

## **Outline and reflections on 'Reaching Agreement' conference discussions.**

### **LAA support for small grants and the role of the VCS in delivery**

#### **John Corbishley – CNET, Bradford District Community Empowerment Network**

*The small grants and small commissioning pots follow on from the 'refresh' of the LAA pilot in Bradford, including new priorities for capacity building, and cross-block working. The pots were jointly decided between VCS and service providers as a priority within the safer and stronger block of the LAA - the pots were 'top-sliced' from the total budget, before commissioning.*

#### **Key reflections from delegates**

1. Building relationships with key people, e.g. senior policy officer in LA, being an 'honest' broker
2. Opportunity has been gained by linking to the civil renewal agenda, further opportunities may come with the white paper – make the most of them – be clever
3. Commissioning pot (in Bradford) is important for organisations wanting to move to next level to deliver services
4. 'Depth' of engagement is difficult. VCS representative structures need to be 'real' and effective, robust and strong, structures are crucial

#### **Messages to the VCS**

- Sharing experiences is very important
- Challenging process e.g. commissioning process is starting to make a difference
- Capacity building of the sector is crucial to enable engagement

### **The role and value of VCS infrastructure in designing the LAA**

#### **Jane Daguerre - Leeds Voice**

*Jane described the process that Leeds Voice has gone through to develop the local Area Agreement. This includes the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector cross cutting theme, implementation, involvement in programme management, and the lessons learnt.*

#### **Key reflections from delegates**

1. VCF sector engagement needs to be monitored (transparent process involving the sector) and reported on to sector, make sure partners are taking guidance seriously
2. More de-mystification of complex process – simplify the process!

#### **Messages to the VCS**

- Hang on in there
- Keep asking the questions and work together to challenge
- Share our knowledge and promote our contribution

#### **Messages to the public sector**

- Keep VCF involved at all stages of LAA
- Make good use of what VCF sector can offer
- Implement LAA to COMPACT principles
- Allow challenge

#### **Messages to government**

- Message to LSPs to allocate SSCF to CENs
- Sector needs independent campaigning voice to contribute to genuine leadership, to bring about change
- Two tier needs extra support /resources

## **Working together to design and deliver the LAA in Wakefield**

### **Tony Dean – VOX (Wakefield Community Empowerment Network) and Mary Dowson - WMDC**

*Tony and Mary are joint lead officers for the Stronger Communities theme of the LAA. They illustrated how through working together they have shaped this block and designed appropriate outcomes. VOX is also involved in the other LAA themes and anticipates a significant role in delivering services to meet current agendas around community engagement and neighbourhood arrangements.*

#### **Key reflections from delegates**

1. Communication is key in early stages and can be adapted in early stages e.g. 1<sup>st</sup> stage - awareness raising, 2<sup>nd</sup> stage - engagement
2. Voluntary /community sector has a valuable role to play in LAAs, stretch targets are seen as priorities over and above all else
3. Decision-making around allocation of pool funding to LAA outcome framework

#### **Messages to the VCS**

- Be productive rather than reactive (statement of community involvement)
- Important to demonstrate the added value of voluntary sector at different levels

#### **Messages to the public sector**

- Find a way for regional and sub-regional VCS to relate to LAAs
- Reward element going to voluntary /community sector, plus pump-priming money

#### **Messages to government**

- More time – more money
- Treasury review should consider a mandatory pot for voluntary /community sector to ensure full involvement and decision-making

## **The value of BME strategy organisations in contributing to the LAA**

### **Taiba Yassen – Rotherham Ethnic Minority Alliance (REMA)**

*REMA is the BME VCS infrastructure organisation in Rotherham. Taiba discussed the process of engagement and inclusion of BME organisations in the development of the LAA. The workshop examined the extent to which LAA's have embedded community cohesion and the Race Relation Act.*

#### **Key reflections from delegates**

1. Representation /accountability at a strategic level, problem of 'usual suspects', information not being disseminated. Solution – a democratic process for representation, more monitoring of representatives and performance management of reps
2. BMEOs must work together and present a unified voice, can appear fragmented
3. BMEOs must challenge, through robust performance management? Through RRA? Through COMPACT? BMEOs must also challenge itself (so many organisations duplicating services etc)
4. The Race Relations Act is pivotal but not used enough
5. BMEOs have local knowledge but often big capacity issue

## **Neighbourhood health pilot LAA**

**Colin Havard - Sharrow Community Forum (SCF), Joanna Rutter, South West Sheffield PCT**

*"We believe our experience clearly show how the VCS can contribute to a LAA successfully, and as an equal partner."*

*Colin and Joanna shared their experience of developing a Health Pilot LAA. This was led by the PCT, but involved a variety of stakeholders in firstly identifying the priorities, then developing a business plan for delivering services. The delivery of services has involved pooling of resources by different agencies and VCS. There is now a health information shop, jointly funded and managed by PCT and SCF.*

### **Key reflections from delegates**

1. Need to ensure vertical 'buy-in'
2. Enables conversation about added value of VCS input
3. Takes time to build trust but co-operation /partnership is different

### **Messages to the VCS**

- Need to be positive and proactive in engaging

### **Messages to the Public Sector**

- Do not change goal posts half-way through

### **Messages to government**

- Important that goal posts don't change as have in some previous programmes.
- Don't give power to community then take it away

## **Community delivery of quality services**

**Trisha Beacock - Voices in Play (VIP), Hull**

*VIP provides activities for young people and their families, contributing to floor targets, capacity building and community cohesion. Tricia described how local people have organised themselves to respond to needs identified by the community and by statutory agencies, highlighting the significance of communities delivering quality services. For example, following police identification of motorbike crime as a major local problem, VIP developed a young people's motorbike project with significant positive impact.*

### **Key reflections from delegates**

1. Measuring success – how to get across the 'lived' successes in ways more vivid than numbers
2. Sustainability – 'losing' people when they are empowered! Great, a measure of success, but...
3. Need for lots of support to get involved in LAAs (even to understand them) – support from VCS infrastructure organisations needed – needs resources

## **The VCS as a delivery partner; Marie Copley – Royds Community Association**

*Marie talked about the importance of the voluntary sector being recognised as equal partners and as such their ability to deliver elements of LAA's based on value for money, meeting targets on time and a professional business approach to delivering programmes.*

### **Key reflections from delegates**

1. Clear commission frameworks with transparent and fair systems
2. Full cost recovery
3. Relationships within the sector, acknowledging different roles

### **Messages to the VCS**

- Be clear and consistent about what the VCS brings and what it delivers
- Be clear about different roles e.g. community development, partner, delivery agent

### **Messages to the Public Sector**

- Need to develop and deliver LAAs properly – recognising value and need to support community organisations, otherwise parts of the sector will disappear
- Statutory partners need to fund VCS and community involvement from mainstream funds and develop more robust commissioning processes
- Stop treating sector as cheap option

### **Messages to government**

- How to fund and support community involvement (following end of SCP)

## **Making the LAA work for the VCS, Jason Stamp Doncaster CEN**

*Doncaster was a pilot LAA area and the VCS have been actively involved in the development and review of the pilot agreement. This workshop looked at how sector groups and organisations have been supported to make the LAA relevant to them, and how mapping sector activity against targets and outcomes has assisted in funding, commissioning and service delivery.*

### **Key reflections from delegates**

1. VCs need an understanding of the LAA, public sector needs an understanding of the LAA and the role of the VCS
2. Open acknowledgement needed of respective roles, agendas and expectations
3. Need to gather evidence and prepare to contribute proactively

### **Messages to the VCS**

- Collecting evidence
- Proactive approach

### **Messages to the public sector**

- Who delivers and whose target?
- Delivery mechanism?
- How does this link to commissioning? Need for coherent commissioning frameworks
- Grant aid / commissioning?

### **Messages to government**

- Avoid a silo mentality
- Resources and timescales?
- Grant aid is fundamental