

**VOLUNTARY AND  
COMMUNITY SECTOR  
FUNDING SUPPORT IN  
BRADFORD & DISTRICT**

# VCS REPORT

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2. Process of the review
3. Definitions, facts and figures
4. The support grant
5. Current arrangements
6. Future arrangements
7. Feedback from the workshop sessions
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# INTRODUCTION

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## INTRODUCTION

# **This is a review of the infrastructure support structures available to the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) in Bradford and District.**

As the previous BMDC support grant was due to in March 2019<sup>1</sup>, and in line with efforts to support systems working, the review was commissioned jointly by the Local Authority (BMDC) and the Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs), supported by the VCS Assembly.

The principle sponsors of VCS infrastructure support<sup>2</sup> sought an independent assessment, informed by the views and opinions of partners and stakeholders of what support might be best provided in future and how that might be structured to support the VCS to be sustainable and maximise its impact, within the wider system and in the context of a challenging and changing environment.

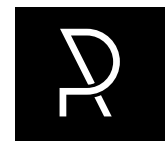
What has become clear during the collation of the report is that there is a shared ambition for the VCS – everyone wants it to thrive. It is also commonly acknowledged that the VCS will play a vital role in the future success of the City and District.

External stakeholders and the VCS themselves are keen to demonstrate the level of impact that the sector has in a wide range of activities. Both wish the VCS to operate on a financially sustainable footing that increasingly does not rely on Public Sector Grant income. And, suppliers of services recognise the innovation, can-do spirit and deep engagement that local VCS providers can add to sometimes over-stretched public service provision.

Ultimately a strong VCS will lead to the better use of public resource and stronger services for the general public. It will also improve the everyday lives, wellbeing and connectiveness of citizens allowing them greater opportunities to become involved in a large number of good causes and positive activities.

<sup>1</sup> These arrangements have been extended to allow for this review.

<sup>2</sup> City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council (CBMDC) and Bradford NHS Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)



## INTRODUCTION

This recognition of what is possible is not new. Substantial public sector resource is already being made available to support and improve the VCS across the district both in terms of the infrastructure support and direct delivery of services. This money has supported some excellent initiatives and valuable work. There are inspiring stories of success and improvement in the local VCS that would not have happened if it was not for the existing arrangements.

But almost everyone agrees these arrangements are now past their sell by date, and are disjointed in their commissioning and delivery. Set up in a different era, when the VCS was often viewed as the junior partner in service provision, grants dominated VCS financing. Impact didn't have to be demonstrated quite as rigorously. There was no real imperative to end duplication in spending between public sector agencies and the plurality of beneficiaries was a top-tier concern.

There is now an opportunity for a refresh. We are convinced that the public sector and the VCS together can build a single, effective, improvement package for the third sector in Bradford and District, but it will take leadership and mutual trust to bring that change about.

**OUR APPROACH**  
**NET POSITIVE**

**THE RESULT FOR OUR CLIENTS**

- Outstanding subject knowledge and contextual understanding
- High quality service at a competitive price
- Flexible terms
- Work with a team with great values
- First-rate brand association

**THE RESULT FOR OUR PEOPLE**

- Interesting work for a purpose-driven company
- Good rates of pay and lessened payment risk
- Flexibility
- Autonomy
- Esprit de couer
- Brand association

**THE RESULT FOR SOCIETY AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

- First 10% of our annual profit goes to good purposes
  - / Educational access project
  - / Regenerational project
  - / Rebuilding project
- Sustainable business practices

# **PROCESS OF THE REVIEW**

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## PROCESS OF THE REVIEW

Our research has revealed what VCS organisations, stakeholders, commissioners, providers and individuals think about the current services and products and how they are organised.

This research concentrated mainly on the products, services and arrangements of the BMDC VCS Support Grant.

## REPORT PRODUCTION

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1. Desktop exercise to establish and amalgamate existing knowledge
2. Primary Research (interviews & survey)
  - Semi structured survey (212 responses from 1,629 Briefing Bradford subscribers invited to respond)
  - Focus Groups (130 VCS participants)
  - 1hr face to face interviews (32 VCS “leaders”)
  - 1 hr face to face interviews (12 public sector commissioners)
  - ½ hr telephone interviews (17 external sector experts out with Bradford)
  - 1 hr conversations (5 Trusts & 3 Foundations)
  - 2 hr workshop (Elected members)
  - Unstructured conversations, email, telephone calls with individuals on request.
3. Recommendations Workshops:
  - (1) VCS Leadership (2) Funders & Partners
  - ‘Check and confirm’ with additional feedback gathered
4. Synthesis

## ENVISAGED POST REPORT ACTIONS

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5. Final Report
6. “Co-design” of grant specification and outcomes
7. Commissioning document produced
8. Grant to be let

# **DEFINITIONS, FACTS & FIGURES**

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## DEFINITIONS, FACTS & FIGURES

When one asks observers what they mean by “the VCS”, you receive very different answers. These vary from narrow definitions based on legal entity status, to more expansive ones that include private traders and companies who operate with a purpose beyond profit margin. Certainly in the context of Bradford and its commissioners, the VCS is all encompassing and includes everything from micro, non-constituted volunteer groups, to large national charities with multi-million pound turnovers.

Although for the purposes of engaging with the VCS, there is a frequent expectation from external stakeholders that the sector should be able to operate as a single, coherent entity with a common voice and approach, this is in fact impossible as the sector is large, diverse, disparate and transient in its nature.

Small and medium-sized charities whose annual income falls between £10,000 and £1 million, nationally, constitute 52 percent (64,000) of all registered charities and 19 percent (£7.2 billion) of charitable income (2014-15) across the UK.<sup>3</sup>

We have based all our facts, figures and definitions on a single reputable publication: **The 3rd Sector Trends Study 2012 & 2016 University of Durham 2016.**

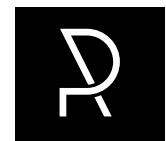
This study used robust methodology and drew data from reputable sources and compared results across the north of England to reach its conclusions. The study undertook some original research (including in Bradford) but relied heavily on commercially available datasets such as GuideStar.

In an attempt to reassure ourselves that we were not too far from the mark we have triangulated the Durham Study data with that contained in the NVCO Civil Society Almanac 2018, The Charities Commission website and other local datasets held by some commissioning organisations and the VCS itself.

We have accepted University of Durham’s findings unless there was a more up to date credible and referenceable source. However, the reader should not get hung up on detail, but rather, concentrate on the trends or themes contained within this report.

We accept that the findings of our study are “proximate” in nature and based on information which is now a couple of years out of date, however, this is the best available data to us at this point.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www4.shu.ac.uk/research/cresr/sites/shu.ac.uk/files/value-of-small-final.pdf>



## DEFINITIONS, FACTS & FIGURES

### WHERE IS BRADFORD & DISTRICT?

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The Durham Study delaminates “Bradford” by the postcodes covered by the Council (including LS29). This is the same geography as set out by BMDC. We have adopted this as our standard area. NHS boundaries stretch beyond the political and include parts of North Yorkshire. It is important to note that the Clinical Commissioning Groups and other NHS partners also cover Craven, which, from a local authority perspective is covered by North Yorkshire County Council who commission VCS infrastructure separately. The areas are of equal importance, but it would be a long and complicated exercise to disentangle the data beyond the scope of this study. This is another reason why it is important not to get hung up on the specifics of this report.

### HOW MANY VCOS ARE THERE IN BRADFORD & DISTRICT?

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There are more than 5,316 VCOs (voluntary and community organisations) operating within the District at the current time. The evidence suggests that this volume for Bradford & District is broadly in line with the rest of West Yorkshire.<sup>4</sup>

There are probably many more purpose driven micro- organisations within the district, but these are next to impossible to track, either financially or via registration as their turnover will be below reporting limits. They do, however access the support funding offered via local authority grants on occasion and a small number will go on to make a great impact on their community.

We estimate that there is a turnover rate of 6% per annum in registered VCOs. This mainly comprises of small charitable endeavours being created/ceasing registration. Again, this is in line with what would be expected. The data contradicts the strong local narrative we encountered who reported experiencing a rapid decline in the number of third sector organisations especially in more economically challenged communities. This is more likely to be a decline in the number of services delivered by VCS organisations, as public funding is lost.

Hidden within this statistic are the 644 charities headquartered within the Bradford district who have been removed from the Charities Commission Register since 2012. A further 109 are out with the statutory time allowed to file returns in this financial year and will be removed if this is not rectified. These removals usually happen because an organisation has either spent up or ceased to function for some other reason. It is an important statistic because along with Trustee turnover rates (which are very high in Bradford and District), many external funders use this measure to inform as part of their investment confidence level.

<sup>4</sup> Third Sector Trends: Durham University, July 2016 based on Guidestar data. This triangulates with a more limited dataset produced by the NVCO Civil Society Almanac 2016-2018 – adding the none duplicates leaves us with a figure of 5,316 – this is not an actual figure it is an estimate.



## DEFINITIONS, FACTS & FIGURES

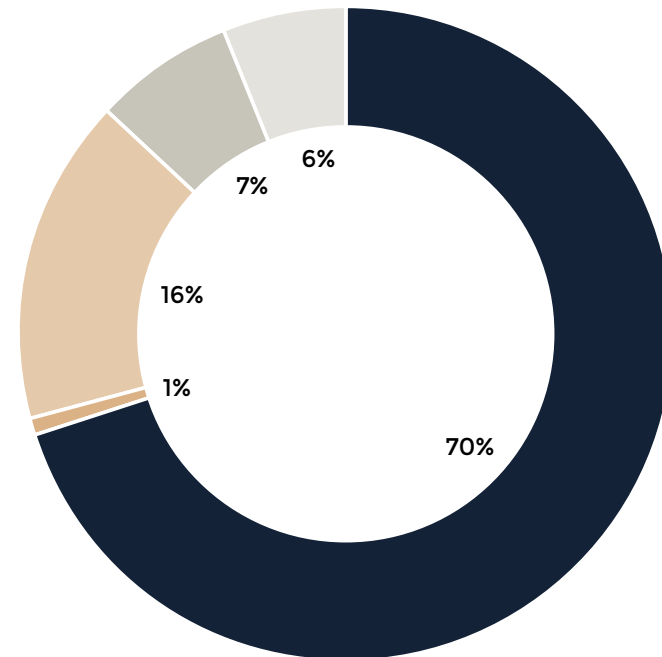
# WHICH ARE THE ORGANISATIONS IN THE VCS IN BRADFORD & DISTRICT?

The Durham Study includes and excludes specific “types” of organisation. All organisations which are legally constituted as “not for profit” or “third sector” are included, this means that Cooperatives, Mutuels and legally constituted faith groups are included but self-employed professionals working in the field or companies who have a purpose beyond profit, such as B-Corps are not.

Bradford VCS Assembly, which is the ‘Voice and Influence’ part of the infrastructure, and includes a number of Forums, has not defined who can attend or why, but it invites and is attended by organisations with a civic purpose, so, sole-traders, trading faith groups and B-Corps come but Bradford’s thriving Mutuels do not attend. Neither has support been offered from the support grant to Co-operatives. It is therefore important to re-iterate that one must be careful when reading across from one source to another and the VCS itself seems to be settling on a definition of “VCS” which is purpose rather and legally driven.

Notwithstanding this, VCS organisations are often divided by legal “type”. In 2016 the mix of these in Bradford and District were as follows (*right*)

Obviously this does not include voluntary groups with no legal structure. As one might expect, Charities are in the majority. These comprise of fund-raising organisations such as school foundations or charity shops for example and organisations who provide services, from medical aid abroad to local junior football clubs. The mix is changing; as trading activities increase a larger percentage of “companies” are being registered.



**VCS LEGAL STRUCTURES BRADFORD (2016)**



## WHO WORKS IN VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS (VCOS) IN BRADFORD AND DISTRICT?

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Obviously the 5,000+ organisations in the VCS vary in size – from no employees, to single handers, SMEs to large charitable endeavours with hundreds of people employed.

In many ways how many people a VCS “employs” and/or how many people volunteer is a better measure of gravity or impact than financial turnover. There is a clear correlation between turnover and employment and financial reporting is regulated and more transparent than staffing numbers. So, we have followed others in defining size by financial turnover (see funding).

In 2016 Bradford and District VCS employed 6,600 people. The value per year to the local economy of that employment is £140 million (using an average wage calculation).<sup>5</sup> Many of these people work for Mutuals and large foundations who have little to do with the VCS support infrastructure, but it gives the reader an idea of the scale of the not for profit sector as a whole and the relatively limited reach of the current support infrastructure arrangements.

Consultants, sole-traders and small PLCs who would classify themselves as social entrepreneurs are also blurring the boundaries of the type of organisation which would be included in the VCS.

The Durham Study estimates that Bradford and District has 30,000 volunteers.<sup>6</sup> There is considerable disquiet with this calculation in particular. It does seem a little low. Claims of 100,000+ volunteers have been made in some official documentation. Presumably this includes anyone who has ever staffed a stall at the school fete or volunteered through a corporate giving programme etc. which is of course volunteering; but might not be what is meaningful to count. Further research will be needed to establish (a) what we mean by volunteer, and (b) the level at which this currently stands, if this is to be considered as a measure of success for the VCS.

Another key set of people are the Trustees of organisations. They are overwhelmingly volunteers (indeed to be a Trustee rather than a director you cannot receive payment). 46% of VCOs interviewed as part of this Review reported they were carrying Trustee vacancies. This correlates with information we received from the Bradford Volunteering Service and would certainly seem to be a worrying trend.

<sup>5</sup> Third Sector Trends: Durham University, July 2016

<sup>6</sup> This does not include carers who are a specific group within the voluntary economy who are not counted in this figure.

## DEFINITIONS, FACTS & FIGURES

# WHAT AREAS OF ACTIVITY ARE SUPPORTED BY THE VCS IN BRADFORD AND DISTRICT?

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There is considerable range to the type of activity delivered by VCS organisations.

If we use the crude measure of income as a proxy for “level of support” the latest survey information indicates causes that attract significantly more funding than the regional average are children & young people, disadvantaged urban, households in poverty. Those attracting significantly less funding than normal are older people, people with a mental health condition, people with physical disabilities.<sup>7</sup>

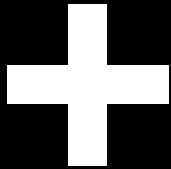
Yet many interviewees insisted that causes relating to poverty and social justice were on the decline in their area. Both these could be correct - funding for the disadvantaged urban causes may well have decreased from a higher point, or the geographic spread might have altered. As we will see in the funding section, the decisions the Public Sector take on whether and how it will out-source its provision via VCS providers has a significant effect on this type of calculation.

<sup>7</sup> This data was collected by University of Durham. statistical significance = +/-1 standard deviation from the norm.



## DEFINITIONS, FACTS & FIGURES

### Causes receiving more or less assistance than regional average via VCS

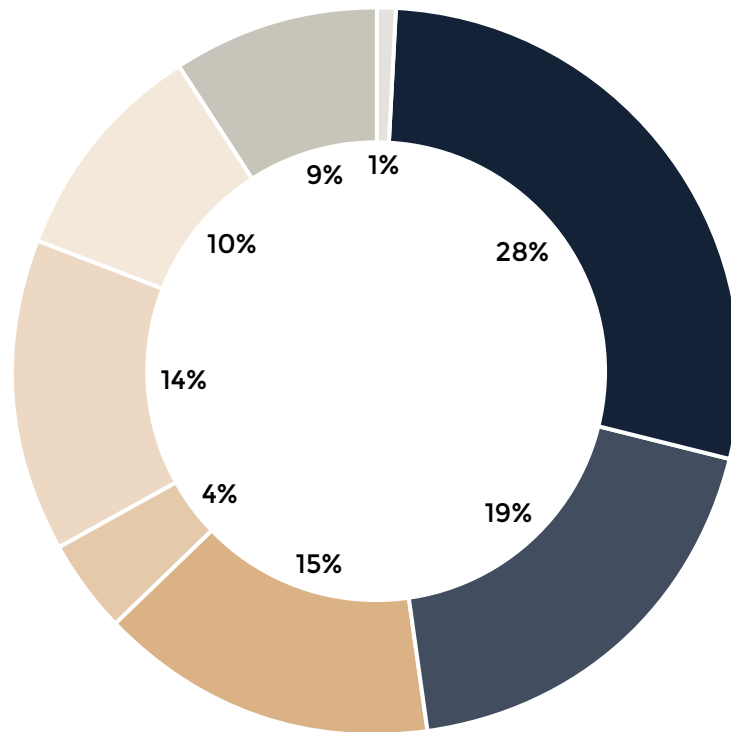


Children & young people  
Disadvantaged urban  
Households in poverty

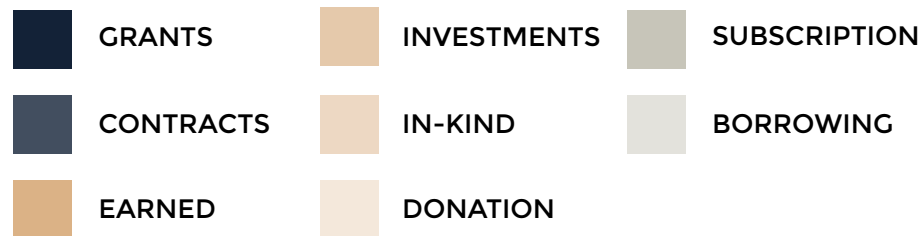


Older people  
People with a mental health condition  
People with physical disabilities

## DEFINITIONS, FACTS & FIGURES



### VCS INCOME



## HOW IS THE VCS FUNDED?

The total income figure reported for VCS Bradford in the Durham Study is: estimated **£95.5m per year**<sup>8</sup>. Most VCOs believe this will remain roughly the same going forward.<sup>9</sup> When taking inflation into account this amount does not seem to have altered significantly since last measured in 2013 by Durham University.

National research carried out by Sheffield Hallam University of behalf of the Lloyds Bank Foundation (2018) shows that what they define as small and medium sized VCS organisations receive much less local government funding (16 percent) than larger charities do (84 percent) and that the difference is most pronounced in comparison with the very largest charities (income over £10m) – the large majority of which (76 percent) are non-local – who receive 55 percent of all local government funding.<sup>10</sup>

Three key funding points to consider: (1) a large number of micro-purpose driven organisations, charitable entities and the mutual/co-operative sector are not directly supported by public sector contracting/funding. (2) in many parts of the country, the public sector have moved more swiftly than in Bradford away from “grants” as a mechanism of funding, and, (3) Many charities and local organisations benefit in other ways from local authority policy – such as reduced rents on shop space etc. which disproportionately benefits the largest regional, national and international charities.

<sup>8</sup> Third Sector Trends: Durham University, July 2016

<sup>9</sup> Third Sector Trends: Durham University, July 2016

<sup>10</sup> <https://www4.shu.ac.uk/research/cresr/sites/shu.ac.uk/files/value-of-small-final.pdf>

## DEFINITIONS, FACTS & FIGURES

Notably is localised activity which is paid for by the generosity of citizens and private benefactors in a traditional and 'charitable' manner - this amounts to 10% of the income of the VCS in Bradford and District as a whole. Many of these organisations are not interested in becoming involved in formal support arrangements locally. They might apply for the occasional grant, but they are proud to be independent (see VCS access).

The overwhelming amount of funding in the sector comes from grants and commissioned work and goes to a very small percentage of the 5,000+ organisations.

The definition of what is a grant and what is contracted income is quite tricky to establish, and in the case of the above diagram covers grant funding from the public sector as well as other Charitable Trusts and Foundations.

We have followed convention and split our reporting by income as follows:

**Small** = below £50,000 turnover per year (representing 41% of the Bradford VCS)

**Medium** = £50,000-£250,000 turnover per year (representing 31% of the Bradford VCS)

**Large** = £250,000 and above turnover per year (representing 28% of the Bradford VCS)



# **THE SUPPORT GRANT**

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## THE SUPPORT GRANT

# THE PURPOSE OF SUPPORT FOR THE VCS

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There are a number public sector “grants” available from commissioners in any given year which are specifically designed to support the sustainability and effectiveness of the sector. It is important to note that this is not the investment in the sector as a whole, and does not include funding for the delivery of front-line services:

**£460,000**

BMDC Neighbourhoods Infrastructure Support Grant

**£72,000**

BMDC Children’s Services Infrastructure Support Grant

**£500,000**

BMDC VCS Transformation fund (non-recurrent)<sup>11</sup>

**£259,000**

BMDC Community Building Grant<sup>12</sup>

**£175-400,000**

BMDC Community Building Grant<sup>13</sup>

Notably the CCG investment has been across a range of grants although in most recent years have included non-recurrent investment in establishing the VCS Alliance, and the Engaging People grant.

To all intent and purpose these grants and payments have operated independently from each other and have been governed via separate arrangements and structures.

Yet although they are all configured differently, they share a common purpose, which is to unlock the asset base of people and place by maximising the impact and sustainability of the VCS in Bradford and District.

Definitions of infrastructure are varied, however, for these purposes, from the perspective of CCG and BMDC commissioners, these are activities and services designed to support the sector, that is anything which is not considered a front-line service delivery.

<sup>11</sup> This is a non-recurrent source of funding which is used flexibly which includes reviewing the needs of an organisation and providing consultancy support and advice, as well as small grants.

<sup>12</sup> Funding to support small organisations with building costs

<sup>13</sup> CCG defines “support” as any service which is not directly delivering care. This is an average estimated from previous spend. This funding has included non-recurrent funding to establish the VCS Alliance, the Engaging People grant, and other small adhoc grants.

## THE SUPPORT GRANT

# THE CURRENT SUPPORT STRUCTURE ARRANGEMENTS

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The current grants are administered and provided through a disparate and complicated set of arrangements.

The 2 formal governance structures for VCS Support are currently:

### **The VCS Assembly**

Bradford VCS Assembly is the elected voice and influence structure made up of Forums, which provides representation onto a number of committees and boards, including Health and Wellbeing Board, and is funded via the BMDC Neighbourhoods Grant. The Assembly has a Chair and Assembly Steering Group which is made up of the Forum Chairs.

### **Bradford VCS Alliance**

Bradford VCS Alliance (BVCSA) <http://www.bradfordvcsalliance.org.uk/> was established to allow the VCS to operate as part of the integrated health and care system, similar to GP Alliances. The Alliance provides a contracting management function for health (currently the CCG) which also allows it to use its 'market place' of member VCS organisations to come together to deliver creative solutions.

BVCSA is established as a separate legal entity with a Board of Directors. BVCSA co-ordinates the VCS Representation on the majority of the Community Partnerships in Bradford and also represents the VCS on the Bradford Health and Care Partnership.

## THE SUPPORT GRANT

# DELIVERY WITHIN THE CURRENT ARRANGEMENTS

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Within the main BMDC VCS infrastructure grant which is let by the Neighbourhoods Service, there is a lead provider: Community Action Bradford and District (CABAD), and a range of subcontractors including C-Net, WYCAS, Bradford Volunteering Service and Keighley Volunteering Service, COEMO, Equity Partnership and Equalities Together.

Delivery is across the following key areas:

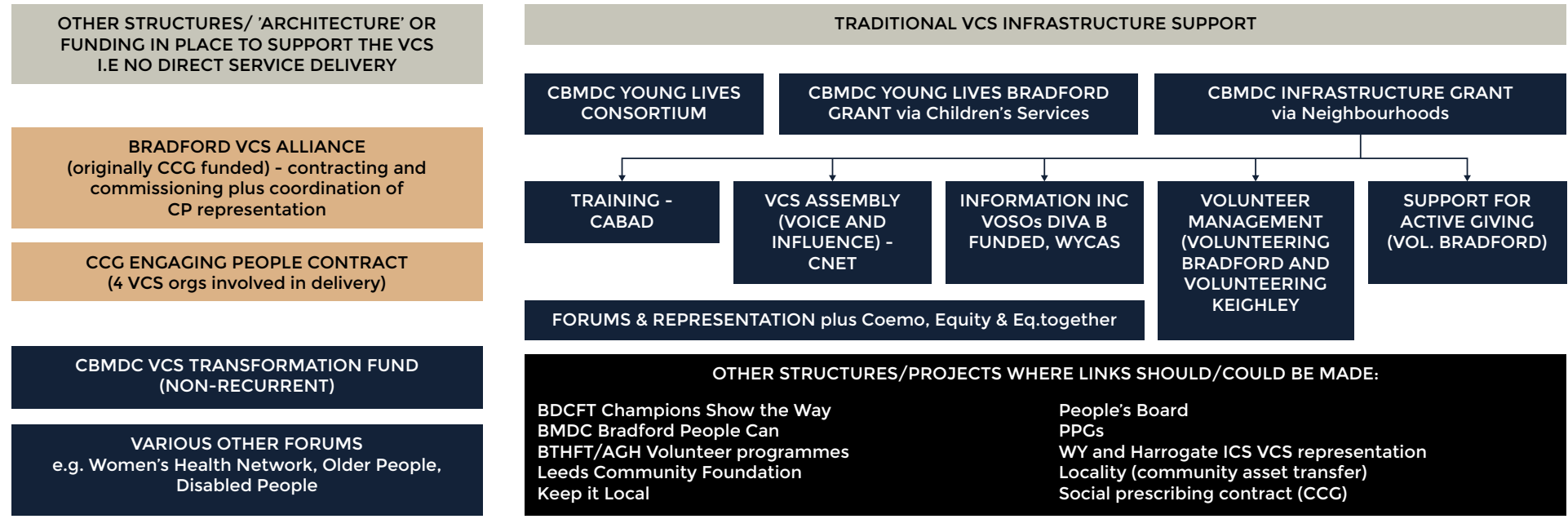
- Information to VCS organisations
- Voice and influence
- Equality Forum development
- Volunteering
- VCS support and development
- Active giving
- Training

In addition to this, BMDC Children's Services fund a separate infrastructure called Young Lives which has an infrastructure function, as well as Young Lives Consortium (a similar model to the Bradford VCS Alliance).

The CCG consider the partial outsourcing of its statutory engagement duties via the Engaging People grant to be a further form of support structure which is delivered by the VCS although it is recognised that this would not necessarily be a function which would be defined as infrastructure.

There are also a range of ad-hoc forms such as Woman's Health Network, Positive Ageing Partnership which do not currently operate within the formal structures.

# THE SUPPORT GRANT



## **HOW SHOULD THE VCS STRUCTURE SUPPORT FIT ALONGSIDE OTHER COMMISSIONED SUPPORT IN BRADFORD AND DISTRICT?**

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Arguably there are projects and programmes which could or should be linked in some way as they are publicly funded, such as: BDCFT Champions Show the Way, BMDC Bradford People Can, BTHFT Volunteers, AGHFT Volunteers, Leeds Community Foundation, Keep it Local, People's Board, Patient Participation Groups, West Yorkshire & Harrogate Integrated Care System /VCS Representation, Locality, Social Prescribing. This is something which could be explored further as part of the co-design process.

## THE SUPPORT GRANT

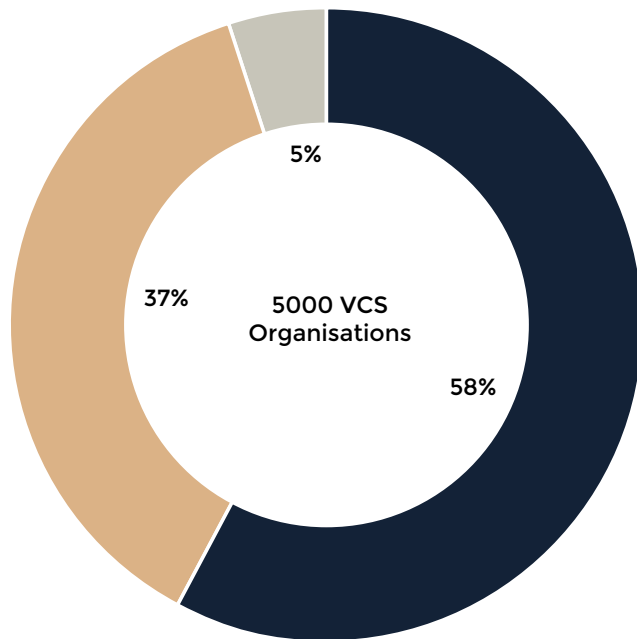
# HOW MANY VCOS PARTICIPATE AND ACCESS SUPPORT VIA THE BMDC INFRASTRUCTURE GRANT?

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It is important to note that the current BMDC Neighbourhoods infrastructure grant was commissioned specifically to support smaller VCOS rather than the full spectrum that the sector covers, which is arguably where there is greatest need for support.

Around half of the 5,000+ voluntary and community organisations in Bradford and District have not had contact with the support offered via any grant, are not registered on the DIVA database and are seemingly uninterested in being involved with state sponsored activities. This is for a range of reasons including other infrastructure being resourced elsewhere (eg for sport), not seeing the value in what is being delivered, and wanting to remain independent from the statutory funded provision entirely.

A further 37% are registered on the DIVA database and receive regular communications (once a year or more) from the infrastructure. 5% take part in activities (have either responded to surveys/ accessed services and courses or use VOSOs). Fewer attend events - 80 VCOS (296 individuals) have taken part in Assembly events in the first 3 months of 2019-20. A further 60 individuals have attended the Young Lives Forum. 369 training sessions have been held - reaching a maximum of 391 individuals in the quarter. This element of provision is the part which is most diverse in take-up and involvement.



## ESTIMATE OF CURRENT SUPPORT 'REACH'

NO CURRENT ENGAGEMENT
  ON DIVA DATABASE
  TAKE PART IN ACTIVITIES

### OTHER FACTS (Q1: 2019)

C-NET E-bulletin 936  
 DIVA User logins 7,327  
 Web enquiries about volunteering 2953  
  
 Accounting Advice sessions 60  
 VOSO sessions 299

Most VCOs Interact with the Infrastructure Organisation's on-line. The DIVA database has 7,327 user logins, 4,836 browsed the B-Funded website, 2,107 visited the Community Action Bradford and District (CABAD) website, 1,629 subscribe to the Young Lives E-bulletin, 936 for the VCS Assembly E-Bulletin.<sup>15</sup>

The most engaged and visible participants in the VCS Assembly Steering Group and VCS Alliance are those whose principal funder is the public sector (NHS or Local Authority), as in the main, this is the way that they find out about developments in the public sector, and opportunities for funding. In general, with some exceptions, this group of VCOs are relatively stable professional organisations who have some managerial capacity allowing them to generously contribute their resource to assist the VCS at large through Charing Forums or other representation activity, for example, on public sector committees.

<sup>15</sup> Information is from the Q1 Contract Monitoring Report, we have no further information about which Organisations have logins.



# **CURRENT ARRANGEMENTS**

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## CURRENT ARRANGEMENTS

# WHAT'S STRONG ABOUT THE CURRENT ARRANGEMENTS AND PROVISION?

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VCS participants valued the interaction they enjoy within the wider Bradford and District 'System'. They think the networking opportunities and sharing of information at events was very valuable. The concept of an Assembly was popular, although it was recognised that there needed to be some changes to the way that it works.

Others from outside the Bradford and District mentioned that the level of financial support offered by the public sector to improve the VCS was impressive and welcome – although this was not necessarily recognised by all stakeholders within the VCS, perhaps as they may be less aware of the swathing cuts to the VCS in other areas of the country.

The infrastructure supply organisations were proud of the products and services they provide. They and the elected members commended the work of the VSOs and believed their work on the ground to be a vital part of the jigsaw when it comes to ensuring a vibrant and thriving District, particularly during challenging times.

## CURRENT ARRANGEMENTS

# WHAT'S WRONG ABOUT THE CURRENT ARRANGEMENTS AND PROVISION?

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### VCS Issues

VCO's who were not engaged with the system fell into two camps:

- the majority did not care much about being involved with the infrastructure and their only point of contention was about "communication" and notification of opportunities to bid for grants
- the minority who didn't even want this level of involvement. They want their independence to be respected.

None of the small number we talked with had accessed training this year.

The mid-sized and larger locally based VCOs are more likely to be engaged in the VCS Assembly. Notification of opportunities was a continuing theme with a number of the engaged VCOs who also felt that methods and processes for this were not clear, or often transparent. They were supportive of a number of the infrastructure services offered to the sector but seemed to think these were not aimed at them but at smaller organisations.

A number of VCO's complained about the commissioning arrangements claiming that they had been brought together by the VCS Alliance to bid collectively for work but had not received what they believed to be value for their part in this work – with particular concerns about the lack of full cost recovery and the perceived unfair management charge taken by the Alliance.

A small number of organisations and groups complained vociferous about not having a voice within the system, claiming the architecture had failed them and that there is no clear link between 'grass roots' feedback and the representation work within the current arrangements.

## CURRENT ARRANGEMENTS

### Public Sector issues

Familiar concern about the complicated nature of infrastructure arrangements were again raised particularly in terms of it being unclear how to navigate the politics and who to speak to about what. This could often be seen as a barrier to involving the VCS as it can feel like 'hard work.' Commissioners were also very concerned about the cost of these arrangements, specifically about the duplication of functions and number of senior officers/back office functions the grants supported etc.

The Public Sector colleagues we spoke to recognised the importance of investment in VCS infrastructure, but did not believe current arrangements had led to a consistently high-quality product being delivered to them. They also did not feel that there were the market mechanisms available to them all offering the degree of flexibility they wanted.

They did not believe the current arrangement supported the VCOs leadership enough. They wanted to involve the leaders of the VCOs in more projects, as well as at a strategic level, but recognised that this was an area which needed greater investment as there was over-reliance on a few key individuals willing to volunteer their time to be involved in representation activity, and that this was not a sustainable position.

Finally, they are very concerned that present arrangements do not address problems in provision locally (at a ward or Community Partnership level). There are parts of the city where community centres and organisations act as 'anchors'. These vary significantly in terms of their quality of delivery, provision available and sustainability with clear examples of where provision is failing and their closure could have a significant impact on the local area it serves. There were widely varied opinions, in terms of how this should be addressed, however, a number of key stakeholders highlighted the need for the grant to be used more flexibly to identify areas of the District with significant gaps in VCS provision and/or areas with significant health inequalities. This would mean more targeted resource and less 'universal offer' which could also be controversial for those who perceive themselves as missing out. It would also not be a 'quick fix' and would require significant investment in community development and capacity building over an extended period of time.

## CURRENT ARRANGEMENTS

### Grant makers and Foundations

There is a significant amount of grant funding that comes into the District via Trusts and Foundations. Of particular note is the level of investment in Bradford as an identified 'priority area' from the Big Lottery, Henry Smith, Lloyds Bank Foundation, Power to Change, St George Martin, BBC Children in Need, Sport England, Bradford Community Fund, under the umbrella of Leeds Community Foundation and the Cooperative Group.

That said, the external funders we talked with told us that they wanted to invest more in Bradford and District as it ticked a lot of boxes for them to do so. However, they had found interacting with the VCS here quite difficult. They were particularly unsure who was speaking for whom. One respondent told us they gave up trying to invest "because it was just too complicated to work out where the money would go" and they were: *"fed up of having to work so hard for the pleasure of giving these organisations our money"*. For those we talked to, the proxy measures they use to assess investment risk (such as Trustee and organisational turnover, record keeping, internal governance) were all "flashing red" in Bradford.

## CURRENT ARRANGEMENTS

# SUMMARY

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Although there have been previous reviews of VCS support infrastructure which have led to changes<sup>16</sup>, there was an overwhelming opinion that it is time for significant change to ensure a fit for purpose and future proofed solution, which maximises impact.

It is notable that there was a high degree of alignment about the strengths and weaknesses of the current system from all stakeholders (VCS and public sector). The current infrastructure organisations recognised the need for enhancements, although were varied in their views about how significant this change should be.

Most respondents were pleasantly surprised at the level of funding made available via the local authority support grant and the overall funding that has flowed from the public sector to develop and build the VCS.

Though this information is available through annual reports and other publications, only a few very well-informed commentators have an understanding of how the money flows once it is received by the commissioned provider and what has been achieved with that funding.

Nearly every commentator believed the system had too many organisations, complicated governance structures and back office/management functions involved in administration and delivery, that the money had been split too many ways, and, that the Assembly Forums need updating.

<sup>16</sup> The last review led to the merger of a number of organisations to create what is now Community Action Bradford and District (CABAD)

# **FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS**

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## FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS

# MARKERS OF A SUCCESSFUL VCS ENVIRONMENT

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We asked 10 Funders (Public Sector, Grant givers and Foundations), 10 VCOs and 5 external experts to think about systems and places where the local VCS thrive. Specifically, we wanted them to list the characteristics that would mark out a good system in which the VCS would thrive.

### Tier 1:

(>75% of participants “agreed”)

- Large number of diverse VCOs
- Evidence of an independent mindset (not public sector in character/entrepreneurial)
- Evidence of diverse funding streams
- Transparent systems and processes

### Tier 2:

(25%-75% of participants “agreed”)

- Low turnover of Trustees
- Growing numbers of Volunteers
- Other funding recently attracted
- Co-production of contracts
- A culture of giving evident
- Long retention of Chief Executive

We also asked them to identify a place they knew which they admired as a great place to be a VCO. The results were far more mixed; and no pattern was established. Most told us there isn't a single exemplar.

There was also a strong theme encouraging charities to modernise and update systems and processes to take full advantage of modern digital tools.



## FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS

# WHAT LARGER VCOS (+£250K) WOULD LIKE TO SEE IN FUTURE

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Most of the respondents we talked with in this category had interacted with the infrastructure during the last twelve months. Two larger fundraising VCOs (based in Bradford) had not had any contact and they saw no reason to become engaged in future. The rest were engaged and were animated about improving the system. The larger the organisation (financially and staff wise) the less they needed the practical help being offered, preferring to use commercially/externally available alternatives which they could tailor to their needs. Medium size organisations were interested in both expert assistance and sector wide development opportunities. They also highlighted that they would be keen for different models to be explored such as a sliding scale for paying for services, support for joint purchasing (economies of scale) and coordination of more specialised training.

All provider organisations within this cohort wanted to create more opportunities for the public sector to outsource their work to the VCS, or to deliver collaboratively. They noted the wide narrative around the 'left shift' of resources but had seen limited evidence of this happening. They thought this might be organised via infrastructure support system. They were interested in grants and commissioned work and were comfortable with the direction of travel toward higher standards of reporting and outcomes.

A small but influential number of respondents (notably those working at a locality level) wanted to decentralise the support offer completely and support VCO development locally through strong anchor organisations. The Anchor VCO would then be paid a fee to manage this work and would develop their local community micro-offer. When this organisational response was raised with others they agreed that a geographical approach works in places where there is a natural anchor, but doesn't if there is not, they were also keen to understand how these "uber-centres" would be nominated and what that meant for non-geographically assigned VCOs – would they lose out in some way? (see three big issues).

This group definitely see the infrastructure as a means to facilitate a collective voice for the VCS in both NHS and Local Authority decision making bodies/systems forums, and felt that there had been some positive results for the sector, and communities, by working at this level, particularly in the last couple of years.

## FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS

# WHAT SMALLER VCOS (-£250K) WOULD LIKE TO SEE IN FUTURE

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The support infrastructure providers and other VCS leaders believe that smaller organisations and purpose driven micro-organisations in the main beneficiaries of support. The training and access to information offered is essential to them, and a number have benefited from the direct support of the Voluntary Organisation Support Officers (VOSOs).

Yet few are involved in the leadership and representation of the VCS as they simply don't have the resources to do so. Although we tried to balance the sample, we talked with more engaged VCOs in this category than non-engaged but the views of both about the future were consistent.

Smaller VCOs wanted practical help to increase resource. They want to increase their income with bid writing assistance and access to grants. They are not as interested in trading in general and see themselves as key providers of insight into their community. And, they want to increase the number of volunteers. They see a role for a centralised resource in both these areas. They clearly do not feel that their voice is currently being represented through current mechanisms, however, there is also a challenge given their limited resources for them to participate in meetings or even engage in some of the electronic communication methods.

A key message from small VCOs were that they did not want infrastructure organisations which are meant to be supporting them, to then compete with them for grants.

## FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS

# WHAT THE NHS WANTS FROM THE VCS IN FUTURE

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Although the NHS has historically been a proxy for the local Clinical Commissioning Groups, as part of this review we also spoke to colleagues from Bradford District Foundation Care Trust, and the two local acute hospitals.

All NHS colleagues were keen to do more with the VCS and see the infrastructure system as a way of making this happen for them. There are practical and ideological drivers for them.

The NHS is clear that it must ensure that the money it spends in the VCS gets results. They want to be able to prove the impact this spend has made on their objectives set by the NHS. When pushed they accepted that they do see the VCS as a way of delivering a number of stretching targets within a reducing resource envelope.

Some NHS stakeholders were very clear that, if they were to keep the maximum amount of spend in- district, in the case of unplanned funding or funding released from NHS England with little notice, they will occasionally have to strike bilateral agreements with VCOs that they trust to deliver at short notice.

The NHS providers (who commission services) in Bradford and District told us they would prefer to trade with strong collaborations of locally anchored organisations who they can trust with large sums of money and they see “pre-qualified frameworks” as a sensible way to achieve this. They also want a single marketplace where they can advertise opportunities.

The VCS Alliance is perceived as performing a useful function, in its ability to broker creative solutions, get funding to smaller organisations and perform a time consuming contract management function which they are no longer resourced to deliver in-house. There have, however, been some concerns about the delivery vehicle and business model for this function.

There is a clear commitment within the NHS to supporting the local VCS in Bradford and District, and they recognise the ability the VCS have to reach into communities to gain insight and influence. A couple of senior NHS leaders believed that the public sector had a lot to learn from the VCS about how to innovate to improve services delivery.

## FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS

# WHAT THE LOCAL AUTHORITY WILL WANT FROM THE VCS IN FUTURE

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The local authority had many similarities to the NHS in practical considerations: improved impact reporting, support to the VCO's so they provide higher quality products for a lower price, use of local VCOs as insight collectors and influencers in "difficult to reach" communities etc. Like the NHS the key commissioners of services were concerned about their specific duties and how these were to be discharged but did recognise the wider requirement to create a universally strong VCS offer.

There was more emphasis on supporting sustainable organisations in the community. Universal coverage was more important to some Local Authority officials than other respondents. Some wish to ensure the city and district has strong VCS local anchors throughout and see the VCS support grant as a possible route to supplying these.

They seek a way to deal fairly with the community centres who might be at threat of closure and require financial assistance to survive and want a method to re-establish VCO coverage in areas which are currently under serviced.

The council procurement team is committed to transforming their procurement strategy, including procuring for social value and looking at where a 'light touch regime' can be applied. They were keen to establish "fair" trading rules, definitions and application that the entire local public sector could work within. They want to end any possibility of sweetheart deals being struck as these undermine trust in the system overall. They are keen to open dialogue with their counterparts in the NHS to discuss these matters. The team also wish to encourage diversity in VCS supply and a higher number of participants in the supply chain in future.

There was some interest in the function provided by the VCS Alliance, which has previously been focused on health funding only, and noted that this could be a useful vehicle for other external funding which might be brought into the District.

## FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS

# WHAT THE GRANT-GIVING ORGANISATIONS AND FOUNDATIONS WANT FROM THE VCS IN FUTURE

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The public sector respondents were mostly concerned about systems and processes being fit for the future, the Grant & Foundations were more interested in people and relationships. They want to encourage purposeful leaders and to build longer term relationships with key trusted individuals.

They are short of is time to help local organisations apply. They wanted the confusion around whom speaks for whom in the sector sorted out with a single point of entry to the Bradford Marketplace. They also thought the Bradford system could be as smart as its neighbours, they should understand the key measures the foundations and grant givers use as proxies for good governance or high performance for example and have answers to the obvious questions they will ask. They also wanted to be welcomed for what they do rather than have their methodology questioned as if they were up to no good.

# WHAT ELECTED MEMBERS WANT FROM THE VCS IN FUTURE

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The elected members were quite clear about their requirements They want the majority of the grant to reach smaller localised organisations working within communities. They wanted universal coverage for the VCS with the district at the same time as clarity of what was available at a ward level. They were keen to ensure the percentage of money spent on the support infrastructure was transparent and for the overhead costs to be reduced as a way to ensure that funding was maximised at the front line. They were also clear that they wanted a greater understand of impact and outcomes. They were supportive of alignment between NHS/Local Authority spend.

# FEEDBACK FROM WORKSHOP SESSIONS

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## FEEDBACK FROM WORKSHOP SESSIONS

A series of three workshop sessions were held with: (1) Elected Members (2) VCS Assembly Steering Group (the elected leadership), VCS Alliance Directors and the support infrastructure organisations/providers, and (3) Public Sector commissioners and providers. The insight gained from these sessions has been used throughout this report, however, each session contained important views that should be recorded in this report.

# 01 Elected Members

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The session with the elected members was well attended. Most of the output was about what was possible in future and is recorded above. There was considerable support for continuing to support the work that the VCOs do within wards and the VCS overall. Members want to reduce duplication, administration cost and would support greater alignment of public sector spend overall.

# 02

## VCS Assembly and Alliance and current providers

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There was clear agreement that change was needed, but we could not find unanimous support for what the new system needed to look like or how to enact change. Consensus was, in general, difficult to find. Participants who supported change when interviewed fell silent when their ideas for change were repeated to peers who would be affected by the changes they supported in private.

For example, most participants supported the principle of simplification and the general direction of travel toward the recommendations contained later in this report - but there were a minority who do not support a single slim-lined structure/organisation to oversee the contract in Bradford and District.

It was clear that a number of organisations in the room came expecting to hear specific contractual recommendations on how commissioners would refresh support. Others noted that there were elements of the report that related to wider 'systems issues' which would not necessarily be addressed by VCS infrastructure and would also require changes in behaviour and approaches used by public sector colleagues.

Although this was the most challenging of all the feedback sessions we held, it was in many ways the most helpful. It narrowed the scope of what might be achieved with the VCS in Bradford and District at present. And it clarified that getting to meaningful change would require a longer period of time if co-production is used.



# 03

## Public Sector commissioners

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At a workshop with the public sector commissioners in November 2019 there was unanimous agreement from senior officers across the Local Authority and the NHS to work together toward a common objective of ensuring a strong and sustainable VCS in support of the wider objectives of the District. Officers also agreed to investigate the practicalities of bringing together funding for a joint commission of these services going forwards.

# THREE DIFFICULT ISSUES

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## THREE DIFFICULT ISSUES

We have covered a lot of ground during this review and we have uncovered some great ideas and positive attitudes about what the future might look like, but we have also uncovered three difficult issues, which need to be acknowledged but around which there is no consensus of opinion.

# 01

### “NOT-SPOTS” AND COMMUNITY ANCHORS

There are parts of the City and District with strong vibrant Community Centres that are financially stable, run by experienced leaders who have earned a high level of trust from local charities and voluntary organisations as well commissioners. They would definitely be well placed for hosting support services and functions. There are other places where probable anchors (the stronger community organization) are either in deep financial/governance trouble and/or issue specific in nature.

There are a series of responses one could make to this challenge. Funders might choose to channel a significant proportion of support spending (and management fees) through Community Anchors, commissioning them to deliver all support within a given geography within the City and District. This is very popular with some - but who will pick the winners & losers?

A large percentage of the financially weaker institutions are in the most economically deprived parts of the City - arguably, where they are most needed. This is clearly of concern.

In some places the strongest “anchor” with a community minded purpose would be a faith or sports organisation or an issue driven charity. Some smaller VCOs liked the idea of working with such a local anchor - others were absolutely dead set against it, claiming that unintentional bias was bound to play a part in this arrangement. In a completely random and unrepresentative survey both possible non-community centre anchors that we approached were very reluctant to take responsibility as it was an objective beyond their articles of association.

Alternatively, the public sector might also put together a “support package” to help failing Community Centres in critical “not-spots”. But is this not rewarding failure? It is certainly grant funding by another name.

Or the public sector could choose to leave Centres to fail and wait for the void to be filled by a sustainable locally generated response - perhaps from another third sector provider such as a faith organisation – yet this could leave a part of town without provision for a time or unintentionally marginalise another community? At the moment this issue is not being addressed at all.

# 02

## **CO-PRODUCTION PROCESS AND MEANINGFUL CHANGE**

There is a majority voice locally for radical and meaningful change to the way the support infrastructure is delivered. Yet most interviewees favour implementing that change through a local co-production process that will involve the current suppliers of services. Yet our experience is that what is said in private is not always supported in public. Our concern is therefore that entering a co-production process will result in little meaningful change to arrangements. A central contract let and several sub-contractors all of whom are paid management fees, leaving less for front-line support.

VCOs are already defining themselves less by geography and more by community of interest. We are also not convinced that all of the VCS current infrastructure delivery partners who are engaged in the process have the same appetite to innovate or adopt new technology as may be needed if they are to remain relevant to their VCO colleagues in future.

Simplification of the system, and maximizing innovation and impact, will require absolute resolve from commissioners in particular.

# 03

## **DON'T REWARD THE VCOS BECAUSE THEY ARE MICROCOSM OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR**

The most engaged actors in this review are those who are involved in public sector led commissioning contracts. The public sector is understandably keen to do business with organisations with which it feels comfortable. The view is that the most successful VCO providers are those who walk and talk like public sector organisations. By insisting on compliance to public sector norms the system might lose innovative practice and entrepreneurial spirit along the way - and that would be detrimental to quality in the long run.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

Having considered the matter carefully we are putting forward the following recommendations to improve the VCS in Bradford and District via a public sector support package.

## PRIORITISING THESE RECOMMENDATIONS

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Agreeing a purpose (recommendation one) is the most important enabler. In setting a purpose, decision makers MUST ensure that plurality and diversity is respected – specifically this cannot exclude those who champion causes beyond: Health, Children Social Care etc. so a wider purpose (wellbeing?) should be favoured.

Then, those recommendations that help VCOs of whatever size or purpose to become sustainable and find funding from out with the public sector are to be favoured as one cannot expect support grants to continue beyond this settlement. This includes support for entrepreneurial activities.

Finally, finding and recruiting a diverse set of high-quality Trustees across the sector – thereby reducing the overall vacancy rate and increasing the number of people with influence who are personally involved with good causes is, we believe, a universal improvement we could deliver through this support.

The commissioners should apply the following principles to support spending on the VCS in future:

### **Public Sector and VCS to work together to agree a shared vision and set of values**

with the potential to link this to a refresh of the Compact. Perhaps start with the working in recommendation one.

### **Do things once. Avoid duplication.**

Bring all public sector VCS support spend together to maximize improvement impact and reduce overhead spend. This may best be achieved via a single facilitator.

### **Bradford and District first (whenever possible).**

Spending money within the District has added beneficial effect. A local solution is always therefore preferable – but only if it is of equal or better quality and price to an external offer.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Commissioners should contract a single infrastructure organisation to oversee the following five programmes to:

1. Attract more external funding and diversify the income streams of VCOs so they are collectively less reliant on the public purse.
2. Recruit, retain and develop individual VCS/VCO leaders
3. Improve the consistency of quality of service and reporting offered by VCOs to commissioners/funders.
4. Fill Trustee and volunteer vacancies and improve the governance of VCOs across the district.
5. Simplify and modernise the support infrastructure, including service directories and market mechanisms.

A time limit should be set against delivery of each programme as should Outputs and Outcomes drawn from Appendix 2.

None of these programmes will be fully successful unless there is system-wide agreement and behaviours change. The current arrangements include a behaviour code – which is observed through the breach. **Participants from the public sector and the VCS must agree to play by the rules and not try to go around the systems which are being put in place.**

The VCS and its VCOs should view the improvement support they receive as something they should add to. Specifically, there is an organisational responsibility for VCOs to improve the package of training and development they offer to their staff and volunteers.

The Assembly and forums should be subject to evolution rather than revolution via Programme 5 Simplify and Modernise. We support calls for the Assembly Chair to be elected by the Assembly membership, act as the leader of the VCS in Bradford and District, be a sabbatical post supported financially via these arrangements. It is unfair to ask people to carry out this full-time task in an ad-hoc manner. The VC needs a single identifiable leader who is from the VCS.

For further detail of what might be included within each programme of work and to find out more about the ideas discussed in the consultation stage, please see Appendix 2.

**“YOU HAVE  
TO EAT YOUR  
OWN-BRAND  
DOG FOOD  
OR IT WILL  
NEVER TASTE  
ANY BETTER”.**

*Google playbook*



# **APPENDIX**

## PROGRAMMES TO DISCUSS

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## APPENDIX: PROGRAMMES TO DISCUSS

### Commission support against an agreed common objective.

Idea	Notes
Perhaps “to ensure that the VCS in Bradford and District is supported and equipped to deliver the best outcomes for citizens of the district”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Based on our external expert testimony</li> </ul>

### Do things once.

Idea	Notes
Bring all public sector VCS support spend together to maximize improvement impact and reduce overhead spend.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Building on Local Authority/ NHS workshop</li> <li>This may best be achieved via a single infrastructure organisation set within a clear hierarchy</li> </ul>

### Bradford and District first (whenever possible).

Idea	Notes
Spending money within the district has added beneficial effect.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A local solution is always therefore preferable</li> <li>But only if it is of equal or better quality and price to an external offer.</li> <li>Bring Procurement Teams together to discuss</li> </ul>
VCS to collaborate more with each other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Boards of VCOs should agree to interview at least one candidate from the wider Bradford &amp; District VCS for Executive officer roles.</li> </ul>

### Programme One: Attract more funding and increasing the overall pot

Idea	Notes
Centralised Horizon Scanning Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Linked to marketplace</li> <li>Be more pro-active with push messenger etc.</li> </ul>
Centralised Bid-writing Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not universally supported by VCS who fear “de-skilling” of smaller organisations if this happens</li> </ul>
Single point of contact for VCS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create one infrastructure team with one person at the head.</li> </ul>
Campaign to attract outside funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A warmer welcome for private funders.</li> </ul>
Spend more public sector money with the BD VCS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Especially research money</li> </ul>
Spend more Bradford donations in Bradford	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outreach to find out what local givers want to support</li> <li>Active campaign to encourage local spending from Foundations &amp; Trusts and Grant givers</li> </ul>
Longer term contracts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public Sector change required</li> </ul>
Support VCOs to “trade” off assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learn from Transformation programme</li> <li>Training package?</li> </ul>

## Programme two: People and leadership talent development

Idea	Notes
Support for Social Entrepreneurs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May need to change definitions/ broadening of third sector to social purpose</li> </ul>
Access to good quality leadership development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to extend public sector training to include VCS</li> <li>• Focus on diversity of leadership to ensure representation of BAME communities</li> </ul>

## Programme three: Improve quality and reporting

Idea	Notes
Create and use a single VCO Assessment tool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn from Transformation programme – but simplify</li> <li>• Agree a shared understanding of Outcomes Based Accountability.</li> <li>• Investing a substantial proportion of this grant to support a drive towards every VCO producing an Impact Assessment.</li> </ul>
Out-reach for new VCOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The VCS Infrastructure should always strive to have a better knowledge of groups and what they offer to place on DIVA.</li> </ul>
Not-spots	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decide on a future of support programme for “failing” centres – where financial support is given for a change in governance.</li> </ul>
Support for Small & Medium VCOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training programmes should continue to be offered specifically at these organisations</li> </ul>

## Programme four: Trustees & Volunteers

Idea	Notes
A trustee marketing campaign	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To attract and fill vacancies (especially from beyond the public sector)</li> <li>• Increase applications from those with protected characteristics.</li> </ul>
Volunteering better triage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All should use the central on-line system</li> <li>• Agree a consistent definition of Volunteers and a way to estimate their number and use it.</li> </ul>
Volunteer Centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need greater investment and to be more presentable and welcoming than present.</li> </ul>

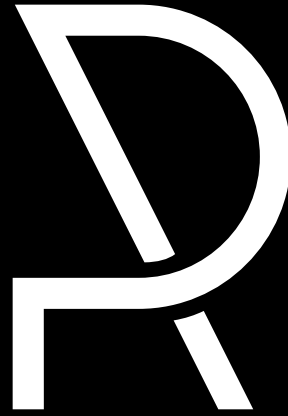


## Programme five: simplify and modernise

Idea	Notes
Change the marketplace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remove lower value contracts from competition process.</li> <li>• Agree cross sector “social value” clause</li> <li>• Create and use a single portal (Better than B-Funded)</li> <li>• Pre-qualification will read across to training.</li> <li>• Single guardian/host of system – with no trading arm.</li> </ul>
Single VCS Directory Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Link to commercial social value planning gain menu on all Public Sector contracts</li> <li>• Should be next generation (machine learning, Artificial Intelligence, block chain etc.) to reduce cost and complexity.</li> </ul>
Agree single management fee for all commissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 15% should be the starting point for negotiations</li> </ul>
A single voice for the VCS through the Assembly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The infrastructure support organisation should report to the Assembly as the representative group for the VCS across the District.</li> </ul>
Single Communication system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A (single) e-newsletter and face to face meetings should work alongside a flexible online two-way communication platform; this might be linked to the “marketplace platform.</li> </ul>
Assembly should adopt a digital platform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For information sharing, most meetings and transparent decision making</li> </ul>
Review Role of Reps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rep Role: (a) helping develop a new product, (b) being the “subject specialist” adding professional insight, or (c) as the provider of service.</li> <li>• Rep should be interviewed for positions rather than elected</li> <li>• Discussing a matter with the VCS/organisation is not a replacement for meaningful engagement with the target group itself.</li> <li>• Engagement or reach into a community should be commissioned.</li> <li>• Consideration should be given as part of the co-design process about whether the current model of representation is sustainable.</li> <li>• Consideration should be given as part of the co-design process, how the voice of small grass roots organisations can be fed in more effectively.</li> </ul>

Review the Assembly governance arrangements at Board level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assembly Steering Group (the Board) should be appointed by a panel of system leaders rather than elected</li> <li>• Might be aligned to Community Partnerships</li> </ul>
Assembly Forums	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communities of interest and popular subject specific groups (such as Health and Wellbeing or the Youth Forum) should be encouraged to continue for information sharing, however, the topics should be reviewed as they are outdated.</li> <li>• Consideration should be given as part of the co-design process how the Assembly can also operate in a more agile manner to coordinate around cross cutting themes.</li> </ul>
An Infrastructure Organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A slimmed down, simple management organisation should administer the grant and commission services. This body should not supply commissioned front-line services to others – its sole purpose is to service this contract in the most efficient method available and certainly within 15% of the total monies available.</li> </ul>





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