

Frontline hopscotch

VCS engagement in delivering change for children and young people: a jumpy start or a step back?



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for NAVCA

“Voluntary sector organisations can not only provide the full range of children's services but are the voice of children and young people. Without the full engagement of the voluntary sector's unique position Every Child Matters can never become a reality.”

Clare Tickell, Chief Executive, NCH

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

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

Written by Jason Leman, **Centre for Voluntary Sector Research**, with thanks to Rob Macmillan for his help with this report.

Commissioned by the **National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA)** – Kate Housden and Warren Escadale.

NAVCA is the national voice of local voluntary and community sector infrastructure in England. Its 360 members work with 140,000 local community groups and voluntary organisations which provide services, regenerate neighbourhoods, increase volunteering and tackle discrimination, in partnership with local public bodies.

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Executive summary

The advent of local area agreements together with the Department for Education and Skills' Every Child Matters are changing the landscape of children and young people's services. This paper outlines some of the emerging trends as they affect voluntary and community sector (VCS) provision of services for children and young people (C&YP).

The findings are based on a joint survey conducted by NAVCA on behalf of three key England-wide networks of local VCS organisations: the National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA), the National Council of Voluntary Child Care Organisations (NCVCCO) and the National Council for Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS). In all 173 organisations responded, between them covering 86 local authority areas.

The findings suggest very strongly that local community based provision is under threat, indeed the evidence shows that in some places the threat has been carried out. Our concern goes beyond narrow self interest, community organisations have particular knowledge, networks, and expertise that give them unique strengths in building community ownership and improving local services. There is a danger we will lose the vital preventative work of small groups amongst the most disadvantaged communities. This sort of local community action is key to sustaining local social, economic and environmental well-being and to the development of social capital.

Key findings

Responses reveal the following key findings:

The voluntary and community sector (VCS) is experiencing widespread cuts to preventative services for children and young people (Section 2).

- 68% of the VCS reports cuts in the last 12 months.
- 40% of the VCS reports that efficiency savings are the single greatest cause of cuts.
- Only one respondent reports increased local investment in preventative services (0.8%).

The voluntary and community sector is delivering fewer services for children and young people (Section 3).

- VCS delivered services are being taken in-house by local authorities and other statutory agencies:
 - 51% of the VCS reports that services, previously delivered by the VCS, have been taken in-house in the last 12 months.
- Funding shifting to local statutory agency (local authorities, PCTs and LEAs) control tends to fund statutory agency provision. This is especially apparent where the following applies:
 - Children's Fund,
 - Sure Start / Children's Centres, and
 - Connexions.

- As a consequence, funding is bypassing and jeopardising experienced voluntary and community sector service delivery organisations, e.g. where budgets have been devolved to schools away from LEAs.
- Reorganisation of services and cuts by local authorities has resulted in services supplied by the VCS being put at risk or even lost.

Current competitive tendering practice is discouraging voluntary and community organisations from delivering services for children and young people (Section 4):

- 79% of the VCS believes that competitive tendering, involving in-house local authority bids, has, in the last 12 months, lacked either fairness or transparency, or both.
- In the context of a significant increase in the number of services being put out to tender, voluntary and community organisations are increasingly choosing to opt out of bidding for contracts:
 - Because of the level of bureaucracy involved, 40% of organisations decided, in the last 12 months, not to bid to deliver services for children and young people.
 - 16% of VCS organisations are put off from tendering purely because of the cost involved.
 - The tendering process can be time-consuming, divisive and demoralising.

The voluntary and community sector, in many areas, is more involved in the strategic planning of services for children and young people (Section 5):

- 51% of the VCS reports increased involvement in strategic planning.
- 65% of local (VCS) infrastructure organisations report increased involvement in strategic planning.
- However, local statutory agency involvement of the VCS is inconsistent.
 - Nearly a sixth of the VCS (16%) reports reduced VCS involvement in strategic planning in its area.
 - Some respondents find that increased involvement in strategic planning discussions can be superficial and does not mean increased VCS influence.
 - Respondents expressed concerns that whilst the VCS is evermore involved in discussions about services, it is not involved in actually delivering services for children and young people.
- Increased strategic involvement of the VCS is highly dependent on short-term ChangeUp funding.

There are strong indications that efficiency savings, more than central Government strategies and policies, are determining the level and nature of VCS involvement in services for children and young people (Sections 1-5).

Recommendations

The voluntary and community sector (VCS) currently has an essential role in delivering public services, with its particular gift of getting to the most marginalised in the community. This survey provides us with new evidence to confirm anecdotal feedback that the new Every Child Matters framework, budgetary pressures on local authorities and the advent of local area agreements are creating significant obstacles for the children's services' VCS.

NAVCA is calling on ministers to address the issues identified in this survey and will be working with the Community Sector Partnership for Children and Young People to draw attention to the Compact compliance issues that arise in relation to the Compact codes on consultation and policy, funding and procurement for better practice at local authority level.

NAVCA's recommendations:

1. National and local government and their agencies should urgently address:
 - the current tensions between the need for preventative and child protection services and the budgetary pressures on public bodies; and
 - the potentially irreversible loss of VCS providers of children's services as a result.
2. Public procurement and commissioning arrangements at all levels must create a level playing field for VCS service delivery organisations.
3. VCS Engage, the DfES funded infrastructure partnership, should address the barriers faced by the VCS in its work to strengthen VCS engagement in the planning and delivery of children's services.

Recommendations from survey participants:

- Further work is needed to establish whether the key findings identified in this paper are widespread and part of a national mainstreaming trend.
- Local authorities should reduce barriers to VCS engagement in service design and delivery.
- Local statutory agencies should not implement efficiency savings in such a way that they result in disproportionate cuts in VCS services for children, young people and communities in which they live.
- LSPs and local statutory agencies should ensure there is consistent and meaningful involvement of the VCS in strategic planning and that the funding for such engagement is put on a firmer footing.
- LSPs and local statutory agencies should ensure that the VCS voice is heard and responded to - partnership should lead to transformation box-ticking.
- Local Children's Trust commissioning should increase the procurement of support services from appropriate local service providers, especially for marginalised communities.
- Local Children's Trusts should support and resource the development of local VCS consortia to enable smaller VCS organisations to access funding contracts and to deliver user and needs-led local initiatives and support services.

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Glossary of abbreviations

C&YP	Children and Young People
CVS	Councils for Voluntary Service
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
LA	Local Authority
LAA	Local Area Agreement
LIOs	Local (VCS) infrastructure organisations
NAVCA	National Association for Voluntary and Community Action
NCVCCO	National Council of Voluntary Child Care Organisations
NCVYS	National Council for Voluntary Youth Services
PCT	Primary Care Trust
SLA	Service Level Agreement
SSLP	Sure Start Local Programme
VCS	Voluntary and Community Sector

1 Introduction

The Government has repeatedly stated its commitment to voluntary and community sector (VCS) public service delivery. This report summarises a survey of those who are delivering the services, those who "are not only major providers of services to children, young people and families, they have significant expertise to offer in developing strategy and planning these services".¹

Anecdotal feedback from a range of children's service providers in the VCS was identifying a negative shift in the way that services developed by the sector were fairing in current arrangements with local authorities and the shift to local area agreements. Concerns were being raised in a number of public forums about services being cut, closed or taken in-house by public sector partners. NAVCA agreed with other VCS organisations to provide some snapshot in time evidence through a short survey to VCS children's service providers. NAVCA emailed member organisations with a link to an online questionnaire. The survey was further publicised in newsletters and email groups. There were 173 responses from over 60 localities across England and Wales (see Appendix 1). The analysis of results was carried out by the Centre for Voluntary Sector Research at Sheffield Hallam University.

The survey elicited responses from organisations of all sizes, from small community groups with no income to large organisations involved in many types of C&YP service provision and annual incomes over a million pounds (see Table 1).

Despite the differences in size it was notable that there was little difference in the issues raised.

Table 1: Annual income of organisations in the survey, by C&YP provision

Annual income	<i>Provision of C&YP services</i>		
	<i>Main purpose %</i>	<i>Secondary purpose %</i>	<i>Strategic %</i>
Less than £10k	16.1	10.0	2.7
£10k - £100k	26.4	27.5	13.5
£100k - £250k	19.5	27.5	18.9
£250k - £1m	23.0	22.5	51.4
Over £1m	14.9	12.5	13.5
Total n	87	40	37

However, the type of provision offered by organisations does appear to matter. Local infrastructure organisations, who represent the VCS to local authorities, have an overview of the wider local voluntary and community sector and the challenges facing the sector. Also, the response of organisations whose main purpose is to provide C&YP services often differs from those whose provision of C&YP services is secondary, part of a more general provision. Therefore, the main analysis shown in this report is by provision type.

¹*Engaging the Voluntary and Community Sectors in Children's Trusts* (2006) Department for Education and Skills

2 Funding to VCS-led children's services

Seeking to quantify anecdote, the survey sought views on whether funding for VCS services has fallen over the past 12 months. The survey found that, overall, the majority of VCS services are experiencing cuts in funding. Over a fifth (22%) of services reported that preventative C&YP services had been the first to be cut. Overall, over two thirds (68%) reported there had been cuts in services over the past year. Nearly two thirds (62%) of organisations whose secondary purpose was the provision of C&YP services reported cuts across the board, although over a tenth (11%) still stated preventative C&YP services were amongst the first to be cut (Table 2).

Table 2: In the last year, have there been cutbacks in preventative C&YP services in your area?

Cutbacks in preventative C&YP services	<i>Total</i>	<i>Provision of C&YP services</i>		
		<i>Main purpose</i>	<i>Secondary purpose</i>	<i>Strategic</i>
Yes (there have been cuts) %	67.8	65.0	73.1	66.7
No (no cuts at this time) %	32.2	35.0	26.9	33.3
Yes, the first services to be cut %	22.0	23.3	11.5	26.7
Yes, along with cuts across the board %	45.8	41.7	61.5	40.0
Yes, though no cuts following discussion %	7.6	8.3	3.8	10.0
No, no cuts %	22.0	23.3	19.2	23.3
No, no cuts and not vulnerable %	1.7	3.3	0.0	0.0
No, no cuts, not vulnerable and increased local investment in such services %	0.8	0.0	3.8	0.0
Total n	118	60	26	30

The most common reason given for the cuts was the need for efficiency savings or lack of resources, with over half (53%) reporting this. Nearly a third (30%) gave service re-organisation as a reason, although this had sometimes been done to save resources (Table 3).

Table 3: If there have been cuts to preventative C&YP services, what reasons were given?*

Reasons for cuts to preventative C&YP services	<i>Total</i>	<i>Provision of C&YP services</i>		
		<i>Main purpose</i>	<i>Secondary purpose</i>	<i>Strategic</i>
Efficiency savings / Lack of resources % [†]	53.1	58.7	57.1	40.7
Service re-organisation%	30.2	34.8	23.8	25.9
Service doesn't need to be delivered in same way %	19.8	21.7	14.3	18.5
Service is no longer a priority %	18.8	21.7	23.8	11.1
To be delivered in-house by local authority %	17.7	17.4	19.0	14.8
Policy change %	9.4	6.5	9.5	11.1
No reason %	6.3	4.3	14.3	3.7
Dissatisfaction with service provided %	5.2	2.2	0.0	11.1
Other %	15.3	14.1	16.0	14.7
Total n	98	47	22	27

*respondents could tick more than one answer. †comments indicated that efficiency savings were related to a lack of resources, several other comments only referring to the latter issue are included in this figure.

2.1 Changes to funding streams/regimes

In the past couple of years there have been major changes in the way that funding is delivered to C&YP services as a result of a major change in government strategy. Central government initiatives that concentrate on preventative services providing ring-fenced funding to local partnerships, with specific targets for VCS lead involvement and VCS service delivery, have been replaced by the concept of mainstreaming and the emergence of Children's Trusts and local area agreements (LAAs)².

Definitions of mainstreaming from the Cross Cutting Review on Children at Risk 2002

- Converting best practice, developed at a small scale or in geographically limited areas, into common practice
- Shifting the cost of successful programmes developed in initiatives into the core budgetary framework of the local statutory agencies to deliver security and sustainability

The first change to occur was to the Children's Fund. The fund was launched in 2000 to develop co-ordinated preventative services for children and young people. The partnerships are locally directed and flexible in how services are provided. The fund had been subject to uncertainty but is now guaranteed to last until 2008. The main strategic plan since 2005 has been to move the services provided through the Children's Fund within Children's Trusts and the framework of LAAs. Children's Trusts are charged with getting the balance of local services right between safeguarding and prevention.

More recently there has been a change to services provided as part of Sure Start, an initiative aimed at pre-school children and their families. From April 2006, Sure Start funding ceased to be directly provided by the Department for Education and Skills, and was, instead channelled through local government. Services provided through the centrally funded Sure Start Local Programmes (SSLPs) were moved under the remit of Children's Centres set up by the local authority, usually developed out of the SSLP.

The NAVCA survey found the change in funding streams has impacted on the involvement of the VCS. The shift from SSLPs to Children's Centres was of particular concern:

“After five years of funding, investment in staff and training and service provision [our service] was given three months' notice in June 2006 of decommissioning and although many of the posts were duplicated in the Children's Centres the staff were not TUPEd

² University of Birmingham & Institute of Education (2006) *Working to prevent the social exclusion of children and young people – Final lessons from the Evaluation of the Children's Fund*, Research Report 734, Department for Education and Skills.

across to the centres. Consequently 10 staff were made redundant; the redundancy payments had to be taken from our charitable reserves.”

“[There have been...] cuts in funding ... Only Sure Start Children's Centres are supported now.”

“New monies that become available, managed by the local authority such as through Children's Centres, are automatically presumed to be best delivered and led by the local authority with little engagement with the VCS.”

Several comments related to the shift from the Children's Fund to new initiatives and the impact that change was having on the VCS:

“As Children's Fund monies decrease and the new structures to support a Children's Trust are yet to be established, there is an actual reduction in investment in V&CS preventative services for C&YP.”

“No monies have come forward to voluntary groups since the ending of the Children's Fund in April 2005. There is funding available from the Community Learning Partnerships but they are not being advertised and the general feel is that the money will go to LA funded projects, i.e. Extended School Services.”

“There are no mechanisms at present moving preventative services from the Children's Fund into a local children's trust.”

“We have been informed by the Children's Fund that our service should be mainstreamed and thus paid for by the schools/education department. However, there has been no indication that this will happen in the near future, especially by April 2007.”

Other comments referred to funding streams winding down or being cut:

“The Children's Fund services have been squeezed to the point that they are becoming unable to operate effectively.”

“Pots of funds running out e.g. New Deal for Communities. ... it's almost impossible to get continuation funding...”

“We have been providing services for 5-13 year olds through funding from NCH Children's Fund – from last year our income has dropped from £50,000 to £10,000. This ceases altogether in March and I am still striving to find other sources of income but have not been successful so far.”

It is clear from the comments that the changes to the way funding is distributed and the way it is delivered to C&YP services has had an impact on the VCS provision of services.

2.2 Cuts in funding from local authorities

Many comments referred to reductions or complete withdrawal of funding by local authorities, citing previous successful provision of services as no guarantee against withdrawal of funding:

“For five consecutive summers we were commissioned ... to provide high quality out of school creative arts activities for young people... The projects have been hugely successful attracting large numbers of young people and even winning prestigious national awards... In 2006 we were told there was no funding for this service to be continued.”

“Our SLAs, [including ones] with Pre-school Learning Alliance, have been terminated over the last three years even though we have all met targets and provided the service as required.”

“The service I was involved with... was closed down in July 2006, due to a lack of funding available, even though it ... proved to be very successful for eight years.”

Services provided by the VCS through SSLPs have also been affected by budget cuts; as one respondent states "cuts in Sure Start budgets have been transferred to cutting their contracts with the VCS".

There were concerns that preventative services are more likely to be cut:

“[our services] are not statutory services. The local authority sees them as 'value added services' which they do value but if cuts are to be made, this is an area they look to.”

“Play projects are particularly vulnerable because they don't appear in the CYP Plan as a priority until Year 2. It has been acknowledged that Year 1 priorities will continue into Year 2 as they are long-term goals – but no confirmation when Year 2 priorities will be picked up.”

“Our experience is that they are often unable or unwilling to provide services that they do not have a clear or direct responsibility to provide.”

Some comments indicated that the cuts were happening as part of wider budget savings being made by local authorities:

“There have been cuts in the budget across the board and we have the projected figures for further years and all show a considerable cut in budget despite the services being under funded currently.”

There were also concerns that services and funding were being taken in-house as part of cost cutting:

“Connexions are trying to get into counselling young people with no clinical supervision set up or clear boundaries for young people. One minute [Connexions is] seeing a young person for advice and guidance, next the Personal Advisors are saying they are their counsellors and to stop using the [VCS] counselling service they had been using for some time.”

“[The] Council have used... Connexions funding to support their own services instead of tendering. They are diverting funds to secure their own failing provision.”

“We demonstrate effectiveness and efficiency regularly to LA but still are threatened constantly. Statutory services (social services) locally are notoriously under staffed and are only working on child protection cases at present yet they are considering withdrawing our funds to [be diverted] into this service.”

Some comments referred to cuts in funding streams being delivered through PCTs:

“PCT grant also stopped at end of March 2006 due to overspend in their budget. This work had been going well. This short notice of funding cuts caused a member of staff to be made redundant and others to be on shorter working hours.”

“The PCT has been subject to financial 'Turn Around' and therefore all services have been scrutinised with the aim of reducing costs.”

Service provision is being re-configured as statutory authorities seek to deliver efficiency savings and stay within budgets. However, on the ground this is experienced as a direct threat to valuable services that are currently being delivered by the VCS.

2.3 Consultation, campaigning and coping

In many authorities there was little or no consultation with the VCS about cuts being implemented:

“Debates over SLAs with Sure Starts and loss of Adult Learners that we haven't even been told about... the authority just seems to do what it pleases without any reference to our provision.”

However, there was some evidence of successful lobbying campaigns. One comment referred to how the VCS lobbied the local authority to maintain its contract:

“We were informed that the Local Authority wished to take the Early Years Support contract 'in house' – the reason given was that the Local Authority would have more control over their own staff and be able to utilise them more effectively. After discussions

and us presenting a paper on why the LA should contract with us, the decision to take the service in house was withdrawn and we were given the contract for a further year.“

Several comments outlined more wide-ranging campaigns to maintain funding:

“County Council planned to implement cuts across the sector last Christmas. They totalled approx. £500,000, and included funding for our... group. After much publicity and lobbying on the part of the sector, the cuts were dropped.”

“Funding for our play scheme for children with disabilities was initially cut and notice of termination of agreement issued. But following a public and media campaign against all the proposed cuts to [services for] children with disabilities in the county this [decision] was rescinded.”

Where funding has been cut, organisations have sought to retain provision by operating as a social enterprise, on a voluntary basis, or subsidising the work:

“Council has started to implement cuts in grant funding to community nurseries since last year at 25%, and 50%, respectively. Eventually they will not receive any grant funding and will be expected to run as social enterprises or businesses.”

“We are being 'invited' to provide [our service] – same amount of time, same service... but there is no funding for the staff – [it is] to be done by volunteers.”

“We have been unable to secure enough funding to provide the service that the Local Authority requires from us, and that we know the early years settings need, and often have to subsidise the service from our own organisation.”

“We previously had an SLA to deliver information, advice and guidance services to young people... Along with other voluntary sector providers in the city, our budget was totally cut without any negotiation or prior discussion. In effect the city still receives this service as it is core work to this agency but they receive it without putting in any funding. We have taken the stance that unless projects are funded we cannot deliver them. In this case, this is impossible.”

There have been clear consequences where cuts were implemented, or where the organisation providing the service was not able to operate on another basis. Difficulties include uncertainty about the provision of services, including the risk of closure:

“All services that we offer to children and young people are funded on a piece meal basis. This has not enabled us to plan ahead and develop sustainable activities.”

“The news about cuts and so forth is a little daunting to us as a committee and we are apprehensive about progressing even though there is much need for service in our locality, as expressed by young people themselves.”

“One organisation that provides services to very vulnerable young people leaving care has lost all funding and this has resulted in the organisation going to the wall.”

“Our own charity is likely to have substantial cuts and may fold next year as money is going to be pooled to the LAA and we can no longer gain funding via [statutory bodies] even though we have approved supplier status and are one of the leading providers of [C&YP services] in the region. Not happy times.”

3 In-house provision

Overall, half of the respondents had experienced services being moved in-house by the local authority or statutory agencies. This was most marked for organisations whose main purpose was the provision of C&YP services (Table 4). There was no correlation with the introduction of Children's Trusts; 45% of VCS organisations in children's trust pathfinder areas reported services being taken in-house compared to 54% in other areas.

Table 4: C&YP services previously provided by the VCS taken in-house in last year:

	Total	Provision of C&YP services		
		Main purpose	Secondary purpose	Strategic
Yes %	50.5	56.0	38.1	48.4
No %	49.5	44.0	61.9	51.6
Total n	103	50	21	31

Comments from organisations in the survey suggest three main reasons for transfer of services: the move of provision from SSLPs to Children's Centres, statutory providers and statutory requirements.

3.1 Reasons – Sure Start and Children's Centres

The largest proportion of comments referred to the transfer of services from SSLP to Children's Centres:

“Under the move from SSLPs to Children's Centres provision of much community activity has been taken in-house to be provided by the core team, undermining VCS organisations and losing valuable local, grass roots knowledge / expertise.”

“Two Sure Start local programmes in [our area] have been mainstreamed into the Children's Centres. This has taken nearly £1m out of one voluntary organisation.”

“Parents and the local community were not involved in the process of deciding the location of the children's centre, nor their design or layout. Four Children's Centres were opened in very close proximity to our centre. We also received funding to open a 'temporary centre' in an area of Housing Renewal; the funding for this was discontinued with our organisation left with an expensive building to maintain. Having built up a large group of vulnerable parents/carers with their children in an area of severe depression, the expectation was that the parents would automatically move across to the Children's Centres.”

“In the last 18 months all targets were met and in most cases exceeded. Despite this the majority of [our] services were decommissioned by Children's Services at the end of June 2006. When queried the assistant to the Assistant Director gave the reason as duplication of services, however there was no duplication until after the Children's Centres came on line.”

“Crèche provision to enable parents to access courses... was not provided in the Children’s Centres although lack of childcare provision had been identified as a barrier to parents attending courses.”

3.2 Reasons – Statutory providers

Several comments referred to services being provided through schools that did not make use of the VCS:

“After-school homework club previously funded through the LEA has been withdrawn due to budgets devolved to schools.”

“There are many groups in the sector that deliver a quality service for children and young people, but due to statutory provision taking precedence they are overlooked. This therefore results in partners such as Heads from extended schools/CLPs not being aware of such availability and children missing out on such vital service provision.”

One comment referred to pressure from the local authority to use in-house services:

“[There is] pressure to use statutory services within the council that is providing the funding for extended schools. Extended schools get charged for using the in-house service.”

“Local authority have developed and supported in house provision. When they are not delivering, the services are reorganised and funding is allocated to the newly formed organisation. In the meantime VCS are not the preferred supplier.”

Some comments referred to statutory providers’ lack of respect for the VCS, resulting in the VCS losing the opportunity to provide services or obtain funding:

“Workers from statutory services often view those involved in VCS organisations as second class and not professional. Deterring more people from getting involved in VCS organisations.”

“[There is a] general culture of wishing to take good ideas from voluntary sector and deliver themselves rather than funding voluntary sector e.g. this year I found CAMHS professional delivering the type of workshop I have done for a while and using the materials our organisation has produced.”

“Substance Misuse services have been carved up behind the back of VCS and all taken in house with total lack of transparency.”

3.3 Reasons – Statutory requirements

Some comments referred to situations where the statutory requirements, or the interpretation of these requirements, mean that the services that local authorities specify do not match those the VCS is able to supply:

“Our organisation used to provide advice to childcare settings registered under the Children Act, on the requirements of the National Daycare Standards. We employed a team of qualified and experienced people to do this. However, they did not necessarily have Qualified Teacher Status and the local authority have now employed a support teacher team to undertake this work in addition to offering advice regarding Early Education.”

“The local community nursery nurses decided to replicate the service we are providing as we couldn't release names and addresses for their statistics due to data protection.”

“VCS post to liaise with the sector, previously located and managed in the CVS, has been taken in-house and developed into a commissioning post within the Trust as part of the statutory management framework. [The post was] not advertised.”

4 Tendering

The Children Act 2004 and Every Child Matters place a clear emphasis on commissioning and procurement of services through competitive tendering. Guidance states that “as far as is practical (taking account of the nature and value of the contract) there should be competitive tendering between providers ... ensuring that all tenders include full costs” and that contracts should be “based increasingly on outcomes”³. The survey asked about the change in tendering for services over the past 12 months, the value of tendering and the openness of the process.

Overall a third of services surveyed stated there has been a significant increase in competitive tendering over the past year. This was clearest for those whose provision of C&YP services were a secondary purpose, with 43% indicating competitive tendering had significantly increased. This compares with over a third (36%) of strategic services and over a quarter (28%) of services whose main purpose is C&YP services indicating this to be the case (Table 5).

Table 5: In the last 12 months has there been a significant increase in competitive tendering for C&YP services that have been provided by the local VCS?

Increase in competitive tendering	<i>Total</i>	<i>Provision of C&YP services</i>		
		<i>Main purpose</i>	<i>Secondary purpose</i>	<i>Strategic</i>
Yes %	33.3	28.3	43.5	36.4
No %	66.7	71.7	56.5	63.6
Total n	111	53	23	33

Where organisations have failed in their bid for contracts, the majority (41%) did not know why. Several organisations (13% overall) had failed due to lack of preferred provider status. Some comments related to the complexity of the process, others to the fact that the VCS was still adapting to changing requirements from funders (Table 6).

Table 6: Reason VCS organisation failed in bid for C&YP contracts*

Reason	<i>Total</i>	<i>Provision of C&YP services</i>		
		<i>Main purpose</i>	<i>Secondary purpose</i>	<i>Strategic</i>
Don't know %	51.7	50.0	65.5	42.3
Not a preferred provider %	16.7	19.4	6.9	15.4
Not offered to VCS %	11.7	11.3	6.9	15.4
Contract price %	9.2	11.3	6.9	7.7
Beaten by statutory competitors %	9.2	11.3	3.4	7.7
Funder wants a bigger contract size than the VCS organisation can fulfil %	5.8	4.8	6.9	7.7
Funder believes that the VCS organisation is too small %	5.8	1.6	10.3	7.7
Other %	12.5	8.1	24.1	7.7
Total n	120	62	29	26

*Respondents could tick more than one

³ *Joint planning and commissioning of children and young people's services* (2006) HM Government

The commissioning of services through competitive tender was preferable to a process where services were not open to tender. However, VCS organisations have found difficulties with the burden of tendering, statutory requirements, and the transparency and fairness of the process.

4.1 The need for tendering

In many areas services are not yet open to competitive tender. Several comments referred to the VCS having little opportunity to provide services where this was the case:

“No competition, no tendering process, just taken in-house.”

“It isn't even competition because all decisions are made in-house so the VCS are not even part of any process in terms of delivery of services. There are no commissioning protocols or processes in place.”

“Reorganisation, lack of clear processes and pressure on funds has led LA services to be less open to commission others, except for small, difficult pieces of work.”

The lack of competitive tendering also meant the process of commissioning was not seen as fair:

“I know of organisations that are core funded through the youth work in [the] central partnership but have gone through no competitive tendering process. If it is open to one it is open to all!”

One comment referred to the difficulty VCS organisations can face in accessing funding when services are not open to tender:

“Commissioning not in place yet. Struggling to exist until it does. Other pots of funding inaccessible because they are looking for 'new' work! What happens to the work that is in demand, but can't access funding?”

The implementation of competitive tendering represented a challenge for local authorities and the VCS:

“It is my opinion that [this region] still has some way to go before they are ready for commissioning services.”

“The [tendering] process has been a learning curve for all involved and has taken a year in one case.”

4.2 Relevance of tendering

Where competitive tendering is used there are concerns over the efficiency of the tendering system for services previously given grants or Service Level Agreements (SLAs):

“In the past five years all our services that we have provided are now subject to competitive tendering. The city council decides its strategy for services (with very little reference to the CVS) and sends out bids with little notice and we all scramble to keep hold of good services that we have been providing for years.”

“Whenever previously SLA-funded work reaches the end of a contract the work is then being put out to competitive tender, even when there really is no likely local competition. It seems incredibly bureaucratic, financially costly, terribly time consuming and totally undermining of any previous respectful partnership working. It has fundamentally undermined confidence and respect.”

“Competition for funding is extremely intense. Therefore many organisations are competing against each other for similar projects and provision.”

4.3 Statutory requirements

As funding has shifted to local authorities there has been a standardisation of priorities and practices. Several comments referred to the difficulties this presented for the VCS as requirements and aims become more stringent:

“There is... some concern that the referral criteria set by the local authority for the services delivered by the voluntary sector are the same as for local authority services, essentially eroding our capacity to undertake preventive work.”

“Voluntary sector provision is asked to use the same criteria as in-house but we can't be the same. We do what we do in our spare time, because we choose to do it, not because we get paid £25 an hour. You are using our goodwill and then asking us to jump through hoops for £500 here and there. It's easier to not get involved and do it ourselves. I have worked for 25 years for the benefit of our youth and all I see from the LA is paper chasing, people trying to justify themselves and.. putting up barriers instead of helping small community based initiatives.”

“Have lost other types of funding by not being an organisation who can deliver [easily assessed] outputs.”

4.4 Choosing not to bid

Many VCS organisations reported that they had not tendered for services. By far the most common reason was the amount of work involved, 40% of organisations stating the bureaucracy was too onerous. It is notable that this was the main reason for organisations irrespective of their size (as determined by income) or type of provision (Table 7).

Table 7: Reasons VCS organisation has decided not to bid for C&YP contracts

<i>Decided not to bid</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Provision of C&YP services</i>		
		<i>Main purpose</i>	<i>Secondary purpose</i>	<i>Strategic</i>
Bureaucracy too onerous	40.0	38.2	44.4	38.5
Costs of bidding are too high	16.4	14.5	14.8	19.2
Price offered is too low	15.5	20.0	11.1	7.7
Difficulties getting preferred provider status	13.6	9.1	18.5	15.4
Competition from local authority's in-house provision	11.8	7.3	7.4	19.2
Other	15.5	16.4	14.8	15.4
Total n	110	55	27	26

**Respondents could mark all that applied*

Comments indicated the bureaucratic requirements of the tendering process made it less likely VCS organisations would participate:

“Tendering is just too difficult to get involved with.”

“Whilst it is on the surface, fair and transparent, it is, at the same time, often weighted against VCS by use of complicated, web-based processes for tendering.”

“The competitive bidding process is very complicated, time consuming and obviously geared towards commercial companies, with no thought to the capacity of voluntary sector organisations and their ability to engage in the process.”

Some organisations indicated they had not bid because they could not realistically operate under the terms of service offered, for example:

“There was a 'tender' for delivery of education to excluded young people... The young people were NOT allowed to be refused and HAD to be engaged whether they were 'willing' or not. There appeared to be no 'choice'. We were expected to provide a service for up to 30 children but the contract was to be paid for per child - and we may have only been offered one child! - too risky!”

4.5 Transparency and fairness

Just above a fifth (21%) stated that competition between the VCS and in-house provision was fair and transparent; this dropped to 16% for organisations whose main purpose was C&YP service provision (Table 8).

Table 8: Competition between the local VCS and your local authority's in-house provision has been fair and transparent in the last 12 months

Fair and transparent competition	<i>Total</i>	<i>Provision of C&YP services</i>		
		<i>Main purpose</i>	<i>Secondary purpose</i>	<i>Strategic</i>
Yes %	21.3	16.3	25.0	30.0
No %	78.8	83.7	75.0	70.0
Total n	80	43	16	20

Where processes were not thought to be transparent, the key issue appears to be a lack of information, consultation and feedback about tendering opportunities:

“Trying to get information out of the local authority is like trying to get blood out of a stone, especially concerning Youth Opportunities Fund and Youth Capital Fund.”

“We get very little feedback about the tenders; we find out who has been successful via the grapevine. Sometimes the service specification changes without notice or the duration of the contract is shortened.”

“No one knows who they should be speaking to, to secure contracts, or what the time-scales are.”

“Nothing is transparent in [our area]! The best they do is consult the umbrella organisations who are not in a position to speak on our behalf due to lack of specialist knowledge.”

Concerns about the fairness of the process tend to focus on the difficulties of the Full Cost Recovery method:

“Transparent but not fair, e.g. we had an SLA for Early Years work but they reduced the funding available by 25%, and their own in-house provision looked more attractive because it did not include the Full Cost figures we used.”

“Not able to get full cost recovery. Costs questioned and told that costs are too high when we know the service is much cheaper than statutory agencies.”

“As a voluntary sector organisation we are so used to providing services and making do with the money we get, that it then becomes difficult to show that the service should actually cost more.”

“Everyone wants value added, no LA really believes in full cost recovery for the VCS.”

One comment referred to a disparity between contracts offered to statutory providers and VCS providers:

“Not just local authority – but education / college providers. They are guaranteed three and five-year funding streams – and are guaranteed regardless of output – and paid management cost (full cost recovery) and get this in advance ... we have a fixed contract price, have to deliver before getting paid and only get paid on performance – and this may be a year’s contract that is confirmed three or four months into the timescale! – Not fair or equitable is it?”

There were some comments around what factors were used to judge tenders. One respondent stated "factors such as staff competency, quality of delivery and sustainability should be looked at, as well as cost". Other comments indicated that this was not happening, with cost being the overriding factor.

4.6 Good practice

There were several examples of where the tendering of services had been experienced as a positive process, for example:

“[Of two tendering processes] one was a messy, rushed tendering process with a very protracted decision-making timeframe with no feedback (six months from submission to decision) and resulting in the unnecessary loss of staff. We retained part of the contract. The other was a comprehensive, well planned and transparent process – whilst we were not awarded the contract we were given full feedback and it was a positive experience in many ways.”

However there were concerns about the awareness in local authorities of the limited resources VCS organisations have for the tendering process:

“We haven't the resources to attend the countless meetings at which these things are discussed and planned. The infrastructure is very time consuming and costly and we simply don't have the time, money or energy to play an active role.”

“All training events etc cannot be attended by voluntary sector staff due to them ALWAYS being held during the day, within the normal working week, that is when we are at work. This certainly isn't fair; yes they are transparent in this but unable or unprepared to change. What this means is that we are behind 'in-house' provision without a voice and not in the loop.”

Some comments advocated that the VCS adopt a consortium approach, or a collaborative arrangement, when bidding for contracts:

“Procurement and tendering for Youth Offending Team based services... is expected to commence from next year's funding round. In anticipation of this, we are working closely with other youth infrastructure bodies, working towards the formation of a collaborative arrangement in order to meet the needs of all stakeholders, in a more efficient and effective way, so that we can improve outcomes across the VYS.”

“I have been advocating locally that larger VCS join together to develop consortium approaches to bidding for tenders, each able to maintain their independence as organisations but come together in either formal or informal partnerships to bid for tenders based on each organisation's added value and competitive advantage which collectively will be greater.”

Others identified joint commissioning work. For example local authority, Connexions and the VCS working together, and pooling their knowledge, to commission youth services.

5 Strategic planning

In general, over half (51%) of VCS organisations think the sector has been more involved in strategic planning of C&YP services over the past year. This is especially apparent in strategic services where nearly two thirds (65%) indicated this was the case. Overall, just 16% reported less involvement of the VCS in strategic planning over the past year (Table 9).

Table 9: Change in the way the VCS is involved in the strategic planning of C&YP services

<i>Involvement of VCS in C&YP services</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Provision of C&YP services</i>		
		<i>Main purpose %</i>	<i>Secondary purpose %</i>	<i>Strategic %</i>
About the same	32.6	32.4	42.4	20.6
Less involved	16.3	16.9	18.2	14.7
More involved	51.1	50.7	39.4	64.7
Total n	141	71	33	34

Whilst these figures are generally positive there remain areas where involvement has fallen and even in areas where there is increased consultation, comments suggest underlying concerns.

5.1 Varied levels of involvement

Despite the Children Act of 2004 and the local area agreement guidance encouraging participation of VCS organisations, the level of involvement of the sector varies from authority to authority:

“Involvement has increased and the authority have provided funding to enable the engagement of community and voluntary organisations in the commissioning of services. In other authorities the intentions appear to be constructive but poor implementation has created barriers and / or uncertainty. In some authorities there has been a clear move to exclude [the VCS].”

Several comments referred to where representation of the VCS has fallen:

“CVS not allowed to be represented at children’s trust board.”

“Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership has been stopped – no platform for VCS organisations to be involved. Strategic VCS group has been set up by Children's Trust but only two reps from group on to strategic group so I can no longer speak on behalf of childminders in the authority directly.”

“Funding that has been in place to engage the sector has been withdrawn and in-house posts being created.”

5.2 Meaningful strategies

Where involvement in strategic planning has increased organisations remain doubtful about the likely impact:

“A bit sceptical as to whether this is just a tick box exercise. Things seem cut and dried.”

“Meetings are held but we are presented with *fait accompli*.”

“Although we are members of the Local Area Agreement Children and Young People’s Group the voluntary sector has no voting powers, meetings are changed to suit the statutory sector members with no reference to the VCS. There’s minimal discussion at meetings. Papers are circulated very close to meetings. Everything is deemed as being a Statutory responsibility [where] no input from the VCS is required.”

“We are more involved but it’s all talk. Expectations are one way towards the VCS’s.”

“C&YP services now in a commissioning and procurement department taken out of the Voluntary Sector Support Unit. There has been no involvement of VCS in the planning of this. We were invited to a presentation on what was going to happen. It appeared that they were only interested in dealing with the largest C&YP organisations and the idea that smaller or non specialist organisations had an interest fell on deaf ears.”

Several spoke of the need for strategic consultation to translate into action:

“Engaging VCS strategically, yes. Engaging VCS in delivery of services, no.”

“The Play Strategy has the potential to have a positive impact, but hasn’t achieved it so far.”

5.3 Successful engagement

There are some examples of improved engagement in planning, though this is not without its own difficulties. Consultation can place a large burden on the organisation involved:

“It is very difficult to know which strategy group to attend to know what decisions are being taken where. I do appreciate that it is difficult for LAs to consult with the CVS when the sector is so diverse and of course we are all in competition with each other now.”

“[We have] a place at the Children’s Trust Board, Safeguarding Board, Youth and Connexions Service Senior Management Team as well as a whole host of other bodies including one-to-ones with Senior Staff. We have also been very involved in a whole range of senior staff appointments, our problem is not lack of engagement but our capacity to take advantage of all the offers to engage.”

“Despite the voluntary sector involvement at levels including the board there is no money for any work that the VCS undertakes at the strategic or local tables. Representation and lobbying are being undertaken but [there is] no contribution.”

“Our organisation is less involved as other VCS services are taking more of a lead. But that is a good thing. As long as we don't get forgotten about because we don't always have the capacity to be at all the partnership or strategy meetings.”

Some comments referred to the positive impact that ChangeUp has had in increasing the extent to which VCS organisations can participate in strategic engagement. However, the short-term nature of funding for ChangeUp casts doubt about the sustainability of this engagement:

“Under ChangeUp we were able to fund a post to do strategic work around CYP services. This funding ran out in September and the LA has not given any money to continue the work.”

“The work we were able to carry out through the ChangeUp funding significantly improved VCS involvement in the planning and delivery of services. This is in danger of being lost now.”

Sheffield was one model of increased engagement:

“The Voluntary Action Sheffield (VAS) children's partnership network is a very effective mechanism to inform and organise VCS organisations. VAS provide lots of info for us which is very helpful and means we feel more informed than before.”

However, there are still concerns over the representation of smaller groups:

“There seems to be a strong network in Sheffield of voluntary organisations having input, but these are just the large ones who are already funded and I have no idea if they have any influence.”

And, as with many issues, there are concerns over putting in place strategic plans:

“I think they are trying to involve the VCS more at the strategic level, it's just getting it translated to practice on the ground.”

6 Summary and suggestions

The report paints a picture of change, both positive and negative. There were many concerns, both about long-term problems and new difficulties being faced, yet the survey did reveal some more positive examples. In this section we summarise the main points of the survey and point to examples of better practice.

6.1 Funding

Overall, over two-thirds of organisations (68%) reported there had been cuts in services over the past year. The most common reason given for the cuts was the need for efficiency savings or lack of resources, with over half (53%) reporting this. Nearly a third (30%) reported service re-organisation as a reason.

Recent changes in how funding and services are delivered to children and young people carry the risk that local public bodies become less well equipped to engage with local VCS service delivery organisations. A National Audit Office study has found that whilst two thirds of local authorities did consult the VCS in the founding of Children's Centres they needed "to involve existing providers and voluntary organisations more"⁴.

There is an implementation gap between government policy to expand the procurement and commissioning role of the VCS and the emerging reality of local authority practice to cut services or take them in-house. The statutory requirements, priorities and cost pressures of funders also change, placing at risk types of provision such as preventative services and those with difficult to measure outputs.

Local authorities are experiencing high pressures on budgets. Authorities provide a growing proportion of spending out of taxation and rates, and have cost pressures due to new legislation and price inflation. This has been recognised and led to a widening of the Lyon's Inquiry and the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review⁵. Primary Care Trusts, another major funder of C&YP services, are experiencing similar problems.

The results from this survey indicate this pressure is currently resulting in a fall in funding to services, especially non-statutory services. In several authorities, C&YP services, and therefore funding, are being taken in-house as part of cost-cutting. Several VCS organisations have had to lobby and campaign in order to maintain funding for services. Some have had to change the basis on which they are providing services, for example subsidising work or providing services on a voluntary basis. There have been clear consequences for service provision as a result of funding diversion or withdrawal.

Where there is a consultation process about any funding cuts this can alleviate the impact on the VCS and providers should be mindful of their local **compact** arrangements:

⁴ *Sure Start Children's Centres* (2006) National Audit Office, HC104

⁵ *A new vision for local government finance* (2006) Local Government Association

“Council involved in funding review but have worked closely with the sector through [the local infrastructure organisation] to make the process fair and transparent. No funding cuts taking place whilst this is happening.”

Good practice for funding organisations is important and achievable:

“As an umbrella organisation, we got the funding and distributed to small organisations that offered very innovative projects on health. The support that we provide to groups: we ensure that their management committees and staff are aware of their roles; that organisations have all relevant policies such as safeguarding children; that they network with their respective localities; and that they are represented in the children's trust.”

Where funding streams are being changed there needs to be an assessment of the impact on the VCS service providers and of the changes in the type of service funding is targeted towards. There is a need for sustainable funding streams where successful projects will be supported and flexible funding provided for innovative services. The funding process should be simple and clear with help available for small organisations who have no administrative support.

6.2 In-house provision

Overall, half of the C&YP services surveyed knew of services previously provided by the VCS sector being moved in-house by the local authority or statutory agencies. In several areas there has been a clear transfer of services from the VCS as part of the move from Sure Start Local Programmes to Children's Centres. There are also concerns over services being moved in-house by the local authority, as a cost saving measure or because of lack of awareness or appreciation of services available through the VCS.

There was no clear evidence either way of how Children's Trusts affected the use of VCS organisations to provide services. It should be noted that there are still concerns over the shift of funding outlined in section 6.1.

6.3 Tendering

Overall, a third of services surveyed stated there has been a significant increase in competitive tendering over the past year. Where organisations have failed in their bid for contracts, many (41%) did not know why this was the case.

In several areas, services are not yet open to tender, with less VCS service provision and/or commissioning taking place behind closed doors. When a tendering process is introduced there needs to be a well thought out preparation involving consultation with all stakeholders to avoid difficulty:

“Joint Commissioning of C&YP Services has not yet been established. We are fully involved, however, in discussions to set up a commissioning framework that is fair, transparent and open.”

Most competitive tendering entails a large resource commitment that many VCS organisations have difficulty meeting and 40% of those who did not bid made their decision because of the bureaucracy involved. The bureaucratic requirements of statutory bodies have placed burdens on VCS organisations in terms of administration and skills, and limited the types of provision available. There are also concerns that the competitive structure is damaging co-ordination and collaboration within the VCS.

Just above a fifth (21%) of respondents stated that competition between the VCS and in-house provision was fair and transparent; this dropped to 16% for organisations whose main purpose was C&YP service provision. The slow timescale of some tendering processes presented difficulties to some VCS organisations. A central part of good tendering processes is having a clear, well defined process with full feedback about how to improve future bids.

Full Cost Recovery was a common concern, respondents questioning whether in-house provision was also properly costed using this methodology. Several respondents felt there was a lack of real comparison between VCS and statutory service provision, and that funding of VCS provision was more tenuous than statutory provision, despite the VCS providers having to fulfil the same requirements.

6.4 Strategic planning

In general, over half (51%) of VCS organisations think the VCS has been more involved in strategic planning of C&YP services over the past year. Overall, just 16% reported less involvement.

Whilst the increase in involvement is to be welcomed, it is not universal. There are concerns over the additional burden consultation on strategy can place on VCS organisations and the need for consultation to be real rather than a "box ticking exercise". The need for real outcomes also relates to how well the strategy is implemented in practice as several commented there had been little change.

With the implementation of local area agreements the importance of effectively engaging the VCS is clear. It is a challenging process for the local authorities and there are difficulties in having effective consultation due to short timescales and limited resources. One reason VCS providers may doubt the value of consultation is that the VCS is often represented at the steering group level – typically an information sharing exercise – rather than at an operational

level, where decisions are made. Also, effective consultation of the VCS can be a long process, making early engagement of the sector in LAAs especially important⁶.

The ChangeUp programme appears to have made an impact on the level of representation VCS organisations can have. However, there is a need for sustainable structures of consultation, for example involving umbrella VCS organisations or statutory bodies acting as advocates for the VCS. Any mechanism needs to be able to effectively represent the concerns of smaller organisations working in specialist areas as well as larger bodies.

6.5 Models for good practice

Many comments highlight how important it is for organisations within the VCS to work together:

“[We are] working closely with other youth infrastructure bodies, working towards the formation of a collaborative arrangement in order to meet the needs of all stakeholders, in a more efficient and effective way, so that we can improve outcomes across the VYS.”

“[Tendering for VCS services] is expected to commence from next year's funding round. In anticipation of this we are working closely with other youth infrastructure bodies, working towards the formation of a collaborative arrangement in order to meet the needs of all stakeholders, in a more efficient and effective way, so that we can improve outcomes across the VYS.”

“We have a large range of effective partnerships wherein [we are] delivering high quality services. The range would cover Children's Centres, services for disabled children and young people, services in partnership with Youth Offending Teams, services for young refugees (although the availability of any sort of funding is becoming critical) and services for young people at risk on the streets.”

Another positive model is the provision of a central support mechanism for the VCS:

“Children's Network gives support to groups and strengthens their ability to deliver services.”

“There are some very good models developing for the young adults and adults per se. The hub and spoke model with the hub being a non delivering partner who writes bids and supports the rest of us to deliver – and [the VCS support organisation] are great in this respect but not yet funded for children.”

“[The local authority] have set up this year a Young People sub group for providers. Although still fairly new is enabling statutory and voluntary services to set priorities, map gaps in services etc.”

⁶ *A process evaluation of the negotiation of pilot Local Area Agreements* (2005) Local and Regional Government Research Unit, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister

“The information provided by NCVYS about how CVS groups should try and engage with Children's Trusts is really useful.”

“Charities Aid Foundation and Youth Inclusion and Support Panels have been valuable tools to engage VCS projects to deliver services that are identified as part of the assessment through multi-agency groups.”

There are also examples of successful representation:

“The VCS in [our area] have developed Voice and Communication structures that have been endorsed by the Children's Trust. This has enabled there to be effective representation on the new Trust combined with a developing communication structure. It has been developed through a partnership between the youth sector (ourselves) the children's sector (National Council of Voluntary Child Care Organisations) and the CVS network here.”

Engagement with the VCS by statutory services and authorities is thought to be very positive when it happens:

“We are actively working with the PCT and Children and Young People's Services to deliver support and consultation to families of disabled children. The VCS is being encouraged to take the lead in this work publicly as it is known that we are trusted more by families.”

“An Invest to Save Budget was backed for the Voluntary Sector to lead on but we had to draw attention to this and take the lead through the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership and were instrumental in getting their backing. This has been the first example of good partnership working.”

“We successfully provide positive parenting courses, delivered by trained parents, to local parents throughout our community. Our extended schools co-ordinator, schools and local health visitors value and are encouraging our provision. They are not in a position to provide this service themselves due to lack of time, lack of funding and lack of expertise.”

“Local authority is very keen at the top level to involve VCS. Needs to be reinforced at middle manager level though.”

These models show that the VCS and statutory bodies can work in a way that promotes successful engagement, both at strategic level and as service providers. For this to happen there may need to be central facilitation as well as guidance from national bodies and government.

6.6 Where next?

Most of the issues raised in this report are not new. In general, the issues raised do not require new solutions. This research repeats much that has been raised as part of previous research and consultation. For example: the Youth Matters conversation⁷, the House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts report on working with the voluntary sector⁸, and responses to initiatives such as the local area agreements and local strategic partnerships from VCS organisations across the country⁹.

Reorganisation of funding means that lack of engagement with the VCS by local authorities and inadequate local government finance is having a serious impact. The survey results do not just reflect transitional difficulties the voluntary and community sector is having in providing services, they reflect the loss of successful projects and the significant risk of permanently losing the work of committed and skilled individuals, and the permanent impact that will have on the lives of children and young people.

⁷ e.g. *Youth Matters - Comments from the Youth Matters conversations with the voluntary and community sector* (2005) The National Council for Voluntary Youth Services

⁸ *Working with the voluntary sector* (2006) House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts HC717

⁹ e.g. *Voluntary and Community Sector responses to the draft Outcomes Framework of Bristol's Local Area Agreement* ChangeUp and <http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/policy/rural/index.asp?id=1433>

Table 10: Area of survey respondents

Area	Response	Area	Response
Barnet	1	Newcastle upon Tyne	4
Barnsley	2	Norfolk	12
Bedfordshire	1	North Lincolnshire	1
Blyth Valley	1	North Lincolnshire and NE Lincolnshire	1
Bolsover District	1	North Somerset	1
Bolton	2	North Tyneside	1
Bradford	2	North Yorkshire	3
Bristol	1	Northamptonshire	1
Broadland	1	Northumberland	7
Bromley	2	Norwich	1
Bury	1	Oxfordshire	1
Cheshire	5	Plymouth	2
Congleton Borough	2	Poole	1
County Durham	3	Reading	2
Cumbria	5	Redcar and Cleveland	1
Darlington	1	Rochdale	4
Devon	4	Sandwell	1
Doncaster	1	Scarborough	1
Ealing	1	Sefton	5
Essex	2	Sheffield	10
Gloucestershire	4	Slough Borough Council	1
Hampshire	1	Somerset County Council	1
Herefordshire	2	South Derbyshire/Derbyshire	1
Kirklees	2	Staffordshire	2
Knowsley	1	Stockport	1
Lancashire	1	Stockton on Tees	1
Lancaster and Preston	1	Stoke-on-Trent	1
London	1	Stroud	1
London Borough of Croydon	1	Suffolk	1
London Borough of Enfield	1	Surrey	2
London Borough of Greenwich	2	Tamworth Borough	2
London Borough of Hackney	1	Tees Valley	1
London Borough of Haringey	1	Teesdale	1
London Borough of Merton	3	Torbay	2
London Borough of Redbridge	1	Torridge	1
London Borough of Southwark	1	Wakefield	1
London Borough of Sutton	7	Warrington	4
London Borough of Tower Hamlets	1	West Sussex	1
Macclesfield Borough	1	Westminster	1
Maldon District	1	Wigan	1
Medway	1	Wiltshire	1
Middlesbrough	4	Wokingham	1
Newcastle	2	National	2
Total	173		