office-led programme - ChangeUp - was designed to map the support needs of the VCS in the period 2004 - 2014 at a local level, and then determine through a business planning process how these can be met. Local plans were then consolidated at a sub-regional and regional level to ensure that support services are organised in a way that maximises economies of scale.

This programme of work - carried out between April 2004 and June 2006 - was led locally by ‘infrastructure development consortia’ comprising the main VCS infrastructure and network support organisations, representatives of front-line VCOs, BME groups and faith organisations, and other local stakeholders including local authorities, the NHS and others. It was coordinated by Government Offices, which allocated substantial sums of money to local consortia to fund the work.

³² H M Treasury (2002), [Cross-cutting Review of the Voluntary and Community Sector](#)

³³ Home Office (2003), [Consultation on the Capacity of the Voluntary and Community Sector](#)

The 'local infrastructure development plans' that were the product of the ChangeUp process were submitted for evaluation to Government Offices in March 2006, and to CapacityBuilders³⁴ in June 2006. Government Offices and CapacityBuilders have given local consortia feedback on their proposals. The programme is now being updated in three ways:

- local VCS infrastructure planning groups are being asked to finalise their proposals for extending the membership of their consortia so that they are inclusive of the whole local VCS by September 2007, with strong links to other partnerships including LSPs and LAAs;
- they are being asked to develop strategy statements for the period 2008 to 2014 by December 2007 that demonstrate the approach they will adopt to developing the VCS in their areas over that period of time; and
- they are also being asked to develop a more comprehensive business plan for the period 2008 to 2011 that will show how the strategy will be delivered, through which agencies, and with what resources.

Plans for consortium development, strategies and business plans will then be evaluated by CapacityBuilders in the early part of 2008, and further funding to local groups is expected to follow. It is unlikely that significant funding will be available to those local consortia that have failed to deliver either a realistic infrastructure development plan or the subsequent plans for consortium development and service delivery.³⁵

Local government and the voluntary and community sector

Local government is seen as having a key role to play in supporting a transformation of the VCS that will be necessary to achieve all these aims. For example, among fourteen 'National Indicators' published in October 2007, that support the Stronger Communities block of Local Area Agreements (see 3.2 below) is the requirement for local authorities to support an 'environment for a thriving third sector'³⁶.

One government advisor's vision is that by 2020:

"... communities across England have been revitalised from within. Local councils have been central to this economic and social renewal, working alongside each and every community in the country ... After twenty years of sustained investment in community infrastructure, local economies are strong ... Growth in social enterprise has been driven by community-based organisations and enabled by progressive councils who take on a more facilitative and catalytic role ... In a sense, we are moving from an assumption that the state's role is to try to solve all social problems, to one where the state's role is to help communities solve their own problems. In this changing world, the role of local government is also changing."

³⁴ Capacity Builders is the non-departmental body charged with carrying forward the ChangeUp programme nationally.

³⁵ We discuss the impact that ChangeUp has had in B&NES later in Part 3.

³⁶ Department for Communities and Local Government (2007), op cit., page 6

“Local government needs to be more than simply a deliverer of public services ... to focus more on the overall welfare of its communities: their cohesion and harmony and their capacity for self-management.”³⁷

3.2 The B&NES Council policy context

B&NES Council does not currently have a corporate statement of intent setting out the way in which it will engage with the VCS and the purpose of this engagement. However, the framework for its approach is set out in a number of policy statements. These include: the Compact Agreement; the B&NES Local Strategic Partnership (‘LSP’) and Community Strategy; and the Local Area Agreement (‘LAA’). These are backed up by guidance on VCS involvement in joint planning groups, and on commissioned services. The main themes in these documents mirror those set out in the Third Sector Review - influencing decisions through advocacy and consultation; strengthening communities; and involvement in public service delivery.

The Compact

The basic premise of the Compact is that the VCS and statutory sector have distinct roles that complement each other. The statutory sector commits itself to supporting the independence of the VCS including its right to offer constructive criticism and to campaign; the VCS commits itself to supporting the statutory sector in its work in a way that balances needs, priorities and available resources.

Development of the Compact involved consultation and negotiation between the Council and a number of leading VCS infrastructure and network support organisations. B&NES CVS was funded by the Council to service the Compact Board.

The Compact Board Chair believes that the process of negotiating the Compact represented a very productive partnership. However, some Council officers may see its job as finished now that the Compact is in place, while the VCS sees an ongoing role for the Compact Board. Two tasks in particular were referred to in interviews with VCS managers:

- increasing the number of signatories to the Compact among statutory and VCS organisations, and in the process to ‘cascade’ signatories within the larger statutory bodies to departmental level as a first step towards achieving greater consistency of approach; and
- monitoring compliance with the Compact and the codes of good practice by signatories.

In the recommendations at the end of this report, we suggest that there may be an even more significant role for the Compact Board in guiding the development of a more strategic relationship between the Council, the LSP and the VCS.

³⁷ Barrie Quirk (2007), Making Assets Work: The Quirk Review of community management and ownership of public assets, Department for Communities and Local Government, pages 3 and 4

The Community Strategy

The Community Strategy is a framework for promoting the long term economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the B&NES area. It contains five overarching 'ambitions' about:

- creating a sense of place;
- inclusivity and celebrating the contributions made by people from different backgrounds;
- the creative sharing of resources;
- building safe and vibrant communities; and
- taking a responsible approach to environmental sustainability.

These ambitions are reflected in six key policy areas: transport, housing, learning and skills, the economy, the environment, and health and social care.

The VCS support and network bodies were involved in developing the Community Strategy, initially through invitations to individual organisations and latterly through the Voluntary Sector Steering Group. B&NES CVS is once again the lead organisation. However two leading VCOs - the Care Forum and Community Action - were not originally members of the LSP. This has recently been rectified.

The Local Area Agreement

The Local Area Agreement is both a planning document that sets out how Community Strategy ambitions will be put into effect ('the LAA outcomes'); and an agreement between the Council, its local partners including the VCS, and government that sets out how different parts of the programme will be delivered and which partners will be involved in each area of work.

The Agreement covers four main blocks, each of which has identified both mandatory (i.e. set by central government) and non-mandatory outcomes (i.e. set by the Council). These are:

- safer and stronger communities;
- healthier communities and older people;
- children and young people; and
- economic development and enterprise.

There has been a high level of involvement by the leading VCS support organisations in developing the LAA strategy. There is also great potential for VCS involvement in delivering the LAA outcomes³⁸, and a number of VCOs are identified in the final version of the LAA document as having a role to play in delivering specified outcomes.

³⁸ Diana Moore (2007), Local Area Agreements and Social Enterprise in South West England, published as this report was being its final editing, looks at the contribution that social enterprises are making to the LAA process.

3.3 Council policy on involvement of the VCS

The B&NES code of good practice on involvement is part of the Compact, and is an agreement between the statutory sector and the VCS on how the statutory sector will include the VCS as a necessary part of bringing about change, making decisions and achieving statutory sector goals. Under the Code, the statutory sector signatories to the Compact commit themselves to involving the VCS in a range of appropriate partnerships in areas such as:

- developing and implementing policy;
- funding;
- service development;
- performance monitoring; and
- service review.

In return, the VCS signatories commit themselves to informing member organisations, service users and stakeholders about Council policies and plans, involving them in debate on the issue that arise, working with infrastructure support providers, and monitoring the sector's performance.

Levels of involvement

We explored the way in which the VCS is being involved in the Council's current corporate planning activities and some departmental programmes. The information we have gathered is far from comprehensive, but gives the impression that the level of involvement in Council programmes by the majority of front-line VCOs is variable, and that there are a number of issues to be addressed.

Where front-line groups are members of a well organised network such as B&NES CVS or the Care Forum, they are provided with information about new policy and programme developments, have opportunities to feed in their views via their support organisation, and in some cases can have a direct dialogue with the relevant Council departments. However, our mapping data suggest that only a minority of front-line groups are part of one of these networks and therefore have access to this information.

A majority of the Council officers that were interviewed for this study said that they are in direct contact with relatively few VCOs given the size of the sector. These tend to be the organisations they are funding for service delivery or through discretionary grants rather than the many other frontline groups that are working in their field. The number of VCOs involved with policy development and service planning in their particular areas of work via the Council is therefore limited.

However, it must be acknowledged that it would be hard for Council departments to develop a relationship with front-line groups in their areas of work when the leading VCS support organisations do not know who they are or what they are doing, and have not yet developed reliable mechanisms for communicating with the sector.

Against this background it may be hard to see what else the Council can do other than take over direct responsibility for establishing lines of communication with the wider VCS even though this might be seen as undercutting the role of the VCS umbrella organisations.

However, there could be some support for a strategy of making more direct contact with front-line VCOs within the Council. One group of Council officers who submitted a joint response to our enquiries suggested that too much reliance is placed by the Council on umbrella organisations to 'speak for' the voluntary sector or as a way of accessing local communities. It was felt that some groups claim to speak for their communities of interest in spite of the fact that they are not actually in contact with many groups, and not all of that community of interest recognises their leadership role.

Our conclusion is that these problems arise mainly because there are not yet any structures in place for communicating with the majority of front-line VCOs in B&NES. Until this study compiled the data, there has been little information on who they are, what they do, or how to get in touch with them.

This has been overcome in other areas in two ways, although each approach requires resources that the sector does not appear to have at present:

- by ensuring that there are systems for communicating directly with individual VCOs by the VCS support and network organisations and by the Council, and for disseminating information via websites, newsletters and e-briefings; and
- by organising regular VCS forums in different 'zones' within the district. In theory, this helps to ensure that forum meetings are held near where groups are working rather than in one central location which many groups based in other areas do not attend. However, when B&NES CVS has tried this approach, attendance has often been poor. The question of why people in B&NES do not attend forum meetings also needs to be addressed.

Some initiatives are under way in BANES to give front line groups the information needed to achieve a greater level of involvement - the CVS, BREC, Care Forum and WECIL all try to do this in different ways. The problem is that these efforts are uncoordinated and do not yet reach a majority of small B&NES VCOs. Yet the ability to take into account the views of a cross section of VCOs is important because, as one interviewee told us:

"The homelessness sector review that took place involved a lot of providers, but only the bigger ones spoke up, which gave a skewed view of where the service should go. We had to go back to smaller providers to give them another chance to contribute ... Sometimes there is something rather bullying about the bigger, more entrepreneurial providers. There is tension between support for the smaller providers and the pressure that can be applied by the bigger providers." (Senior housing association manager)

Capacity of VCOs to be involved

Even if the issue of a wider involvement in discussion of issues affecting the sector by front line VCOs is addressed, however, there will still be problems of capacity within the VCS to be overcome when it comes to joining the more complex planning processes.

“As an infrastructure organisation with a paid staff team we have struggled to engage with these issues. The LAA lacks cross-cutting themes or a narrative thread that would provide a way in for most groups. How can a small, volunteer-based group engage with something as complex as the LAA? Involvement can only be done in bite-sized pieces and delivered in a series of local events.” (Senior VCS manager)

Another Council officer suggested that consultation and involvement needs to be couched in terms that are relevant to what front-line groups are doing.

“Groups want to be engaged in things that are practical and achievable for them. Some of them are very small organisations and they need to know why it is important for them to be involved, and how it affects them and the people they are in business to help.”

One of the voluntary organisations echoed these views.

“Lots of voluntary sector organisations consider themselves too small and overwhelmed by bureaucracy to get involved. They attend the Voluntary Sector Forum meetings and hear about the LAA and other programmes and think: How does this affect me? Can we tender for e.g. children’s services against an organisation like Barnados? Probably not, so they lose interest. This is an awesome process for volunteers to manage.” (VCO manager)

Council officers made three points in response to these comments.

- Firstly, those who are closely involved with the LAA suggest that the Stronger Communities theme is intended to be a cross-cutting theme that can involve a wide spectrum of VCOs. However, they accept that the LAA document itself might benefit from a stronger introductory narrative.
- Secondly, they asked about the role the support organisations play in informing groups, opening up opportunities, and engaging their interest. In their view, the Children and Young Peoples’ network did it well with good information and drop in sessions for small groups. The same could be said for Somer Housing’s approach to working with residents groups and homelessness groups, and for the Care Network’s work with carers.
- Finally, they pointed out that the Council recognised early on in the LAA process that VCS involvement is a key issue, but they did not have very good information. That was the rationale underlying the commission to North Harbour Consulting that resulted in this report.

Involvement by rural VCOs

Finally, in contrast to the Voicebox 12 finding that levels of volunteering are higher in rural areas than in urban areas, there is significant evidence from our study that organisations working in rural areas do not have many opportunities for involvement either with the wider VCS or with the Council. This appears to be particularly true for groups working in the Chew Valley area. The ability to link up with rural groups and provide them with the support services they need is one of the more significant missing links in B&NES at present.

3.4 Council policy on funding

Policy on funding

The aim of the Compact Funding Code is ‘to make a positive impact on the funding relationship that exists between the statutory sector and the VCS ... The code will help to develop and sustain effective procedures that result in sound funding decisions to support well-delivered quality services.’ The focus is therefore more on commissioned services than on community capacity building or the VCS’s need for development.

The key principles on which the code is based include:

- effective protection and proper accountability for public funds;
- the need to ensure financial stability and to minimise the administrative burden on groups;
- value for money; and
- transparency, consistency and fairness.

Within the Council, the achievement of these principles can best be described as ‘work in progress’. Like an increasing number of local authorities, B&NES Council policy is to move progressively away from a funding system based on annual discretionary grants to one based on commissioned services agreements. Most significant programmes are now funded in this way, and 76% of all Council funding for the VCS now takes this form. However, while some departments (e.g. Policy and Partnerships, Social and Housing Services, Children and Young People) are following this approach³⁹, other departments (e.g. Arts, Museums, Active Leisure and Sport, Community Transport) still fund VCOs largely on the basis of discretionary grants. There is also an issue surrounding the time frame for commissioned services agreements, which at present tend to be for one year rather than for three - the target for sustainability and sound business planning set out in national policy and in the B&NES Compact.

While we understand the need to retain discretionary grants where very small or one-off payments are concerned, we suggest that to run an entire programme on the basis of such grants as some departments are doing does not achieve either the protection or accountability for funding that the funding code requires. We have not explored this issue in any great detail, but it seems to us that the aims of the funding code are not yet being achieved across all areas of Council funding.

³⁹ Policy and Partnerships Department is promoting a ‘commissioned services agreement’; Housing and Social Services are promoting a ‘service level agreement’.

3.5 Funding for the B&NES VCS

Overall Council funding for the VCS

We have analysed the available data on local authority financial support for the VCS in B&NES in 2006/2007, and interviewed a number of key VCS and statutory sector stakeholders about their approach to funding the VCS.

Firstly, we asked each of the Council's officers whom we interviewed how many VCOs they or their department were involved with for funding or service development purposes⁴⁰. The responses varied. Some officers were vague about the number of groups their departments were involved with. Others had precise information. Sport and Active Leisure Services appeared to have most contact with the voluntary sector with more than 250 groups on their mailing list, and close contact with more than 50 groups. Housing and social services were involved with the second largest number of VCOs and had the largest number under a service level agreement at 92. In total, Council departments said they had working contact with more than 500 VCOs, although there may be some duplication within this number.

Analysis of B&NES Council funding⁴¹ awarded to VCOs in the 2006/2007 financial year shows that 156 named VCOs received Council funding of £4.9 million in total. Others un-named in the report received small grants⁴² totalling £20,500 in value. The total number of VCOs funded by the Council approached 10% of all VCOs working in B&NES, and we estimate that 15% of all VCS funding comes from the Council.

The named organisations between them received 206 separately identified payments. These included contract payments, discretionary grants, central government grants and payments in kind (e.g. concessionary rents in Council-owned properties).

The average payment under a commissioned services agreement was £60,640; the average grant payment was £10,640⁴³.

Analysis of the organisations in receipt of funding shows that medium-to-large VCOs are most likely to be funded via a commissioned services agreement. The majority of discretionary grants go to smaller organisations, although some significant organisations also received grants.

⁴⁰ We also understand that the B&NES PCT funds 12 VCOs.

⁴¹ Report provided by B&NES Council, Policy and Partnerships.

⁴² See, for example, the unspecified small grants programme under the 'Sports' heading. Note that only the total budget for discretionary grants is given in some cases and the estimated number of organisations being funded is therefore on the low side.

⁴³ There are two reservations about this figure: grant payments include a small number of quite large central government grants in areas such as homelessness, and drug and substance misuse; this figure does not take into account budgets for small grants since we do not know how many small grants were awarded. As a result, this average is on the high side.

Funding for support and network organisations

We examined the levels of funding being awarded to six of the leading VCS support and network organisations in 2006/2007⁴⁴. Just under 7% of all Council funding for the VCS in 2006/2007 was allocated to these organisations, and 4% was specifically identified as supporting VCS support and ‘umbrella’ activities⁴⁵.

- The CVS, Bath Racial Equality Council (BREC) and West of England Council for Independent Living (WECIL) received core funding as ‘umbrella’ organisations; WECIL also received a substantial payment from Housing and Social Services for service delivery;
- the Care Forum is funded by Housing and Social Services as well as from other sources for service delivery, although we understand that part of this funding is to support and coordinate care network members - this element of their funding is not included in the 4% referred to above;
- Community Action, which is largely funded by DEFRA grants and from other sources, only received Council funding for its community transport scheme in 2006/2007, although it subsequently received funding for core activities linked to its role in rural areas in 2007/2008;
- the Volunteer Centre did not receive Council funding at all in 2006/2007, but receives funding in 2007/2008 related to support for volunteering in connection with the LAA.

The significance of these findings is that while these organisations are playing a significant role in the Council’s policy and planning groups where they represent the wider VCS through the Voluntary Sector Steering Group, their role in providing leadership and a sense of direction for the wider VCS do not appear to be recognised in their service agreements. However, we understand that discussions are currently taking place between B&NES Council and the CVS on these issues.

Departmental funding

Most funding for the voluntary sector is departmentally led. The levels of funding by department are shown in Table 4, Appendix 3. The largest funder is Housing and Social Services, which accounted for 42% of all Council funding for the VCS in 2006 - 2007. Community Cohesion - Drugs and Substance Misuse accounted for 22%; Arts funding accounted for 10%; and Environment and Consumer Services funding accounted for 8%.

The need for a more corporate approach to funding

There is a shared perception among the people we interviewed that the Council should adopt a more corporate approach to its funding relationship with the voluntary sector.

⁴⁴ B&NES CVA, Community Action, Bath Racial Equality Council (BREC), the Care Forum, West of England Centre for Inclusive Living (WECIL) and the Volunteer Centre.

⁴⁵ Report provided by B&NES Council, Policy and Partnerships.

“B&NES Council is very departmental - each silo has its own network of relationships with the sector.” (VCS manager)

“No-one has an over-view - everyone see the details but not the whole.” (VCS manager)

“There needs to be more ‘joining-up’ between the public services giving support to the voluntary sector as most are after the same sort of support e.g. funding, increasing volunteers, and advice on governance and management structures.” (B&NES Council manager)

As a number of the VCS and Council managers also pointed out, this approach ties funding to service-level priorities and programmes, but does little to foster delivery of the LSP, LAA or other priorities.

3.6 VCS funded involvement in the LAA

The relevance of departmental funding to the LAA blocks

Following on from the analysis of Council funding for the VCS, we have also looked at how this pattern of funding supports the LAA programme blocks. We have analysed the list of VCOs funded by B&NES Council in 2006/2007 to identify organisations that are being funded for work that is relevant to particular LAA blocks. This does not necessarily mean that the purpose of the funding as referred to in the funding agreements is support for the LAA, so the results shown in Table 5, Appendix 3 are based on our own interpretation of ‘relevance’. Figure 2 summarises the results of Table 5 (see next page).

We have identified four types of relationship between VCS funding and the relevance of the funded work to the LAA blocks:

- VCOs whose funding is directly relevant to one of the blocks even if that is not explicitly recognised in the funding agreement;
- VCOs whose funding is relevant to more than one block;
- funding for generic front-line organisations (such as advice services whose work potentially cuts across all of the blocks - although we note that the CAB is an exception whose funding is listed under the Safer and Stronger Communities block even though the CAB’s impact probably cuts across the LAA as a whole); and
- funding for second-tier network and infrastructure support organisations such as the CVS whose work supports VCOs working under any of the blocks or none.

It is significant that half of all Council funding for the VCS appears to be relevant to one of the LAA blocks, and more than 80% is relevant to the LAA as a whole. Yet, according to commissioning managers we interviewed, most of their funding is intended to support departmental priorities and services rather than the LAA outcomes per se. We are told that commissioned service agreements tend to be couched in departmental terms and do not refer in most cases to the VCOs’ role in support of the LAA. The discretionary grants system is also entirely departmentally based even though some of the activities that are being funded could be seen to support an LAA outcome.

Figure 2: Relationship between Council funding for the VCS and the LAA programme blocks

	Number of VCOs receiving Council funding	Number of identified payments to VCOs	Global amount of payments to VCOs	Percentage of total paid to VCOs in 2006/2007
Directly relevant to an LAA block	122	153	£2,508,300	51%
Relevant to more than one LAA block	19	27	£1,555,500	32%
Generic front-line groups - cross cutting the LAA - e.g. CAB	16	22	£639,000	13%
Second tier support organisations - cross cutting the LAA - e.g. CVS	4	4	£216,500	4%

Council managers also confirmed that while funded VCOs may be involved in discussions about departmental priorities, many are not involved in discussions about the LAA and the wider Council priorities. (Policy and Partnerships, Housing and Social Services, Children and Young People are probably the exceptions here). Even though individual departmental leads were asked to identify VCOs that they wished to involve in achieving particular LAA outcomes, this initial mapping of the relationship between funding and LAA priorities suggests that departmental concerns are driving VCS funding rather than corporate policy. In a number of service areas, there may of course be links between department priorities and the LAA, but these links may not always be flagged up to the VCOs that are being funded.

All this suggests that the Council could enlist far more VCOs in support of the LAA if they knew in what way the work front-line VCOs are doing contributes, directly or indirectly, to achieving the LAA outcomes. This is primarily a matter of having an evidence base, and a communication strategy rather than a question of additional funding.

As a result, the LAA is seen by VCS support service managers as being a Council programme with selected VCS inputs, rather than a genuine partnership between the Council and the VCS. But of course, to achieve a genuine partnership, the partners have to know much more about what each of them can contribute to any common endeavour than is currently the case in B&NES. This brings us to the question of the VCS’s identity in B&NES and how it is perceived by the Council.

3.7 The identity of the VCS in B&NES

Council and VCS documents make it clear that the voluntary sector is recognised as an important part of local community life, and an important partner for the Council and other public bodies. Yet knowledge of what the sector is and what it does varies considerably.

VCS profiling of the sector

The leading VCS infrastructure support organisations have information about the sector but the perspective that each organisation takes is largely determined by its role. For example, B&NES CVS - umbrella organisation for the VCS as a whole - has general knowledge about a large number of different kinds of VCO derived from its membership of more than 100, and a mailing list of around 650 organisations. This information is being extended through the use of the Merlin database system which will eventually record profiling information about each its members. However, it is not currently the CVSs intention to profile non-members in this way, and non-members are likely to represent the majority of VCOs in B&NES for some time to come.

In contrast, other organisations (the Care Forum and BREC are examples) have a very good knowledge of groups that have joined their network, but a more limited knowledge of other kinds of VCO. Community Action (the rural community council for the former Avon County area) does not have information about rural groups as such, but does have information about particular types of rural group - village hall committees, playing field committees, village planning groups etc.

Support organisations' knowledge of the VCS is therefore fragmented, and limited in its scope. It is either broad but not very detailed, or it gives some detail about a limited set of VCOs. Since little of this information is shared between the lead VCS organisations, there is no unified overview. Indeed, some organisations that we interviewed are reluctant to share the information about VCOs that they hold, either with each other or with the Council, because they say it is confidential. We do not think this is very helpful.

Council knowledge of the VCS

A similar picture emerged from our discussion with Council departments. The Policy and Partnerships team owns an extensive contact database, but this does not contain very much descriptive information. Other departments also have their own contacts lists but these vary in size and coverage, and almost certainly contain duplicates. In total, we gathered information about ten council lists, ranging in size from 10 to more than 650 VCOs. There are additional lists which we have not had access to held by Community Transport, Planning Services and other departments. Once again, there is no unified overview.

B&NES Primary Care Trust

B&NES PCT funds 18 VCOs and takes its information about the sector primarily from B&NES Council departmental contacts. The total amount of funding in 2007/2008 is £380,000. From the information available all this money appears to be allocated to front-line service delivery.

Concepts of the B&NES VCS

There are a number of points to be made about these findings.

- With few exceptions (the Care Forum's 'Room 102' system for example, the Council's LSP on-line groups system, or the CVS's Merlin system once it is fully developed) most of the information systems that we are aware of are essentially contact lists rather than data sets from which a profile could be developed.
- Even the largest data sets held by the CVS and the Council's Policy and Partnerships team list only 30% of the total number of VCOs based or working in B&NES that were identified in the course of this study.
- None of the organisations that were interviewed therefore had information from which to construct a representative profile of the sector as a basis for establishing its identity and characteristics.

This lack of knowledge almost certainly leads to a number of different but overlapping concepts of what the voluntary and community sector in B&NES is. The result is a kaleidoscope rather than a clearly defined picture. References to 'the voluntary and community sector' may well be references to the particular set of VCOs that the organisation or department is in touch with. Some of these contacts are extremely limited, which means that the organisational or departmental view of the sector is also very limited. Indeed, one VCO manager suggested that his organisation's constituency is a conceptual one, based on a commitment to certain principles rather than knowledge of a set of groups that the organisation works with.

This limited knowledge of the VCS influences the way in which partnerships and planning groups involving the VCS are established, because involvement with a particular group of VCOs can be taken to be a representative involvement with relevant parts of the sector as a whole. Several Council managers and the leading housing association said that they needed to know much more about the VCS, and they needed better contacts, if their objective of working in partnership was to be achieved.

There is also a risk that working with the lead VCS organisations and the Voluntary Sector Steering Group could, by default, become a proxy for partnership with the sector as a whole. The problem with this is that it may be unsafe to assume that the VCOs that have a strategic relationship with the Council are able either to speak authoritatively about the VCS as a whole, or to communicate the knowledge that they obtain through their partnerships with the Council to the wider VCS.

The conclusion that we draw is contradictory. The VCS in B&NES has no clear identity: but it also has multiple identities depending on the perspective of the observer. The temptation is therefore to make policy at a level of generality, referring to 'the voluntary and community sector', while actually engaging only with those parts of the sector that are immediately visible.

The question this poses for both the lead VCS bodies and the Council is: how can the sector's role be developed and supported in ways that are suggested by national policy if the sector does not have a clear identity, if there is no evidence base, and if there is no means of communicating with the sector's organisations and groups?

3.8 Developing the VCS in B&NES

The ChangeUp Programme

Development of the VCS is critically dependent on leadership and the existence of a robust support infrastructure. This has been recognised in both policy and funding terms by central government from 2000 onwards and as noted at the start of Part 3, a series of national initiatives over the past seven years have been aimed at promoting the development of the VCS through better planning and delivery of its support needs.

In particular, the national ChangeUp programme plays a central role in pulling together a number of different policy strands. The intention of the programme was that consortia of local VCS infrastructure support providers together with representatives of front-line service providers, local authority and NHS representatives and others should carry out two main tasks - a mapping study of the VCS across the county or unitary authority's area to establish its characteristics and its support needs if such a profile did not already exist; followed by development of a 'local VCS infrastructure development plan'. This programme appears to have had very little impact in the B&NES area.

The ChangeUp programme covering the Avon County area was funded by the Government Office for the South West. Funding was divided between Bristol (with a budget of £500,000) and a 'West of England Consortium' covering three local authority areas - South Gloucestershire, North Somerset and B&NES (with a budget of £250,000).

According to the eight senior VCS managers we interviewed, only four of them or their organisations were involved in ChangeUp in any way. Community Action was lead body for the West of England Consortium. Bath Racial Equality Council and the Care Forum were also involved. The CVS was being set up at the start of the ChangeUp programme, and became involved towards the end. There was no involvement by other support bodies or by B&NES front-line VCOs as intended in national policy.

The work programme appears to have been fragmented, with different projects being led by different VCOs with different timescales. Some mapping work was apparently carried out in 2004 - 2005, and a business plan was also produced. We have not been able to find any organisation that has access to documents that report on the mapping work, and the version of the business plan which most people refer to is unfinished. It contains only generalisations about the West of England area as a whole, with very little new information and no specific proposals for developing infrastructure support in the West of England, or in B&NES.

There is criticism among the VCOs we spoke to of the Government Office for the way the programme was set up. Very short timetable, late changes in the way the money was to be allocated between Bristol and the West Of England that led to uncertainty, and lack of funding are referred to in our interviews. There is also some criticism of Community Action as lead body for the way the programme was administered. One VCS interviewee summarised the situation as follows:

“The West of England Consortium had ten members, but this is now down to six. We delivered nine programmes covering every heading and category in ChangeUp. Every member of the consortium benefited, received funding and had a responsibility for delivery. However, nothing was written up ... All reporting went to the Government Office on-line by the individual agencies. It was a big mess. Community Action had no control over what the agencies did because the Government Office worked over Community Action’s head. None of the work has continued since the end of the programme.” (VCS support organisation manager)

The general view seems to be that ChangeUp was a missed opportunity for the VCS in B&NES and the neighbouring local authority areas. ChangeUp also seems to have passed by a number of the key organisations that should have been involved, including the Council and the PCT. Some specific results are visible - for example, through investment in the CVS’s start up costs. However, the basic characteristics of the VCS in B&NES have still not been mapped, and the intended framework within which better VCS support services will be developed in B&NES does not exist.

The support needs of frontline VCOs in B&NES

In the absence of any baseline analysis from ChangeUp, we asked VCS managers and Council officers about their perceptions of the support needs of front-line groups at present. The needs identified are similar to those we have found in other areas. The key requirements are information, advice and support at both basic and advanced levels on:

- constitutions, governance and management;
- service development, standards and quality assurance;
- workforce development, contracts of employment and other human resources issues;
- finding volunteers, especially among BME communities and in rural areas;
- funding, including how to make a grant application, and how to engage with a public sector tendering process;
- financial management, business planning and risk assessment;
- peer networking, information sharing, sharing of good practice;
- ICT and information systems; and
- new legislation affecting the voluntary and community sector.

The problem that we have identified is that the check list of needs is essentially static.

It does not contain either an analysis of how the needs relate to the sector's current stage of development in B&NES; nor does it convey any understanding of how the sector will need to change if it is to respond positively to government and Council policy initiatives. Thus there was no reference in any of the responses to some of the issues identified in the recent third sector review or the Quirk report - leadership, vision, development strategy, sustainability, social enterprise or asset base, for example.

Asked about the quality of infrastructure support services for the VCS in B&NES, the general view is that some support services are available if you know where to look, and they are of good or reasonable quality. But they are focused on Bath. The majority of small VCOs, those working in rural areas and with BME communities miss out.

B&NES CVS should be playing a pivotal role in the coordination and delivery of generic VCS support services. However, there are comments from Council officers as well as from VCOs who say that the CVS is over-stretched, is still developing its coverage, and is under-resourced to provide consistent services across all parts of B&NES.

The support needs of the network and support organisations in B&NES

We asked the VCS support organisations whose managers were interviewed what their own organisational support needs are. Community accountancy, HR and ICT were mentioned. However, the main issues seem to be less about specific types of support than about the absence of joined-up working within the VCS, and between the VCS and Council departments.

4: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 The VCS in B&NES There is a very large voluntary and community sector in B&NES given the size and population of the local authority area. It is diverse, and involved in a wide range of activity. It involves large numbers of volunteers; it makes a very substantial contribution to local community life; and it has a significant impact on the local economy. Yet very little is known about the sector, and about the many smaller groups within it.

There have been no previous mapping studies in B&NES⁴⁶, therefore existing knowledge about the VCS is incomplete and fragmented. As a pointer to this lack of knowledge, previous estimates of the size of the sector are two- to three-times lower than our own count. Interpreting the information that we have been able to collect about the B&NES VCS in comparison with data from studies we have conducted elsewhere⁴⁷, it seems likely that at least half of all B&NES VCOs are small or very small, have very little funding, and are likely to have a very localised base for their activities. For this reason they are hard to identify, yet they have a very important role in strengthening communities.

4.2 Infrastructure and network organisations in B&NES Evidence from our other studies also suggests that small, local groups need a regular flow of volunteers, plus access to information, advice and support if they do not receive public or charitable funding. This is not the case in B&NES, where the majority of frontline groups are not in contact with either the organisations that lead and support the sector, or with the Council.

There are two generic support providers - B&NES CVS and the Volunteer Centre.

- The CVS is doing good work and is well regarded by its peers and by Council officers. While it is clearly meeting all its contractual obligation and sets out to provide services for the whole VCS in B&NES, some observers suggest that its coverage across the B&NES area is uneven. (This is not just a problem for the CVS in B&NES - CVSs elsewhere experience similar issues of lower service take-up in rural areas). Resources, as well as the sheer volume of catch-up work that the CVS is attempting, are underlying issues.
- The Volunteer Centre is also doing good work and is well regarded by most of those we spoke to. However, the Volunteer Centre is not a member of the Voluntary Sector Steering Group which coordinates activity among the leading support and network VCOs, nor has it been involved in a number of other working groups. We think it should be.

⁴⁶ It is claimed that some mapping work was carried out as part of the ChangeUp programme, but none of the results are available to our study or, more importantly, to the VCS support and network organisations working in B&NES or the Council.

⁴⁷ We have completed or been involved with mapping studies in the following areas: Brighton and Hove; the Alton district in Hampshire; Oxfordshire; Surrey; the Hampshire sub-region including Southampton, Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight; Portsmouth, Isle of Wight

There are five other specialist support organisations which are significant in particular areas of activity:

- Community Action (the rural community council for the West of England area);
- Bath Racial Equality Council (BREC);
- the Care Forum working in the field of health and social care;
- the West of England Council for Independent Living (WECIL) - that focuses on support for disabled people; and
- Envolve, advocating more sustainable use of resources.

Most of these organisations are making a useful contribution to the provision of networking and support services to groups working in their particular fields that they are in contact with. Inevitably the effectiveness of these organisations varies, but in our view the Care Forum is a particularly good example of a specialist network organisation.

Taking an overview of these lead organisations and the services they provide, it is clear that there is good work taking place, and yet the sum of the various parts does not add up to a coherent whole. Support services are patchy across B&NES and are not evenly distributed. Some groups are well plugged in to support services and others are not at all.

Most of lead organisations collaborate with the CVS, and the Voluntary Sector Steering Group initiated by the voluntary sector infrastructure organisations and supported by the Council is well regarded. However, our impression is that infrastructure and network support are still fragmented. There are two reasons for this:

- the basic mapping of needs and of 'who does what' has not been carried out so that there is no coherent strategy or programme involving partnerships between the lead VCOs; and
- there are cleavages between some of these second-tier support groups, caused partly by the network organisations' focus on their own patch, and partly by the need to integrate the Volunteer Centre into the infrastructure network.

We conclude that there has been a vacuum of leadership within the VCS in B&NES that is now partly being filled as the CVS finds its feet, and as the Voluntary Sector Steering Group's remit is extended beyond its partnership with the Council. However, the absence of a local infrastructure development plan for B&NES and a well-organised VCS consortium⁴⁸ to back it up also means that it will be very hard for the CVS and other local groups to gain access to the next round of CapacityBuilders funding⁴⁹ as a basis for any further development.

⁴⁸ As envisaged by the Home Office ChangeUp programme.

⁴⁹ CapacityBuilders is currently engaged in a round of negotiation with infrastructure consortia on a regional basis about the future development of each consortium, and on a review of infrastructure development strategies to 2014 and business plans for service provision up to 2011. The absence of a clear framework for B&NES, and the fragmented nature of the programme's leadership do not bode well for future funding from this source.

There is therefore a premium on B&NES Council funding, which is a finite resource. Given the fragmented nature of the VCS in B&NES, however, local authority funding will not be enough to drive development of the VCS as a whole. It will require the efforts of all the leading network support providers, working together and with the wider VCS, the Council and the LSP, to develop a vision for how the VCS can be developed and supported.

4.3 B&NES Council and the VCS

The Council is seen as very departmental by its own officers and by the VCS support organisations. Each department appears to have its own network of relationships with the VCS that are not joined up internally. The disjointed approach to working with the sector within the Council mirrors the fragmentation of VCS support services and of the sector as a whole.

The situation is not helped by the fact that the VCS and its lead bodies do not have a clear identity or a vision for their own future; and the Council, whilst generally well-disposed towards the VCS, does not have a corporate strategy for how it sees the VCS and what its own role should be in developing and supporting the sector. This makes it difficult for the sector to communicate and collaborate with the Council; difficult for support and network organisations to provide leadership and support in respect of Council programmes; and difficult for the Council to engage with the sector.

This also has immediate implications for the Council's ability to engage the VCS in strategic partnerships around the LSP and LAA. In the longer term it means that neither the VCS support organisations nor the Council are in a position to promote the kind of development within the sector that is envisaged in government policy.

Related issues include:

- differences in the format and the requirements of the commissioned services agreements and service level agreements between different Council departments, coupled with the fact that some departments still base their funding programmes on discretionary grants;
- the emphasis on outputs rather than outcomes in most SLAs;
- the fact that outputs do not generally cover the more strategic work that some of the lead organisations are required to carry out in respect of the Compact, the LSP, the LAA or development of the VCS;
- the absence of full cost recovery in funding packages which runs against the Compact principles;
- the fact that individual departments have not signed up to the Compact and are in breach of the Compact requirements, even though the Council corporately is both an architect of and a signatory to the Compact.

All these factors tend to undermine the Council's good intentions and ability to engage consistently and at a strategic level with the VCS.

4.4 Overall conclusion The VCS in B&NES is large and very active, but there is a significant lack of coherence in the way that it is organised and presents itself to the wider world. It is several years behind VCS networks in some other parts of the South West region - Cornwall and Torbay, for example - in terms of its organisation and ability to engage with social needs and public programmes. It needs to develop a clear identity and purpose. To do this it needs leadership and high quality support. And as a starting point all those involved with the sector need to have much better information about its characteristics and activities, and there need to be better systems for informing and communicating with individual VCOs.

The B&NES VCS and its public sector partners - especially the Council - do not need to reinvent to wheel to achieve these objectives. There are examples elsewhere of vibrant, well organised and well informed voluntary sectors in both unitary authorities and at county level. There are also good examples of how CVSs, rural community councils, volunteer centres and specialist infrastructure and network organisations can work together on a shared programme to develop and support the VCS in their areas. The VCS support organisations in B&NES should make contact with some of these groups to find out how they achieved this.

At first sight, the list of recommendations given below looks daunting. However, it should be borne in mind that ChangeUp, which was intended to deal with similar issues, was conceived by central government as a ten year development programme for the VCS, supported by a series of shorter term business plans. The development programme that is needed for the VCS in B&NES should be seen in a similar way as a medium to long term project. However, the principles on which the sector's development will be based, the shape of the programme and the structures for delivery need to be decided quickly.

CapacityBuilders is currently in the process of negotiating with local VCS development consortia on similar programmes of work. Our recommendations are therefore set out in a way that follows the structure of the current CapacityBuilders forward planning exercise for VCS development. The key headings under which a B&NES VCS development programme needs to be developed are:

- vision for the future;
- leadership;
- strategy and planning;
- identity and structure;
- programme delivery and coordination;
- resourcing the development programme.

The recommendations that follow are set out under these headings, but would not be carried out in a strict sequence. Multi-tasking is a necessity. That will involve a change of priorities on the part of the leading VCS support providers.

It is preferable that the VCS in B&NES should agree its own approach to development, seeking the support of its local stakeholders and of regional and national funders to put this vision into effect.

But that is not the only way forward. Government policies now require local authorities to promote and support an effective VCS in their areas as part of the ‘place shaping’, and regeneration agendas. In areas where the VCS has not been able to show the necessary leadership and vision to move forward, the local authority has taken the lead in commissioning new organisations to act as the area’s ‘Third Sector Development Agency’. In our view, all options for the future development of the VCS in B&NES should be open until there is an agreed way forward.

4.5 Recommendations Vision for the future

Social change and policy change are making new demands on the VCS. To meet these challenges head-on, it is essential for the VCS in B&NES to develop a shared understanding of its role in the area and a vision for its future.

Given the current fragmented nature of the sector, it is not viable for a vision to be developed in the short term in a way that involves the sector as a whole in democratic debate. The infrastructure and network organisations, in consultation with their public sector partners, have a responsibility to start the process by outlining both a vision and a supporting strategy for delivering it. They should then work through the existing networks to develop the vision whilst getting on with the initial programme of work. In the medium term, development and discussion of the vision, strategy and delivery plan for VCS development would form the basis for building more inclusive structures, which should be open to all VCOs working in B&NES. An example of a vision statement is contained in Appendix 4.

Leadership

The only agencies that are currently in a position to start the process of change are the infrastructure support and network organisations who were involved in this study, plus possibly a small number of other significant VCOs, such as Somer Housing which might have an important role in facilitating asset transfer from public bodies to the wider VCS. These lead agencies need to do two things: they need to work together on a common agenda: and given the weak track record of Avon-wide VCS development in the post ChangeUp era, they need to develop their own thinking about how the VCS in B&NES can be better developed, supported and promoted.

Strategy and Planning

At the same time that a vision for the VCS is developed it is important to consider what kind of strategy is needed to support and develop the VCS in both its present and likely future roles. The fact that there is currently no reliable profile of the VCS, no overall support needs assessment and no infrastructure development plan for B&NES is a handicap, because there is no evidence base on which to build a VCS development programme.

Our recommendation is that the B&NES infrastructure and network organisations should pool their existing knowledge to carry out three inter-related tasks over the next three to six months:

- consider what kinds of change are needed within the VCS in response to the community cohesion, community capacity-building and public service delivery agendas;
- identify the main information and support needs that B&NES front line groups have now, and will increasingly have as they respond to these new demands; and
- assess the extent to which the support services that are needed can be delivered within the current framework, and the changes in the type and delivery of support needed to build support capacity that meets the needs of the wider sector.

Out of this ‘quick and dirty’ profile, it would be possible to develop a strategy for the development of the sector locally, and in its sub-regional and regional context; and a business plan for the way in which the sector and its partners would meet these developmental and support needs. The VCS elsewhere has collected this kind of information, developed a coherent vision of its future, and is well on the way to establishing an institutional and financial framework for its development and support so there are models that can be followed by the VCS in B&NES⁵⁰.

Identity and structure

One of the major tasks confronting the VCS and its partners is to develop for the sector a clear identity and some form of structure. At the core of this is the need to establish a reliable and comprehensive information and communication system that will be able to perform three different tasks:

- identifying VCOs working in B&NES;
- communicating with and giving information to front line VCOs; and
- profiling the sector to identify its development and support needs.

There are a number of different strategies that can be employed for achieving these aims. We commend as a starting point the kind of VCS registration process which is recommended by NAVCA and the Audit Commission⁵¹, and which is implicit in the B&NES CVS Merlin system and the Care Forum’s Room 101.

⁵⁰ Many examples of these strategies and plans can be downloaded from VCS and government office websites. For example, the entire set of local infrastructure development plans for the South East Region can be viewed and downloaded at <http://www.raise-networks.org.uk/changeup/yourArea/localDocuments.html>

⁵¹ National Association for Voluntary and Community Action and The Audit Commission (2006), Getting to know your local voluntary and community sector: developing voluntary and community sector profiles

This is a huge task for one organisation, however, and a partnership approach is advisable to avoid the kind of duplication of effort and wasted resources that are involved in the large number of inadequate information systems that currently exist within the VCS and the Council. Such a resource should aim to be inclusive of as many VCOs as possible.

We recommend that a data sharing partnership be formed between the Council and the leading VCS support organisations⁵². The partnership should subscribe to the Guidestar UK data on VCOs in B&NES. At present these data describe registered charities only, but Guidestar UK plans to extend its coverage to include companies limited by guarantee by the end of 2007. The data are updated annually. This avoids the need for a costly and time-consuming data collection exercise. Once this information is assembled, it will then be necessary to find a way of obtaining information on the many smaller groups that are neither charities nor companies.

If an information sharing partnership of this kind were to be agreed between the Council and the support and network organisations, the core information from Guidestar UK would be augmented by additional information collected by the lead VCOs and Council departments and fed into a common data bank as is the case elsewhere. There are examples of such an approach being led by local authorities, by individual VCOs, or by partnerships. However, for such an arrangement to work, it is essential to agree common data standards so that everyone is working on the same basis.⁵³

Programme delivery and coordination

Smaller VCOs need support with recruiting, training and retaining volunteers; access to information, advice and support services so that they make better use of the resources that are available; better networking opportunities, so that local groups are in a position to help each other; and developmental support for those that are ambitious to develop new services or expand their volume of work.

Our belief is that a small local group providing neighbourly care will have broadly the same organisational support needs as a group running a youth football team, although each will have additional support needs connected with the nature of their core activity. It therefore does not make any sense for the generic support needs of these groups to be developed and provided separately by different specialists. There are two reasons why this is so:

- there can be no guarantee that the level of expertise is the same in different support providers; and
- duplication of effort takes resources away from other tasks.

⁵² The partnership between the Hampshire CVSs, Hampshire County Council and others that has developed the e.VOLve online information resource is one possible approach.

⁵³ Advice on this can be obtained from the Hampshire e.VOLve system (<http://e.volve.org.uk/>) c/o Karen Narkiewicz, Economic Development Unit, Hampshire County Council, Tel: 01962 845719

Collaboration and an agreed division of responsibility between support providers are therefore essential in meeting the needs of the majority of small VCOs.

The position is rather different for medium and large VCOs. Some are already involved in public service delivery and in income generation, but the expectation is that even more of them will become involved in community capacity-building, public service delivery and possibly some form of social enterprise in future. A majority of these groups employ staff, and need more advanced advice services in areas such as legal and financial advice, quality assurance, human resources, ICT, business planning and risk assessment if they are to flourish. These are also most likely to be the organisations that take an active role in asset transfer from local authorities as suggested in the Quirk review, so there are also issues connected with the efficiency and effectiveness of their current use of resources, including their capital assets; and with the way in which services and activities are organised to maximise opportunities for income generation.

It is unlikely that services at this more advanced level can all be provided within the B&NES VCS. It is even more unlikely that such services will be provided by a multiplicity of VCS support providers as is presently the case. Both rationalisation and a well-organised interface with sub-regional and national support providers, and with public sector partners and private sector advisors such as Business Link, are necessary in order to meet the support needs of medium and large VCOs.

This brings us to the position of those organisations that provide developmental support for the sector. Our focus here is primarily on organisations within the VCS - the generic and specialist infrastructure support and network organisations. We consider the Council's contribution in the next section.

- There needs to be a well-planned approach to meeting the support needs of groups at different stages of development - as in the distinction drawn above between the support needs of small volunteer-based groups and larger groups that employ staff and deliver services more formally.
- These differences cut across other dimensions that may involve some degree of specialisation. At present, specialist organisations that support distinct types of group are each doing their own thing - although there is growing collaboration with the CVS and with the Voluntary Sector Steering Group on specific issues. But as we have already argued, this tends to be on an ad hoc basis and needs to be pulled together into a coherent development plan based on the likely direction of travel of the VCS over the next ten years.
- There are issues connected with the low density of VCOs, communication and travel times that have to be overcome in providing support to rural groups.
- There are comparable issues involved in working with BME communities, religious and faith groups, asylum seekers and refugees, or Gypsies and travellers.

The only realistic way in which these different factors can be taken into account is to have all interested parties around the same table. Our recommendation is that:

- the Voluntary Sector Forum or a similar body should become the consultative user body for inclusive VCS development;
- delivery should be entrusted to a formal partnership of VCS support organisations working in close collaboration with stakeholders such as B&NES Council - a 'VCS Development' or 'Support Partnership' - that would include all those organisations that provide support services for front-line VCOs;
- the VCS support partnership should form an executive committee to drive forward the work programme;
- this executive might be built around an augmented Voluntary Sector Steering Group, whose terms of reference already provide for a line of accountability to the Voluntary Sector Forum;
- there should be a lead support organisation coordinating day to day work (but not necessarily undertaking all the work programme);
- the partnership should have agreed terms of reference that incorporate
 - o a 'code of conduct' governing matters such as conflict of interest;
 - o terms of reference for the executive committee; and
 - o protocols governing accountability of the partnership to the user forum, and of individual support agencies to the partnership.

Resourcing the VCS development programme

One of the principles underlying government policy for the VCS is the view that the sector needs to become more 'sustainable' (i.e. less reliant on external resourcing). That means five things:

- using whatever public and charitable funding is available to pump-prime activities;
- maximising the use of voluntary effort and community resources in support of VCO objectives;
- generating income wherever possible through activities (e.g. sale of goods and services, development of new not-for-profit enterprises);
- strengthening the sector's asset base; and
- redeploying existing resources to meet future needs rather than perpetuating historical patterns of spending.

In future, resourcing this programme of work is most likely to come from four main sources:

- local authority and other public sector funding focused around regeneration, corporate programmes such as the community strategy and local area agreement, and bespoke funding for VCS development to pump prime change in the sector;
- funding from national agencies (CapacityBuilders, FutureBuilders, Big Lottery/Basis) and charities with an interest in VCS development; and
- as important as the first two headings, reprioritising current activities, and refocusing existing money for service delivery by infrastructure bodies into a more strategic approach to VCS development; and
- a greater emphasis on joint working and avoidance of duplication between agencies.

Basically, infrastructure and network support organisations have a set of new tasks that goes beyond support for the status quo. This involves taking the lead in sponsoring change within the VCS. There will need to be some new money for this task, but not as much as the sector thinks it needs. Both new money and the redeployment of existing resources will be highly dependent on the ability of the sector and its infrastructure support organisations to make a strong business case for support. This business case needs to be based on the kind of vision, development strategy, and planning that we advocate.

The role of the Council and of the LSP

B&NES Council and the LSP have an important role to play in assisting the development of a vibrant and dynamic VCS in B&NES. We believe there are three ways in which they need to respond to this challenge:

- they need to support the development of a strategy for VCS change, initially via the leading support and network providers, and in the medium term through the development of inclusive structures that involve the sector as a whole;
- they have an important commissioning role to play in clarifying the leadership role of the main support and network organisations; and
- to achieve both of these objectives, they need to clarify their corporate policies for the sector, and achieve greater consistency of approach between individual departments within the Council, and between different partnership organisations.

A statement of intent is needed from the Council and the LSP that sets out a vision in respect of:

- the kind of VCS that they wish to see promoted in B&NES;
- how they see the sector's role in strengthening communities through developing community capacity and assets, improving public services, and being involved in new forms of enterprise;
- how the Council and the LSP will support a VCS development programme, and the place of this programme within the Community Strategy and the LAA.

Developing the framework: The Compact Board is the ideal forum in which to discuss how the Council and its partners can work with the VCS to achieve a future-orientated development strategy and business plan for the VCS in B&NES.

It is essential that all the key players - including important VCOs, public sector organisations such as NHS Trusts and the Police - are involved in some way in influencing the VCS development programme, either through the Compact Board or the LSP. This means that there must be strong links between the LSP and the Compact. We envisage that the LSP should take on responsibility for overseeing the Compact, and in this way becomes its guardian.

Commissioning infrastructure development services - The CVS: It is highly desirable for the CVS's commissioned services agreement to be centred on its role as the lead umbrella and infrastructure support organisation for the VCS in B&NES. The outcomes on which funding should be based should be linked initially to the development of an agreed development programme for the VCS, and subsequently to the delivery of this programme in accordance with the business plan.

Commissioning infrastructure development services - the Volunteer Centre: It is also desirable for the Volunteer Centre to have a formal, contractual relationship with the Council and to receive an element of Council funding if it is to play its part in sector-wide development. We note that this is already happening as part of the LAA delivery process. The commissioned services agreement should be based on the Centre's role in supporting the development of volunteering across the VCS; and in developing strategies with other VCS support groups to support volunteering in rural areas and within BME communities; as well as in supporting the LAA.

Commissioning infrastructure development services - Specialist support: The commissioned services agreements for specialist network and support organisations should contain as standard a requirement to support the development of the VCS as a whole as well as in their own specialist areas; and to collaborate with the other (named) infrastructure and network organisations in furthering development of the VCS.

Local accountability: The Volunteer Centre and Bath Racial Equality Council have management boards and terms of reference that focus all their energies on the B&NES area. Other organisations such as B&NES CVS, Community Action, the Care Forum and WECIL have governing bodies and aims that by their very nature cover a wider area than B&NES. In terms of service delivery and where contracts are involved there this is not necessarily a barrier to effective service delivery. However, in the case of infrastructure services this lack of co-terminosity in the areas being served by key organisations could potentially weaken the B&NES focus of third sector development activity unless the delivery of the different organisations is very well planned and coordinated. The absence of a well thought out Changeup infrastructure development plan suggests that this issue needs to be addressed.

A requirement to work together: The Council should consider whether it should continue to fund or support any organisation that is unwilling to play a part in sector-wide development in some form, or to work collaboratively with other infrastructure and network organisations in the interests of developing the voluntary sector as a whole.

A Third Sector Development Agency for B&NES? One possible way forward that would deal with issues of delivery and local accountability would be for the Council to commission a 'Third Sector Development Agency' for B&NES. This could either be a single organisation or a hub of organisations working to a common purpose. Either approach would fit easily into the structures for programme delivery and coordination that we have suggested above.

Funding VCS development: The question of where the money should come from for this programme of work needs to be addressed. In 2006/2007, total Council and PCT funding for the VCS was around £5 million. Of this, just over £220,000 (4%) was allocated specifically to four umbrella organisations⁵⁴. In addition, part of the Care Forum's funding from social services is for support and coordination of health and care network members.

There is a need for the Council and the LSP to ensure a higher level of VCS infrastructure capacity and better coordination of leadership and programme development by the VCS support bodies. That probably carries with it a requirement to consider new ways of funding infrastructure support. These could include:

- achieving a greater return on existing investment in infrastructure organisations by the Council and its partners;
- increasing the proportion of total expenditure on support for the VCS which is allocated to infrastructure support;
- helping the sector to lever-in funding from outside bodies such as CapacityBuilders and FutureBuilders; and/or
- increasing total levels of funding in order to promote VCS development and improved infrastructure support.

Any funding for VCS development and infrastructure support should be predicated on the development by lead VCS organisations of a vision and strategy for VCS development over the next decade, and a business plan for delivery of the first phases of this programme over the next three to five years. Planning for this programme needs to be completed within the next three to six months.

⁵⁴ Core funding for the CVS, Bath Racial Equality Council, WECIL and the Care Forum.

Other recommendations - the Compact, Commissioning etc:

- All Council departments should become signatories to the Compact within six months (i.e. not later than 31 March 2008).
- Other members of the LSP should be encouraged to become signatories of the Compact if they have not already done so in order to achieve greater consistency of approach by the partners.
- The Council should either standardise its commissioned services and service level agreements into a single format, or should incorporate a set of standard clauses into these agreements if it is intended that they would continue to be developed at a departmental level.
- The Council should
 - o review the continued use of discretionary grants as a basis for departmental funding except in the case of very small, one-off payments;
 - o consider setting an upper limit on the value of discretionary grants with amounts above this threshold being subject to a commissioned services agreement;
 - o incorporate standard clauses into commissioned service agreements requiring VCS contractors to join the Voluntary Sector Forum, and to participate in the sector's development programmes and training events where these are relevant.

The Compact codes of practice need to be supported by departmental action plans that set out clearly in what way each Council department and LSP member will foster the codes.

Appendix 1

DEFINITIONS AND TERMINOLOGY

'Voluntary and Community Sector'

Voluntary and community sector organisations are defined in this research as:

"... independent bodies with self-governing structures and a wholly voluntary governing body that do not distribute profits to shareholders, and are run for the benefit of others in the community."

This mainly consists of charities (registered and unregistered) and non-charitable voluntary and community groups including social enterprises, cooperatives and 'mutual societies'.

'VCS'

This is a shorthand reference to the Voluntary and Community Sector.

'VCOs'

This is a shorthand reference to Voluntary and Community Organisations.

'Third Sector'

In its recent publications, the Government has substituted the term 'Third Sector' for 'Voluntary and Community Sector'. This terminology is not yet widely accepted within the VCS, and we have retained the previous term in this report. 'Third Sector' is defined in the Review of the Third Sector in Social and Economic Regeneration as:

" ... non-governmental organisations that are value-driven and which principally reinvest their surpluses to further social, environmental or cultural objectives. There is a wide diversity of organisations however that make up the third sector and it is critical that the relationship between the Government and the third sector reflects this diversity."

The term can be most simply categorised as including voluntary and community organisations (VCOs), social enterprises, cooperatives and mutual societies.

'Capacity Building'

*"... activity that empowers and strengthens the ability of voluntary and community organisations to develop their organisations, systems, people and skills so that they are better able to define and achieve their objectives; engage in consultation and planning; manage projects; and take part in partnerships, social enterprise and service delivery."*⁵⁵

'Community Capacity Building'

"Activities, resources and support that strengthen the skills, abilities and confidence of people and community groups to take effective action and leading roles in the development their communities."

'Front-line group' or 'front-line organisation'

Community groups or voluntary organisations of any size whose sole or main purpose is to provide facilities, organise activities or deliver services either to their members or to the general public. The term is used to distinguish these organisations from 'second tier', 'umbrella' or 'infrastructure' organisations.

⁵⁵ Active Communities Unit, ChangeUp: Capacity Building and Infrastructure Framework for the Voluntary and Community Sector (2004), The Home Office, page 15

'Infrastructure'

*" ... the facilities, organisational structures, systems, relationships, people, knowledge and skills that exist to support and develop, co-ordinate, represent and promote front line organisations thus enabling them to deliver their missions more effectively."*⁵⁶

'Infrastructure Organisations'

Infrastructure organisations are:

*" ... those whose primary purpose is to provide infrastructure functions or services (support and development, co-ordination, representation and promotion) to front line organisations. They are sometimes called umbrella organisations, second tier organisations or intermediary organisations."*⁵⁷

'Generic Infrastructure Organisations'

Generic infrastructure organisations provide support to all VCOs within a particular geographic area.

'Specialist Infrastructure Organisations'

Specialist or 'sub-sectoral' infrastructure organisations provide support to VCOs working with specific communities such as BME and faith communities; specific client groups such as the elderly or people with learning disabilities; or working within specific service areas such as health and social care.

'Infrastructure Support Services'

In practical terms, infrastructure support might include any or all of the following:

- support for individuals starting up a new group or organisation;
- assisting with access to premises and facilities - meeting rooms, offices, equipment etc;
- giving advice and information on recruiting, managing and retaining volunteers and operating a volunteer recruitment service;
- giving advice and information on how to recruit, train, manage and develop employees including compliance with employment legislation, equal opportunities etc;
- developing the organisation, including:
 - o governance and leadership;
 - o organisational management;
 - o social inclusion, race equality and diversity;
 - o service development and planning;
 - o setting targets and quality standards;
 - o performance monitoring;
 - o business planning;
 - o funding and financial management;
 - o marketing;
 - o health and safety;
 - o risk management and insurance;
 - o problem solving and support in a crisis.
- information, advice or assistance in relation to public policy, relevant legislation, significant developments that impact on the sector's operating environment, and best practice;
- specialist support in particular areas of service delivery - for example, meeting professional standards in child care provision;

⁵⁶ Active Communities Unit, (2004), op. cit., page 15

⁵⁷ Active Communities Unit, (2004), op. cit., page 15

- information and communication technology - strategies for deploying ICT, access to low cost support / equipment and software, ongoing ICT support;
- skills & training - developing the organisational and professional skills of employees and volunteers including management committees;
- partnership building / brokerage - bringing together frontline organisations and other public and private sector organisations for joint/co-operative policy making, planning and service delivery;
- policy and research: collecting and providing evidence in order to influence policy, planning and service delivery;
- advocacy / representation: on behalf of voluntary and community groups to policy makers, service planners and funders.

'Social Enterprise'

A social enterprise is a business with primarily social objectives whose surpluses are principally reinvested for that purpose in the business or in the community, rather than being driven by the need to maximise profit for shareholders and owners. Social enterprises are diverse. They include local community enterprises, social firms, mutual organisations such as co-operatives, and large-scale organisations operating nationally and internationally. There is no single legal model for social enterprises. They include companies limited by guarantee, industrial and provident societies, and companies limited by shares. Some organisations are unincorporated and others are registered charities.

'Unpaid care'

This is defined by the Office of National Statistics as: looking after, giving help or support to family members, friends, neighbours and others because of long-term physical or mental ill-health or disability, or problems relating to old age.

Appendix 2

CATEGORIES OF ORGANISATION INCLUDED OR EXCLUDED FROM THE COMPOSITE DATABASE AND ANALYSIS

The VCS database that we have provided for B&NES Council and its VCS partners includes the following categories of organisation:

- informal, unconstituted bodies with or without a written constitution;
- companies limited by guarantee (as distinct from limited by shareholding as in the business sector);
- charitable trusts and foundations;
- registered friendly societies;
- co-operatives;
- community interest companies (provided that they do not distribute proceeds to investors or shareholders);
- social enterprises that do not distribute profits to shareholders and who are working for the benefit of the community.

Using this definition, the following types of organisation are excluded from our consideration:

- governmental and other statutory organisations including non-departmental bodies ('quangos');
- NHS Trusts and similar bodies (but not voluntary support groups such as 'Friends of ...');
- companies that trade for profit;
- political parties;
- colleges and universities;
- local authority and grant-maintained schools;
- training and enterprise companies;
- trade unions;
- commercial or professional associations.

We have consulted the B&NES voluntary sector infrastructure organisations, most of whom have responded, and there is a consensus in support of this definition. However, two interesting variations of interpretation have emerged:

- the Volunteer Centre would want to include some of the excluded organisations such as hospitals or colleges if they use volunteers - however, these are usually defined as 'public sector' bodies; and
- the inclusion of Chambers of Commerce and similar bodies has also been queried on the grounds that these are 'business organisations'. In fact they have not for profit constitutions, are run by members for members on a voluntary basis, include some voluntary organisations in their membership, and provide service for VCS members on the same basis as for their private sector members. Given the government's interest in promoting social enterprises and a more entrepreneurial approach by the voluntary sector, we have included chambers of commerce in our definition under the heading of 'companies limited by guarantee'.

Appendix 3

STATISTICAL TABLES

Table 1: Analysis of VCS database organisations by activity heading ranked by % of all VCOs

Activity (A - Z)	Number	% of all VCOs	Rank / 26
Sports and Exercise	378	18.59%	1 st
Health and Social Care	205	10.08%	2 nd
Social and Leisure Activities	201	9.89%	3 rd
Grant-giving and Funding*	182	8.95%	4 th
Arts, Culture and Media	139	6.94%	5 th
Education and Training	137	6.74%	6 th
Children and Young People	99	4.87%	7 th
Community Development (including residents' and community associations)	98	4.82%	8 th
Environment and Conservation	90	4.43%	9 th
Faith and Religion	81	3.98%	10 th
Young People	80	3.94%	11 th
Housing and Homelessness	72	3.54%	12 th
Economic Development and Business Support	41	2.02%	13 th
Transport	35	1.72%	14 th
Equality and Diversity	30	1.48%	15 th
Advice and Information	28	1.38%	16 th
Mediation, Counselling and Rehabilitation	23	1.13%	17 th
Older People	21	1.03%	18 th
Voluntary and Community Sector Support	15	0.74%	19 th
Advocacy	13	0.64%	20 th
Animals	12	0.59%	21 st
International Cooperation and Development	11	0.54%	22 nd
Community Safety / Criminal Justice	7	0.34%	23 rd
Employment	2	0.10%	24 ⁼
Lobbying and Campaigning	2	0.10%	25 ⁼
Indeterminate (not possible to derive activity from name)	31	1.52%	n/a
TOTALS	2,033	100.00%	

Source: Analysis of VCS database compiled by North Harbour Consulting Limited from sources that include Guidestar UK, various contact lists from Bath and North East Somerset Council, B&NES CVS Project and others, June 2007. The data contained in this table are believed to be a reliable estimate.

Table 2: Charities in B&NES by income

Annual Income	Number of B&NES charities in each band	% of B&NES charities in each band
Under £1,000 per annum	160	17.4%
£1,000 to £9,999	337	36.4%
£10,000 to £24,999	139	15.1%
£25,000 to £99,999	136	14.8%
£100,000 to £249,000	67	7.3%
£250,000 to £999,999	53	5.8%
£1,000,000 to £9,999,999	25	2.7%
More than £10,000,000 per annum	5	0.5%
TOTAL	922	100%

Source: Guidestar UK data on charities (Most recent accounts submitted to the Charity Commission). Data in this table are reliable.

Table 3: All voluntary and community organisations in B&NES by income

Annual Turnover by Income Band	Number of B&NES VCOs in each band
Under £1,000 per annum	305
£1,000 to £9,999	637
£10,000 to £24,999	254
£25,000 to £99,999	261
£100,000 to £249,999	128
£250,000 to £999,999	103
£1,000,000 to £9,999,999	47
More than £10,000,000 per annum	9

Source: Estimate prepared by North Harbour Consulting derived from Guidestar UK data on charity income in the South West Region and applied to non-charitable organisations. Data in this table are believed to be a reasonable estimate.

Table 4: Council funding of the VCS in 2006/2007 by department or programme

Council Department or Programme	Value of Contracts & SLAs	Value of Grants	Total Funding
Housing & Social Services	£1,731,696	£327,058	£2,058,754
Community Cohesion Unit - Drugs and Substance Misuse	£1,085,467	£0	£1,085,467
Arts	£0	£507,434	£507,434
Environmental & Consumer Services	£420,117	£8,589	£428,706
Umbrella Groups (VCS infrastructure support providers and networks)	£216,551	£0	£216,551
Community Transport	£0	£189,430	£189,430
Youth & Community	£145,989	£1,500	£147,489
Children's Play	£130,500	£12,145	£142,645
Sports	£11,000	£30,678	£41,678
Independent Museums	£0	£30,720	£30,720
Community Safety	£18,500	£10,000	£28,500
Education: Minority Ethnic Groups	£0	£24,190	£24,190
Environmental Heritage	£0	£17,701	£17,701
TOTALS	£3,759,820	£1,159,445	£4,919,265
<u>Average value per funded organisation</u>	<u>£60,640</u>	<u>£10,640</u>	<u>£23,540</u>

Source: B&NES Council

Notes: In most cases the data provided by the Council indicates whether the funding is based on a contract/service level agreement, or is a discretionary grant. Programmes are ranked by Total Funding. Data in this table are reliable.

Table 5: Council funding of the VCS in 2006/2007 in relation to LAA programme blocks

LAA Block	No of VCOs receiving Council funding	No of payments to VCOs	Value of Funding 2006/2007	%-age of total paid to VCOs in 2006/2007
Safer and Stronger Communities Block - (A) Mandatory and (B) Non-Mandatory Indicators	37	40	£82,740	1.7%
Healthier Communities and Older People Block - (C) Mandatory and (D) Non-Mandatory Indicators	31	49	£1,395,560	28.4%
Children and Young People's Block - (E) Mandatory and (F) Non-Mandatory Indicators	19	24	£491,842	10.0%
(G) Economic Development and Investment Block	35	40	£538,154	10.9%
<u>Sub-total: Direct link to an LAA block</u>	<u>122</u>	<u>153</u>	<u>£2,508,300</u>	<u>51.0%</u>
Cross-cutting funding that supports Blocks (A), (B), (C), (D)	9	16	£1,391,071	28.3%
Cross-cutting funding that supports Blocks (A), (B), (E), (F)	8	9	£158,919	3.2%
Cross-cutting funding that supports Blocks (A), (B), (G)	1	1	£760	0.02%
Cross-cutting funding that supports Blocks (C), (D), (G)	1	1	£4,786	0.1%
<u>Sub-total: Link to more than one LAA block</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>£1,555,536</u>	<u>31.6%</u>
<u>Generic Front-line Organisations*</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>£638,882</u>	<u>13.0%</u>
<u>Generic Infrastructure and Network Groups**</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>£216,551</u>	<u>4.4%</u>
TOTALS	162	206	£4,919,265	100%

Source: B&NES Council

Footnotes:

* These are organisations typified by CABx, Law Centres, Advice Centres etc.

** These organisations include infrastructure bodies, disability and BME networks groups etc.

Note that the figures given are based on the global funding totals for each major spending programme, and not just funding that is awarded specifically in support of the LAA. We have adopted this approach because we believe that in general, as local authority funding moves away from discretionary grants it should increasingly be targeted on achieving strategic priorities and outcomes as defined in the LAA agreement, rather than being defined in terms of 'LAA outcomes' versus 'other activities' to which the Council wishes to make a contribution. This would then influence the way service level agreements set out required outcomes rather than listing specific tasks to be undertaken.

In some cases, only the total budget for discretionary grants is given in the Council data. The number of funded organisations is therefore an underestimate.

Appendix 4

EXAMPLE: STATEMENT OF PURPOSE FOR A POST-CHANGEUP INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT CONSORTIUM IN B&NES⁵⁸

Statement of Purpose

The Bath and North East Somerset Voluntary and Community Sector Development Consortium is a multi-agency partnership promoting third sector development in B&NES.

Vision

By 2014 there will be a vibrant and sustainable third sector that contributes to realising B&NES VCS, Council and LSP ambitions. The third sector will be widely recognised for making an independent and valued contribution to the economic and social development of the area, and to civic and community life. To achieve our vision we will develop an entrepreneurial, dynamic and challenging sector. We will build on our history of innovation in our response to local needs, and act as an investor in the human and social capital of our workforce, and the communities that we seek to serve.

Consortium Objectives

1. Offer strategic leadership in identifying key trends and the direction of travel for the third sector, and for its development up to 2014 and beyond.
2. Facilitate opportunities for change and development in the third sector.
3. Facilitate partnership working between the third sector, the Council, local NHS services, the Police and other public bodies in strengthening local communities and creating the environment for a vibrant and forward looking third sector, transforming public services and encouraging social enterprise.
4. Promote the independent voice and sustainability of the third sector to encourage advocacy, investment and inclusion with and for local communities.

Areas of work

- Dynamic human resource development;
- Improving quality assurance and performance management;
- Creating a better evidence base;
- Enhancing marketing and communications;
- Promoting effective financial and business planning, and risk management;
- Supporting those involved in contracting and public procurement;
- Development of community assets and accommodation.

Intended Outcomes

- The sector is forward looking, innovative and challenges complacency.
- The sector has respected leadership, which promotes the independence, contribution and voice of the third sector and the commissioning of local public services.

⁵⁸ With grateful acknowledgement to the Portsmouth Third Sector Development Group

- The sector has the financial and business skills, and is investing in its own future, to ensure its ongoing development, viability and vibrancy.
- The Council and the LSP are committed to, and actively promote, the Compact and the contribution of the third sector in the area.
- Service commissioners operate a consistent, sustainable and fair commissioning framework.
- The VCS and its stakeholders are outward looking, adopt benchmarking and learning by participating in wider networks that bring benefit to the sector and the area as a whole.

Accountability

The Consortium is the accountable body for VCS development in B&NES.

The Consortium will be accountable to front-line VCOs via a formal membership structure.

It will also be accountable to the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) through its representatives on the LSP Board and working groups.

A VCS Support Partnership formed from generic and specialist VCS support organisations, and public and private sector support organisations, will be responsible for planning and ensuring effective delivery of good quality and relevant support services for front-line VCOs, and will be accountable to the Consortium.

Context

The government's commitment to working in partnership with the VCS and the opportunities it brings are clearly outlined in the third sector review which has identified four major areas of common interest:

- Enabling greater voice and campaigning;
- Strengthening communities;
- Transforming public services;
- Encouraging social enterprise.

These form the basis of the Government's proposed framework for partnership with the VCS over the next ten years.

To achieve the vision for the Voluntary and Community Sector and Social Enterprise, there will be a need for change in the way the VCS works. The Consortium has been developed to bring together key stakeholders to create the conditions in which the sector can grow and develop to meet these challenges in B&NES.

* * * * *