

GUIDANCE NOTE FOR COUNTY SPORTS PARTNERSHIPS ON KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR

Introduction

This briefing note has been prepared jointly by Sport England East and the Community and Voluntary Forum for the East Region (COVER). Its purpose is to:

- *Provide information and advice to County Sports Partnerships (CSPs) on key policy developments and investment taking place into voluntary and community sector (VCS)*
- *Highlight the opportunities for CSPs to work with the VCS to jointly support and build the capacity of voluntary sports organisations at county and sub-county levels*

What is the Voluntary and Community Sector?

There is no one agreed definition for the voluntary and community sector. However, the term embraces organisations which are neither public/statutory nor private sector based but which are engaged in community development work, social enterprise, charitable, non-profit activities, many of which could be regarded as contributing to 'service delivery' in the broadest sense.

What is the Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure?

This refers to voluntary and community organisations whose primary purpose is the provision of infrastructure functions (support and development, coordination, representation and promotion) to front line voluntary and community organisations. They are sometimes called 'umbrella', 'second tier' or 'intermediary organisation'.

Why is Government Supporting the Voluntary and Community Sector?

The Government is committed to working with the VCS because it believes has a crucial role to play in the reform of public services and reinvigoration of civic life. The aim is to build a new and improved partnership between central and local government (including local health agencies) and the sector, to challenge and stimulate new ideas, complement shared objectives and to take forward social policy generally.

Government Policy and Funding Commitments to the Voluntary and Community Sector – "Change Up"

In 2002 the Government conducted a cross cutting review of the role of the VCS in service delivery. Its overall objective was to explore how central and local government can work more effectively with the sector to deliver high quality services so that where the sector wishes to engage in service delivery it is able to do so effectively. The review sets the strategic framework for Government funding allocations to the sector.

In 2004 Government announced a new framework and funding commitment of £80 million to support the VCS. The framework, entitled “Change Up”, sets out a ten year vision (to 2014) for building the capacity of frontline organisations and putting in place the infrastructure support they need. It identifies the key actions which should be taken to turn this vision into reality which are grouped under the following headings:

- *Performance Improvement*
- *Developing a highly effective workforce*
- *ICT*
- *Governance*
- *Recruiting and developing volunteers*
- *Financing voluntary and community sector activity*
- *Reflecting and promoting diversity*

Change Up is being developed through Regional Consortia (including one in the East). The key roles of the consortia are to:

- *Prepare a regional plan for VCS infrastructure development*
- *Provide quality assurance and brokering to ensure coordination and coherence with and between local plans*

Change Up – East

The East of England Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure Strategy, Investment and Implementation Plan was approved towards the end of 2004. Key features are as follows:

- *The total regional allocation is £5.157 million – this is made up of £4.473 million from Change Up and £683.8 million from DEFRA’s infrastructure investment*
- *These funds must be spent by March 2006 – investment will be focussed on strategic planning, reconfiguration, improving quality and reach, plugging gaps where there is clear evidence of need, and sustainability*
- *The priorities set out in the regional plan are based largely on county plans commissioned during 2004*
- *As well as seeking to deliver on the national aspects of Change Up, the regional plan seeks to make meaningful links to both county and regional public sector policy developments, eg Local Strategic Partnerships, Community Plans, Regional Economic Strategy etc*

The regional vision is:

”To support the needs of frontline voluntary and community organisations in the region through strategically focussed county and regional infrastructure consortia and their members. Investment in these structures will initiate and support sustainably funded, effective and efficient generic services that are

accountable to their membership, reflect the diversity of the sector and accessible to all”

Specific objectives include:

- *a highly skilled workforce*
- *performance improvement*
- *more effective use of ICT*
- *strengthened governance*
- *improved volunteer support*
- *more diverse and effective income generation*
- *improved support for frontline VCS organisations serving rural areas and socially excluded groups and individuals*

Both Change Up and DEFRA's infrastructure investment programme are being coordinated by the Government Office in the East of England (GO-East). Priority will be given to proposals and schemes that demonstrate the following:

- *Needs led*
- *Accountability*
- *Collaboration*
- *An outcome focussed approach*
- *Sustainability*
- *Subsidiarity*
- *Equality and diversity*
- *Excellence*
- *Efficiency*
- *Learning*

Sporting and cultural activities are recognised within the Plan as being part of the wider voluntary and community sector.

County Consortia

As stated earlier, a series of county plans were developed during 2004 which have helped to 'shape' the regional plan. County consortia have been formed in each county and these structures will now need to evolve in response to the challenge laid down by 'Change Up'.

Guidance on the formation of county consortia includes the following:

- *Representatives from all local VCS infrastructure, including volunteering infrastructure, some frontline organisations, including BME and faith organisations and other organisations working with excluded and marginalized groups, community, residents' and tenant's groups, those in unitary authorities and rural organisations*
- *An advisory structure with involvement from the social enterprise sector and Local Strategic Partnerships, Local Authorities, Primary Care*

Trusts, Learning & Skills Council and other public sector agencies and partnerships regarded as appropriate for the county

Implications and opportunities for County Sports Partnerships

The developments outlined in this paper provide some significant opportunities for voluntary sports organisations to secure improved levels of support in the future. Key issues here include:

- *The facts and figures around sports volunteering – 26% of all volunteers cite sport as their main area of interest, 15% of the adult population are sports volunteers contributing 1.2 billion hours each year to sport (equivalent to 720,000 additional full time workers). 106,400 affiliated sports clubs across England serving over 8 million members*
- *The pressures and constraints on the voluntary sports sector, eg recruitment & retention of volunteers, time pressures, workload, dealing with new rules and regulations (legislation), the changing relationships between volunteers and professionals*
- *The opportunity for voluntary sports organisations to be seen to be providing a ‘public service’ and contributing to the social policy agenda, with all the demands and accountabilities that come with this*
- *The need to encourage voluntary sports organisations to recognise that they are part of the wider voluntary and community sector, and the potential benefits that this can potentially bring*
- *As well as traditional sports clubs, there are a variety of VCS organisations providing sports opportunities for local people, eg voluntary youth organisations, charitable bodies etc*

County Sports Partnerships, as the ‘umbrella’ organisation for sport in each county, are therefore encouraged to explore opportunities to work with the voluntary and community sector infrastructure to support the frontline delivery of sport.

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