



# The importance of the voluntary and community Sector

**Steve Conway, NW Consultant Community Matters**



# 'Why commission VCS organisations?

- Economic benefits of delivery through community organisations
  - Investment in the local community
    - Employing local labour
    - supporting the local economy
  - Value for money
    - staff costs
    - volunteers – willingness to give and engage
  - Spreading risk across the sectors



# 'Why commission VCS organisations?

- Other benefits of investment in community organisations
  - Good local knowledge and local relationships
    - “close” to the local youth - flexible and responsive service delivery
    - engagement with ‘hard-to-reach’ sections of the community
    - benefits to users of a holistic, one-stop approach
  - Strong track record of self-help and user involvement
  - Freedom from institutional pressures



# 'Why commission VCS organisations?

- **Community benefits**
  - Community empowerment
  - Improved community cohesion and inclusion
    - Enhanced sense of belonging
    - Stronger social capital
    - Reduced social isolation
  - More active communities
    - thriving civil society
  - Benefits to users of a holistic, one-stop approach



# 'Why commission VCS organisations? Benefit the community & Local Partnerships

- Positive policy outcomes
  - Improved
    - services for children & young people
    - local health through sports/fitness activities...
    - learning outcomes through specific programmes
    - local employment and economic outcomes
  - Stronger
    - local democracy
    - and more influential community voice



# 'Why commission VCS organisations? Benefits the community & Local Partnerships

- Positive policy outcomes
  - Raised aspiration
  - Increased intergenerational activity
  - Increased community responsibility
    - Less crime/fear of crime through community led initiatives
  - Greater action on climate change



# A Changing funding environment for VCS organisations

## Sources of investment from public bodies

- Grants
  - unrestricted core funding
  - with Service Level Agreements or conditions
- In kind support
  - Low rent - capital assets at below market value
  - Shared maintenance responsibility
  - Discretionary rates relief
  - Free insurance
  - Staff
- Contracts
  - commissioned directly
  - competitively tendered



# A Changing funding environment for VCS organisations

## Shifting funding environment:

- Grant Making Tango & Shift toward contracts
- Shopping, Giving, Investing?
  - Often interpreted as 'giving bad, shopping good'
- Government should be clear about its investments
- Myths about contracts
  - Europe makes us
  - ensures contestability
  - controls outcomes and quality



# A Changing funding environment for VCS organisations

## Other trends

- Aggregated contracts
- Services taken back in-house
- Private sector providers
  - Super-providers
  - Sub-contracting
- Pressures toward merger or take-over



# Addressing the Changing funding environment for VCS organisations

## Supporting the sector and local communities

- Intelligent commissioning
  - Duty to consult - involving sector in designing services specifications
- Consortium bidding
  - Large and small working together
- Alignment of policies
- Social clauses in contracts and service specifications



# The importance of the voluntary and community Sector

- Further information
- Community Sector Partnership for Children and Young People – Talking Trusts publication
- Community Matters advice line – 0845 VISIBLE
- [www.communitymatters.org.uk](http://www.communitymatters.org.uk)



# Finally:

## Kindle

(the community sector partnership for children and young people)

Currently working on a short publication for VCS organisations that will cover many issues discussed today

Please be open about concerns and barriers with commissioning so that we can be sure to cover this in the document.

Or alternatively, to get in touch with Nina – even if its to say that a particular word or concept is not understood and would need more clarification!

