

VCS Statement with Reference to Children & Young People's Plan

June 2013

The overall vision statement for the plan should be broad enough to incorporate an acknowledgement of the whole of the children and young people's lives

Importance of Preventative Services.

The Children & Young People's Voluntary & Community Sector Workforce (VCS) would like the importance of preventative services to be a key consideration in development of the new CYYP for B&NES.

It is important to recognise the special ability of the VCS to recognise early indications of need. Embedded in the local community, VCS organisations often have more regular contact with children, young people and their families than statutory partners. The VCS are also more likely to be aware of the wider family/social environment of the children & young people.

Importance of Universal Services

The VCS would like to state the importance of Universal Services in terms of engaging with hard to reach children & young people, offering opportunities for early intervention and early recognition of need. Universal Services, in practice, tend to be softly targeted provision because uptake is generally from among those in more need of support.

Ensure that the Voice of Children & Young People is Listened and Responded To.

Children and young people should not only be consulted but their responses should be responded to and their comments addressed in a meaningful way.

Recognition of the Broader Perspective

When developing the CYP Plan there should be recognition that the individual cannot be divorced from the family or community in which they live. Measure for support or intervention should take into account the situation of the family and community.

It should be recognised that even when a community looks weak or 'troubled' there are elements of strength that can be promoted. The VCS operate from a position of belief in these strengths and recognition of what the community has the potential to offer.

Community cohesion is promoted by initiatives that come from within the community in support of community members and using local people.

Importance of – Real Communication between Statutory Services and VCS

- Embed into B&NES working practice an **expectation and requirement** to talk to VCS organisations – to understand what they do and what services they provide which cover the area and field of work of the individual employee.
- Champion the core value of cross –sector collaboration and partnership working across all B&NES departments.
- Re-instate facilitated Interagency Meetings
- Consult with and Involve VCS at the beginning of new initiatives and first stages of strategy development.
- Recognise the unique position of the VCS within the community and thus their ability to recognise and respond to local priorities and need.
- Support for the work of the VCs and recognition of the importance of their contribution.
- Engender a culture of respect for the VCS within B&NES

Recognition – Safeguarding

The council should recognise that the VCS take safeguarding seriously and are very much on the front line as far as Safeguarding is concerned. Access to all levels of LA safeguarding training should be improved for the VCS. Some organisations use Safeguarding Training other than that provided by the LA and this should be admitted when provided by – or already endorsed by other respected agencies. There should be some system for accreditation of other Safeguarding practice/training.

Recognise the Value of the VCS

With the current cuts in funding B&NES should look to make use of the VCS before services are lost. The LA should be looking towards being more an enabler than provider. Should look at where funding the VCS to provide services is better and more cost effective than providing them from within the LA.

Commissioning Strategy

Commissioning strategy should be produced in a collaborative way to ensure that it meets the needs of commissioners and service providers. There should be a policy statement on how to enable the VCS to provide services.

Recognising the Scope of the Work of the VCS.

Work needs to be done to ensure that LA workers and commissioners understand the range and quality of services provided by the VCS.

Query - 1 Big Database (evaluation of effectiveness of 1BigD).

- How many workers within the council use the DB to access information on local services?

- How easy do they find it to use?
- How effective are the search criteria in view of changing priorities and areas of need
- Does 1 Big Dbase enhance the understanding of VCS services within the LA – if not what can be changed?

Additional Specific Comments:

- VCS should have access to information on protocols and methods for cross referral etc. Currently a lot of useful information for partnership working is not available on the public section of the website.
- There is nothing within the current priorities about prevention or looking for early signs of vulnerability. There is no group or sub group that specifically identifies this. From an Early Years perspective the early identification of risk factors that may lead to poor outcomes is crucial. This needs to be made clearer within the priorities.
- Please include the childhood obesity flag. Promoting exercise, walking or biking to school (safety on the roads, promotion of bike helmets, bike cycleways) , nutrition in schools etc. As a preventive service working with public health and looking at young people who are already having problems.