

Third Sector Partnership Board  
Third Sector Team  
Communities and Local Government  
Zone 5/B1, Eland House  
Bressenden Place  
London  
SW1E 5DU

22 September 2008

Dear Colleague,

**Re: Communities and Local Government Third Sector Partnership Board**

The National Council of Voluntary Child Care Organisations (NCVCCO) and the National Council for Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS) are pleased to have the opportunity to submit a joint response to the Communities and Local Government's (CLG) consultation on a *Third Sector Partnership Board* as part of the Speaking Out project.

The Speaking Out project aims to build a voice for the children and young people's voluntary and community sector (CYPVCS) across government. The project seeks to develop closer links between a range of government departments, including the Home Office, CLG, MOJ, DEFRA, Cabinet Office and HM Treasury, and the CYPVCS in delivering cross departmental plans such as *Every Child Matters and the Children's Plan*. Funded by the Office of the Third Sector, Speaking Out also supports the CYPVCS in understanding the impact of a wide range of government policies and provides routes to influence these policies.

NCVCCO and NCVYS welcome the publication of the CLG Community Empowerment White Paper and accompanying consultations. The opportunity to comment on the proposal to re-establish and expand the CLG Third Sector Partnership Board is particularly welcomed and forms the content of this letter.

**Effective third sector representation**

CLG's recognition of the importance of effective third sector representation at a national policymaking and decision-making level is welcome. Following the withdrawal of CLG's strategic partners scheme, the decision to revitalise and enhance the Third Sector Partnership Board will provide an opportunity to ensure that the CYPVCS is able to get its voice heard by both central and local government and make a meaningful contribution to the design, implementation and evaluation of CLG's activities both nationally and locally. This is crucial as often national policies rely on local implementation. As national infrastructure organisations, NCVCCO and NCVYS are ideally placed to represent our member base, which consists of both national and local voluntary and community organisations that work with children, young people and their families.

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It is essential that CLG communicates and engages consistently and effectively with the CYPVCS, bearing in mind that the sector is diverse and comprises a range of organisations all with distinct needs. Furthermore it is important that all three tiers of the voluntary and community sector - local, regional and national - are well represented on the Board and that the specific needs of children and young people are represented.

NCVCCO and NCVYS favour the suggested open selection process for non-representative members to join the Third Sector Partnership Board, which we believe will provide interested organisations with an equal application process. The proposal that the Board holds meetings three times a year will be sufficient to monitor key milestones and developments in CLG's work. The proposed project groups will also offer an opportunity for Board members to contribute to specific areas of interest; such as the representation of children and young people's views in local decision-making.

### **Partnership working**

Whilst there has been considerable improvement in involving the CYPVCS in policy making at the national level, these developments have largely been restricted to those departments that are directly responsible for children and young people such as the Department for Children, Schools and Families. A wider appreciation of the contribution that CYPVCS can make to effective policy making is needed by CLG. Furthermore, fostering links with other government department advisory bodies will be key in promoting joined-up thinking by CLG and central and local government more broadly.

It is worth noting that local authorities across the country have chosen national performance indicators relating specifically to children and young people. This indicates that local authorities realise both the significance of good services for children and young people and how important children and young people are to the future of communities in general.

### **Children and young people's participation**

NCVCCO and NCVYS firmly believe that children and young people should be able to make their voices heard on the issues they care about, irrespective of whether these are current government policy priorities. This must be part of a new mechanism to encourage 'bottom up' policy making such as local petitions and the move to placeshaping. Involving children and young people in developing services and creating opportunities for them to voice their opinions about issues that they care about is central to the aims of the CYPVCS and was clearly illustrated during a recent Speaking Out conference on placeshaping, at which CLG was represented.

CLG should also consider that an increasing number of children and young people's organisations have children and young people represented on their boards and management committees. It is of paramount importance that children and young people's views are properly taken into account in the design of policy, guidance and central government initiatives relating to community empowerment.

NCVCCO and NCVVS are grateful for the opportunity to comment on the expansion and development of the Third Sector Partnership Board and look forward to working with CLG more closely in the future. For more information on any element of this letter, please contact NCVCCO's policy and information officer, Sophie Griffiths on 0207 833 3319 or email [sophie@ncvcco.org](mailto:sophie@ncvcco.org).

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Maggie Jones'.

Maggie Jones  
Chief Executive  
NCVCCO

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Susanne Rauprich'.

Susanne Rauprich  
Chief Executive  
NCVVS