



Capacity Builders Destination 2014: investing in change

A response from the National Council for Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS)

March 2007

Introduction

1. The National Council for Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS) is the independent voice of the voluntary youth sector in England. A diverse network of over 160 voluntary and community organisations and local and regional networks, NCVYS has been working since 1936 to inform and influence public policy, support members to improve the quality of their work, and raise the profile of the voluntary and community sector's work with young people.
2. The NCVYS network reflects the diverse range of voluntary organisations working with young people at community, local, regional and national level. Many of these deliver positive activities, and work with young people through arts, sports and other youth work methods. All contribute to young people's personal and social development; some also engage with spiritual development.
3. NCVYS is an active member of the Infrastructure National Partnership. We contributed to the INP response to 2014 and fully endorse its position.
4. This submission will focus on specific issues highlighted in 2014 which particular impact on sub sector infrastructure organisations such as NCVYS and the particular challenges facing organisations working with young people and children
5. For more information on any element of this paper, please contact NCVYS Head of Policy Mark Blake 020 7253 1010.

Key points

6. NCVYS welcomes the publication of destination 2014 as it provides a useful point of debate on the future direction of Capacity Builders and voluntary sector infrastructure at a time of change and challenges for the sector. We have identified four themes.

The Children's Trust Agenda and VCS infrastructure

7. Destination 2014 states that it wishes to strengthen specialist infrastructure but doesn't provide a detail a framework as to how this can be achieved. Developing work in sub sector policy areas of importance to the sector should be part of the strategy for Capacity Builders. For NCVYS impacting on the development of Children's Trusts should be a priority for 2014. NCVYS through the Community Sector Coalition has recently published a policy statement document Talking Trusts which sets out an agenda for Children's Trusts on how to work effectively with voluntary and community organisations (attached to this submission.)
8. Building the evidence base and case for strong local and regional infrastructure to ensure maximum engagement from local and regional voluntary and community organisations working with Children and Young people is critical. There is strong central Government enthusiasm for an enhanced role for the third sector in the delivery of public services, but feedback on the ground with regards to how Children's Trusts are developing highlight many voluntary and community sector organisations on the periphery of these developments.
9. There is clearly a risk that the transformational vision outlined in Every Child Matters with the third sector as a major partner may not be fulfilled. Specialist infrastructure at this local/regional level is a crucial contributor to ensuring the voice of voluntary and community youth organisations are heard and that they get opportunities to develop their services through Children's Trusts.
10. NCVYS is a leading partner in the DFES VCS Engage programme and research evidence is currently being completed which will provide firm evidence supporting our perceptions from member feedback on the development of Children's Trusts. We would very much like to have a dialogue with Capacity Builders once we have completed this research as to how Capacity Builders can impact in this area. Children's Trusts represent one of the key developments in the Government's agenda to transform public services.

11. This is more than an exercise in local Government restructuring but a fundamental shift in how services for children and young people are planned and delivered placing the needs of young people and children centre stage. The role of the Voluntary and Community Sector should be at the heart of this process but the early evidence points to a patchy experience. There is clearly a risk that central Government's vision and plans, play out very differently at the local level.
12. NCVYS with our partners in the Community Sector Coalition have set out a clear position on how Children's Trusts should involve the sector in a consistent and transparent manner through our report Talking Trusts. The report makes a series of recommendations directed at Children's Trusts, in areas such as: active engagement; representation; creating an effective funding environment; and operational coordination.
13. All of which are underpinned by the need for effective local and regional infrastructure. This needs to be both generic and specialist to support sector organisations working with children and young people make an effective contribution to the development of Children's Trusts. Capacity Builders should become fully engaged with the requirement to develop strong infrastructure to support the sector in effectively participating in the Children's Trust agenda. Some of the specific actions that Capacity Builders should consider are as follows:
 - Looking at ways to develop formal partnerships with the DFES VCS Engage programme and how it could contribute to taking forward the infrastructure aspects of the programme with the DFES once it has concluded in 12 months time
 - Ensuring that the Children's Trust agenda is a focus for Capacity Builders work at a regional level, working with established networks and organisations supporting Young people's and children's sector organisations and working with Government Offices in supporting such infrastructure that exists
 - In regions where there is no specialist infrastructure for sector organisations working with the children and young people's sector to explore with relevant local/regional partners the feasibility and options for establishing support structures
 - Establishing an advisory group of organisations involved in specialist infrastructure for sector organisations working with young people and children to advise the Capacity Builders board on developing its policy in this area

Influencing and working with Local Government

14. NCVYS agrees with 2014's desire to influence Local Government and that this is best achieved through national best practice model building with agencies such as DCLG, LGA, IDEA and the Audit Commission as highlighted in the INP response. However we believe just as best practice should be lauded and promoted so bad practice should be challenged. From our members we continually here examples of poor practice from local public bodies often in breach of the national and local Compacts.
15. Where Capacity Builders finds evidence of poor practice it should be challenged and Capacity Builders should encourage infrastructure bodies that it funds to do likewise through Compact resolution mechanisms and other routes. It should be acknowledged that too often bad practice goes unchallenged because VCS organisations fear challenging local public bodies.
16. Capacity Builders should place promotion and adherence of the Compact at the heart of relationships with Local Government. Capacity Builders should work with its partners, the Compact Commissioner and others to reverse this situation. Capacity Builders has a crucial role to play in developing models of best practice with Local Government. We do however agree with the points raised in the INP submission that Capacity Builders should focus on developing best practice at the national level.
17. Capacity Builders should also seek to influence the Audit Commission as they revise the performance framework for Local Government. We should ensure that whatever follows the CPA assesses Local Authorities support for local sector infrastructure. This is one the surest ways to ensuring Local Government values sector infrastructure and resources it effectively.

Equality, diversity and social exclusion

18. NCVYS welcomes 2014's commitment to supporting infrastructure for diverse and disadvantaged/socially excluded groups. Again this will have to be further developed and should include a framework for all infrastructure organisations to embed this within their core work. However ensuring equalities is embedded across the sector must involve all organisations.
19. More detail needs to be developed about how wider infrastructure bodies can ensure that equalities and diversity is at the heart of their practice. A performance indicator should be formed around this theme.
20. With regards to socially excluded communities often the most dynamic work in this area is carried out by small local community organisations. These are the very organisations that need infrastructure the most. Effective infrastructure can support these organisations in promoting their work and working with public bodies in growing and developing it.

21. Exploring avenues to support infrastructure organisations in this area with other funders and lenders and stimulating entrepreneurial partnerships between infrastructure bodies and/or with frontline organisations should be a central component of the vision. NCVYS welcomes 2014's commitment to supporting infrastructure for diverse and disadvantaged/socially excluded groups. Support for specialist infrastructure bodies working with communities of interest such as the BME, LGBT, disability, and Women's group sector is essential.

Sustainability

22. 2014 offers little with regards to support for infrastructure organisations in developing their product lines and avenues of social enterprise, income generation and asset acquisition. As with all Third Sector organisations strength, independence and sustainability are supported by a diverse funding base. Exploring avenues to support infrastructure organisations in this area with other funders and lenders and stimulating entrepreneurial partnerships between infrastructure bodies and/or with frontline organisations should be a central component of the vision.
23. As with frontline sector organisations, infrastructure bodies often have services and products that are not meeting their full potential both in terms of income generation and reach across the sector and to other interested partners. Identifying resources to support such initiatives are often difficult due to lack of time, knowledge, resources and expertise within organisations. Similar issues impede organisations in acquiring their own premises. Again another potential avenue of income generation and asset acquisition for infrastructure bodies.
24. Supporting sustainability amongst infrastructure bodies should be a central objective of the strategy and appropriate actions and performance indicators developed. An infrastructure sector that is reliant on short term limited funding streams will be vulnerable and cannot deliver its mission effectively.

Summary

25. NCVYS welcomes Destination 2014 and the consultation exercise that Capacity Builders has entered into to develop its strategy. This can only be good for the future development of voluntary/third sector infrastructure. However, we would reiterate the following points:
 - Capacity Builders must develop a framework for supporting specialist infrastructure and should seek to support specialist infrastructure impacting on specific policy areas such as Children's Trusts.

- Working with Local Government at a national level should be priority but Capacity Builders should put working within the compact at the heart of its work with Local Government
- There should be a performance indicator for all infrastructure bodies in the area of delivering on equality and diversity
- Capacity Builders should explore avenues that can support Infrastructure bodies to increase their sustainability through social enterprise; asset acquisition and developing income generating product lines.

National Council for Voluntary Youth Services
2nd Floor
Solecast House
13-27 Brunswick Place
London
N1 6DX
T: 020 7253 1010
F: 020 7253 1012
E: mail@ncvys.org.uk
W: www.ncvys.org.uk
March 2007