

Title of the Assessment:		Voluntary and Community Action Central Bedfordshire (VCA), Community and Voluntary Service (CVS) and Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity (BRCC)	Date of Assessment:	January 2016
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Stage 1 - Setting out the nature of the proposal and potential outcomes.

Stage 1 – Aims and Objectives

1.1 What are the objectives of the proposal under consideration?

To review and develop new arrangements for supporting VCS infrastructure bodies.

The purpose of local infrastructure support is to provide services support and advice and promote local charities, community groups and social enterprise. It also helps to foster relationships between the local voluntary sector, public bodies and local businesses.

Groups accessing infrastructure support have a substantially higher likelihood of success in grant applications and bidding for contracts There are 3 such organisations in Central Bedfordshire. Voluntary and Community Action Central Bedfordshire (VCA), Community and Voluntary Service (CVS) and Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity (BRCC).

An Independent Commission set up by National Association Community and Voluntary Associations (NACVA) published a review in 2015. The review highlighted that infrastructure faces a rapidly changing environment that is starting to make new demands upon it and the social action it supports. Localism and devolution are likely to require more decisions to be taken locally, whilst austerity and the state's withdrawal from a range of public services means communities are being asked to do more themselves: for example running libraries and local parks; gritting the roads; looking out for vulnerable neighbours. Furthermore, collaboration or merger has to be a consideration if VCS bodies are to continue to provide a suitable continuation of service.

The Partnerships and Community Engagement Team (PCE) has been working with the infrastructure bodies to review existing arrangements, but also in the context of budget changes and the need to align services to the delivery of the Creating Stronger Communities priority in the 5 Year Plan.

1.2 Why is this being done?

The Commission found that infrastructure will be needed as long as people come together to form voluntary organisations and community groups. It suggested that the infrastructure of the future is likely to be leaner, an enabler, broker and catalyst rather than necessarily a deliverer. The Commission believed that the case for investment in infrastructure is just as compelling, but that it has to be different and needs to deliver capacity by unlocking capital and leverage. The message to funders is to invest, whilst the message to infrastructure is to change.

The Commission suggested infrastructure services must redesign themselves to meet changing demand. They need to both be reactive and proactive, e.g. offering the local sector foresight and stewardship, helping it to respond to emerging needs and new demands. They must be relationship builders and brokers capable of levering resources. They must look for opportunities to collaborate with each other, within and across existing boundaries.



The key recommendation from the Commission is that Local Infrastructure needs to be redesigned and creatively resourced to meet future challenges.

A proposed reduction in the budget has been a key catalyst to review the size of the grant available to the three VCS infrastructure organisations.

1.3 What will be the impact on staff or customers?

Consistent with the findings of the commission, together with the potential reduction in funding, it is clear that the three infrastructure bodies need to redirect their services to better meet the needs of third party organisations. This would affect communities and VCS organisations in Central Bedfordshire.

The three VCS infrastructure organisations will need to consider greater collaboration and a reallocation of their priorities and resources including their staff.

The desired emphasis during the four years of reduced investment is to focus their activity on achieving the outcomes relating to the 5 year plan priority which is about building stronger communities. A reduction in funding may potentially lead to reduced services in four years time. However, this would be mitigated by previous years efforts to increase formal and informal volunteering, social action and community asset management and greater use of information and advice resources available on line. At this stage following discussions with the three infrastructure organisations there has been no indication to us that any of their existing services to third party organisations will cease.

1.4 How does this proposal contribute or relate to other Council initiatives?

It relates to the 'Creating stronger communities' priority in the 5 Year Plan. The emerging Strategy for Action will focus on Volunteering, Building Social Capital, Community Assets and Facilities and local participation in decision making .Its vital that the VCS infrastructure bodies realign their services to help meet this priority.

Other parts of CBC engage with the wider voluntary sector to protect vulnerable communities and meet other council objectives. The VCS infrastructure bodies provide a vital role in brokering relationships between the Council and third party organisations as well as support and development services to the wider voluntary sector to ensure that they are as effective as possible.

1.5 In which ways does the proposal support Central Bedfordshire's legal duty to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it

National research indicates Infrastructure bodies have a key role to play, particularly in under resourced areas, in helping local communities to address need and tackle inequalities. However, as the Third Sector Research Centre suggests, the level of engagement is generally lower in more deprived areas. Where this is the case, infrastructure bodies will need to maintain, and in some cases develop, their community development activity to help communities tackle growing inequalities caused by the economic downturn and the loss of public services. Consideration of this issue will be more explicitly built into new proposals.



Volunteers often provide support to charitable organisations which provide a variety of activities and often work with vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. Whilst the outcome of a reduction in funding will largely be the decision of the three VCS organisations affected, as they will have to collaboratively best manage their available resources to ensure continuation of service, the Council would wish to work closely with these organisations to support any reconfiguration.

1.6 Is it possible that this proposal could damage relations amongst groups of people with different protected characteristics or contribute to inequality by treating some members of the community less favourably such as people of different ages, men or women, people from black and minority ethnic communities, disabled people, carers, people with different religions or beliefs, new and expectant mothers, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities?

A reduction in funding would lead to reduced services across **all** communities and organisations in Central Bedfordshire. While on the face of it, no demographic group would appear to be disproportionately affected it will be necessary to undertake data analysis to investigate this more carefully. It is essential for the VCS infrastructure bodies to significantly improve the range and quality of data they collect; so that ongoing impact can be more accurately measured.

It is also important to note that the service with the exception of Volunteer Centre supports voluntary groups who in turn support the public. Some voluntary groups work with specific equality groups some reductions may therefore adversely affect key equality groups and this potential impact would need to be investigated.

Stage 2 - Consideration of national and local research, data and consultation findings in order to understand the potential impacts of the proposal.

Stage 2 - Consideration of Relevant Data and Consultation

In completing this section it will be helpful to consider:

- **Publicity** Do people know that the service exists? Yes
- Access Who is using the service? / Who should be using the service? Why aren't they?
 See attached performance report
- **Appropriateness** Does the service meet people's needs and improve outcomes? Yes
- **Service support needs** Is further training and development required for employees? Not 'required', but is provided
- Partnership working Are partners aware of and implementing equality requirements?
- Contracts & monitoring Is equality built into the contract and are outcomes monitored?
 Yes



2.	2.1. Examples of relevant evidence sources are listed below. Please tick which evidence sources are being used in this assessment and provide a summary for						
l.a.	each protected characteristic	in s	sections 2.2 and 2.3.				
ın	ternal desktop research		Damagraphia Brafilas Canava 9 ONG				
	Place survey / Customer satisfaction data		Demographic Profiles – Census & ONS				
	Local Needs Analysis	V	Service Monitoring / Performance Information				
	Other local research						
Th	nird party guidance and example	es					
Se	ee NAVCA report at end of this ass	ses	sment				
V	National / Regional Research	1	Analysis of service outcomes for different groups				
	Best Practice / Guidance		Benchmarking with other organisations				
	Inspection Reports						
Pι	ublic consultation related activit	ies					
	Consultation with Service		Consultation with Community / Voluntary Sector				
	Users		We are in regular dialogue with the three VCS orgs,				
			and they are already aware / preparing to manage a				
			cut in our funding levels.				
	Consultation with Staff		Customer Feedback / Complaints				
	Data about the physical environn	nen	t e.g. housing market, employment, education and				
	training provision, transport, spat	ial _l	planning and public spaces				
Ğ	onsulting Members, stakeholder	s a	nd specialists				
	Elected Members		Expert views of stakeholders representing diverse				
	Specialist staff / service		groups				
	expertise						
PI			of the community will have common interests and				
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Please bear in mind that whilst sections of the community will have common interests and concerns, views and issues vary within groups. E.g. women have differing needs and concerns depending on age, ethnic origin, disability etc

Lack of local knowledge or data is not a justification for assuming there is not a negative impact on some groups of people. Further research may be required.

2.2. Summary of Existing Data and Consultation Findings: - Service Delivery Considering the impact on Customers/Residents

Summary of Independent Commission Research

Our research shows that infrastructure will be needed in some form as long as people come together to form voluntary organisations and community groups. The infrastructure of the future is likely to be a much leaner enabler, broker and catalyst, rather than necessarily a deliverer. New groups and existing ones will still need advice on legal forms governance, compliance, fundraising and income generation, financial and organisational management and demonstrating their value.

Many users of infrastructure operate on little or no income and are unlikely to be able to pay for it. They will also continue to look to infrastructure for information, advocacy and advice, for



which it is very difficult to charge. All this leads us to conclude that one-off injections of finance, which have been tried in the past, will not address the sector's support needs. It is generally understood that our physical infrastructure requires regular investment to help it cope with new and changing demands.

We believe the case for investment in voluntary and community sector infrastructure is just as compelling, but that it has to be different to past attempts at delivering sustainability. Any future investment needs to deliver capacity, by unlocking social capital and leverage. If the message to funders is to invest, the message to infrastructure has to be to change. This must be a 'something for something' deal.

Infrastructure must prove capable of 'redesigning' itself to meet changing demand. It will need to be both proactive and reactive – offering the local voluntary and community sector foresight and stewardship and helping shape how it responds to emerging needs and new demands. Infrastructure bodies must be relationship builders and brokers capable of levering resources.

They must look for opportunities to collaborate with each other both within and across existing boundaries; maintaining strong links with their communities, whilst operating collectively and strategically to help their communities influence decision makers. We identified a number of key challenges for social action, which we address in our recommendations. In summary they are:

- Coping with the problems of today leaves no time for foresight.
- Many local organisations are hanging on for the 'good times' to return.
- Direct financial support is declining while demand is increasing.
- New forms of organising and advancing social causes are emerging.
- There are places where organised social action and infrastructure are fragile.
- Cashless and informal economies are growing but need more support.
- Lack of capacity is placing governance, leadership and succession planning under strain.
- Social media, on-line tools and technology are generally underused.
- Poor inter-sector understanding is resulting in lost opportunities.
- Too few infrastructure bodies and local groups demonstrate impact.
- Understanding of new forms of finance is weak.

The nature of the service provided locally by the three infrastructure bodies is one of both immediate and ultimate impact, in that they provide services to a wider group of VCS organisations to have an immediate impact – those organisations in turn ultimately impact on a more diverse range of groups. This is demonstrated below.

Age: e.g. Under 16 yrs / 16-19 yrs / 20-29 yrs / 30-44 yrs / 45-59 yrs / 60-64 yrs / 65-74 yrs / 75+

Current data indicates that the VCS infrastructure bodies support 45 VCS organisations that in turn support children and young people, pre-school – 25 years.

In addition, they also support 13 VCS organisations who in turn are supporting older people.

- **Disability:** e.g. Physical impairment / Sensory impairment / Mental health condition / Learning disability or difficulty / Long-standing illness or health condition / Severe disfigurement

Current data indicates that the VCS infrastructure bodies support 6 VCS organisations that in turn support those with a learning disability, and 32 with a mental health condition.



- Carers: A person of any age who provides unpaid support to family or friends who could not manage without this help due to illness, disability, mental ill-health or a substance misuse problem

Current data indicates that the 3 VCS infrastructure bodies support 8 VCS organisations that in turn support Carers.

- Gender Reassignment: People who are proposing to undergo, are undergoing or have undergone a process (or part of a process) to reassign their sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex

No data available

- Pregnancy and Maternity: e.g. pregnant women / women who have given birth & women who are breastfeeding (26 week time limit then protected by sex discrimination provisions)
 No data available
- Race: e.g. Asian or Asian British / Black or Black British / Chinese / Gypsies and Travellers / Mixed Heritage / White British / White Irish / White Other
 Current data indicates that the three VCS infrastructure bodies support nine VCS organisations that in turn support black and minority groups, including refugees and asylum seekers.
- Religion or Belief: e.g. Buddhist / Christian / Hindu / Jewish / Muslim / Sikh / No religion / Other

Current data indicates that the three VCS infrastructure bodies support three VCS organisations that in turn support faith or religious communities.

- **Sex**: *e.g.* Women / Girls / Men / Boys Current data indicates that the three VCS infrastructure bodies support one VCS organisation that in turn supports a women only group.
- **Sexual Orientation:** e.g. Lesbians / Gay men / Bisexuals / Heterosexuals No data available
- Other: e.g. Human Rights, Poverty / Social Class / Deprivation, Looked After Children, Offenders, Cohesion, Marriage and Civil Partnership
 Current data indicates that the three VCS infrastructure bodies support the following number of organisations, that in turn support these specific interest groups:
 - Advocacy organisations 6
 - Befriending and mentoring groups 16
 - Family support groups 12
 - Alcohol and substance misuse groups 2
 - Domestic abuse agencies 1
 - Emergency and humanitarian aid organisations 1
 - Housing / homelessness organisations 3
 - Anti Poverty organisation 3
 - Prisoner / Ex Offender agencies 1
 - Veterans / Armed Forces organisations 1

2.3. Summary of Existing Data and Consultation Findings – Employment



Considering the impact on Employees

This proposal does not affect CBC employees

- Age: e.g. 16-19/20-29/30-39/40-49/50-59/60+
- **Disability:** e.g. Physical impairment / Sensory impairment / Mental health condition / Learning disability or difficulty / Long-standing illness or health condition / Severe disfigurement
- Carers: e.g. parent / guardian / foster carer / person caring for an adult who is a spouse, partner, civil partner, relative or person who lives at the same address
- Gender Reassignment: People who are proposing to undergo, are undergoing or have undergone a process (or part of a process) to reassign their sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex
- **Pregnancy and Maternity:** e.g. Pregnancy / Compulsory maternity leave / Ordinary maternity leave / Additional maternity leave
- Race: e.g. Asian or Asian British / Black or Black British / Chinese / Gypsies and Travellers / Mixed Heritage / White British / White Irish / White Other
- Religion or Belief: e.g. Buddhist / Christian / Hindu / Jewish / Muslim / Sikh / No religion / Other
- Sex: Women / Men
- Sexual Orientation: e.g. Lesbians / Gay men / Bisexuals / Heterosexuals
- Other: e.g. Human Rights, Poverty / Social Class / Deprivation, Looked After Children, Offenders, Cohesion, Marriage and Civil Partnership

2.4. To what extent are vulnerable groups more affected by this proposal compared to the population or workforce as a whole?

There is already a difficulty in engaging with vulnerable groups – less funding would mean this was even more difficult to resource / undertake. Reduced core funding would also impact on other contracts held by the three VCS organisations that target vulnerable people.

2.5. To what extent do current procedures and working practices address the above issues and help to promote equality of opportunity?

Voluntary Works website – information available online rather than face to face. Quarterly performance management and monitoring meetings are held with the three infrastructure bodies, at which data and feedback on performance is discussed.

A series of meetings, involving the Service Manager and Head of Service, have been held, on a both a group and individual basis, with the infrastructure bodies during November 2015 to January 2016 to discuss the proposals. Initially some low level reservations were naturally expressed, but all 3 bodies are happy to continue working with the Council to develop specific proposals and discussions are continuing.

2.6. Are there any gaps in data or consultation findings

The proposal was highlighted in the main budget consultation and the findings will be reported to members at Executive.

2.7. What action will be taken to obtain this information? N/A

Stage 3 - Providing an overview of impacts and potential discrimination.

Stage 3 – Assessing Positive & Negative Impacts					
Analysis of	Impact?	Discrimination	Summary of impacts and reasons		



	Impacts ?					
		(+ve)	(- ve)	YES	NO	
3.1	Age		·		No	No one group will be affected disproportionately
3.2	Disability				No	
3.3	Carers				No	
3.4	Gender				No	
Reas	ssignment					
3.5	Pregnanc y & Maternity				No	
3.6	Race				No	
3.7	Religion / Belief				No	
3.8	Sex				No	
3.9	Sexual				No	
Orie	ntation					
Huma Pove Class Depr Look Child Offer Cohe Marri	rivation, red After Iren, nders,				No	

Stage 4 - Identifying mitigating actions that can be taken to address adverse impacts.

Stage 4 – Conclusions, Recommendations and Action Planning

4.1 What are the main conclusions and recommendations from the assessment?

The Commissions' key recommendation that infrastructure bodies need to change, together with the local funding review that indicated the current funding base was not sustainable has been further reinforced by the new priority to Create Stronger Communities.

Discussions have been held with the infrastructure bodies to engage them in the delivery of this priority; this is entirely consistent with the Commission's findings. With better engagement and collaboration comes the intention to create a three year commission allowing for greater stability



and continuity. The reduced funding scenario will encourage the infrastructure bodies to deliver social value and potentially attract corporate funders from the business community.

4.2 What changes will be made to address or mitigate any adverse impacts that have been identified?

Engaging the infrastructure bodies in the delivery of the outcomes in the 5 Year Plan relating to Creating Stronger Communities.

Security of three year funding commitments; albeit at a reduced level.

To work with the three infrastructure organisations to ensure any reductions in service are managed, and that we ensure Compact compliance.

4.3 Are there any budgetary implications?

A reduction in funding would lead to reduced services across all communities and organisations in Central Bedfordshire.

4.4 Actions to be taken to mitigate against any adverse impacts:

Action	Lead Officer	Date	Priority
The VCS infrastructure bodies have been informed individually and collectively of the proposed funding levels for the next four years. We have engaged in positive discussions to explore aligning their services to the outcomes detailed in the emerging Strategy for Stronger Communities.	/ Sarah	October - January 2015	High
Significantly improved quarterly performance monitoring	Sarah Hughes	Ongoing	Medium

Stage 5 - Checking that all the relevant issues and mitigating actions have been identified

Stage 5 – Quality Assurance & Scrutiny:

Checking that all the relevant issues have been identified

5.1 What methods have been used to gain feedback on the main issues raised in the assessment?

Step 1:

Has the Corporate Policy Advisor (Equality & Diversity) reviewed this assessment and provided feedback? Yes

Summary of CPA's comments:

The Corporate Policy Advisor (Equality & Diversity) has supported the development of the equality impact assessment.

Step 2:

5.2 Feedback from Central Bedfordshire Equality Forum

No specific issues identified at the 14 January 2016 meeting.

Stage 6 - Ensuring that the actual impact of proposals are monitored over time.

Stage 6 – Monitoring Future Impact

6.1 How will implementation of the actions be monitored?

Quarterly Performance meetings and monitoring. We are also in regular dialogue with the three VCS organisations.

6.2 What sort of data will be collected and how often will it be analysed?

Performance data analysed quarterly

6.3 How often will the proposal be reviewed?



Annually

6.4 Who will be responsible for this?

Community Engagement Manager

6.5 How have the actions from this assessment been incorporated into the proposal? Yes

Stage 7 - Finalising the assessment.

Stage 7 – Accountability / Signing Off

7.1 Has the lead Assistant Director/Head of Service been notified of the outcome of the assessment

Name: Peter Fraser Date: 25/01/16

7.2 Has the Corporate Policy Adviser Equality & Diversity provided confirmation that the Assessment is complete?

Date: 25/01/16

Quarter 2 2014/15 - Supporting VCS activity in Central Bedfordshire and supporting communities to do more for themselves

	Activity	BRCC		CVS		VCA	
а	TOTAL No of organisations provided with training, information, advice and other support services	63	2	20		13	1
	No of organisations provided with training, information, advice and other support services by geographical area	Ampthill Aspley Guise Biggleswade Caddington Campton Central Beds Clifton Clophill Dunstable Dunton Fairfield Flitwick Hockliffe Houghton Regis Leighton-Linslade Lidlington Marston Moretaine Meppershall Potton Ridgmont Sandy Shefford Silsoe	2 1 6 1 1 1 1 1 4 2 1 6 1 3 3 2 1 2 1 1 2 2 5	Ampthill 4 Biggleswade 3 Flitwick 3 Gravenhurst 1 Lidlington 2 Moggerhanger Northill 1 Sandy 2 Shefford 1 Shillington 1 Silsoe 1	1	Central Beds Caddington Dunstable Hockliffe Hyde Leighton-Linsla	1 1 4 1 1 ade 4 1



		Stotfold 1			
		Toddington 1 West Mid Beds 1			
	Activity No of organizations	BRCC	CVS	VCA	
	No of organisations provided with training, information, advice and other support services by service categories:				
	Advice & Support	0	4	1	
	Children & Young People	17	4	2	
	Community Development	1	2	2	
	Health & Care Services	27	3	2	
	Learning, Skills& EconomyLeisure &	0 17	7	5	
	Environment Social Welfare	1	7	0	
b	No of volunteer-	1	204	446	
	involving organisations		204	110	
	No of live volunteering opportunities		430	417	
	No of volunteer enquiries		254	313	
	No of volunteers successfully placed in a volunteering opportunity		67	8	
	Anonymised information on volunteers by postcode / Age range / Gender / Employment Status / Ethnicity / Disability		To be discussed at Monitoring Meeting	To be discussed at Monitoring Meeting	
С	No of Organisations included in the Voluntaryworks CRM by geographical area	132 (7 pending) organism working in the CBC area CRM system contains 3. • 189 with MK45 post. • 282 with SG post. • 231 with LU5 post. • 270 with LU6 post. • 329 with LU7 post.	256 organisations: ostcodes codes tcodes tcodes	ntaryworks website	
	No of Organisations included in the Voluntaryworks CRM	See list attached of organisations with entry on voluntaryworks website working in the CBC area by service categories			



	by service categories			
	No of website hits to		95,524	
	the Voluntaryworks website – All Pages			
	website – All Fages			
	No of website hits to		Not yet set up	
	the Voluntaryworks			
	website – Partnership Pages			
	No of website hits to		2,726	
	the Voluntaryworks			
	website – Support Pages			
	No of website hits to		4,202	
	the Voluntaryworks website – News			
	Pages			
	Activity	BRCC	CVS	VCA
d	No of communities	12 (Ickwell, Dunton,		
	helped to manage	Westoning, Cranfield,		
	community buildings	Moggerhanger, Clifton,		
	through advice:	Totternhoe, Barton-le-		
		Clay, Chalton, Husborne		
		Crawley, Gravenhurst,		
		Kensworth)		
		66 in total		
	through information:			
	No of communities	3 (Caddington, Slip End,		
	helped to undertake	Barton-le-Clay)		
	Neighbourhood Planning			
	No of communities	3 (Fairfield, Steppingley,		
	helped to undertake	Haynes)		
	other forms of			
	community led			
	planning			

No of Organisations included in the Voluntaryworks CRM by service categories -

Advice and Support	Health and Care Services
Advice (8)	Alcohol and substance misuse (2)
Advocacy (6)	End of life care (5)
Befriending/Mentoring (16)	 Learning disability (6)
Carers support (8)	Life Limiting conditions (8)
Counselling/Bereavement (13)	Mental health (8)
Family support (12)	Older people (13)
 Information, Advice, and guidance (22) 	 Physical / sensory disability (18)
Self-help (7)	Sexual health (1)
	Learning, Skills and Economy



Children and Young People

- Before/after school clubs (1)
- Children 5 12 (12)
- Early Years 0 4 (4)
- Play (1)
- Special Educational Needs (2)
- Uniformed organisations (3)
- Youth work 13 18 (15)
- Youth work 19 25 (8)

Community Development

- Black and Minority Ethnic Communities (5)
- Charity fundraising and grant-making (3)
- Community engagement (5)
- Faith or religious communities (3)
- Rural communities (4)
- Support for voluntary and community groups (7)
- Urban communities (1)
- Volunteering / community service (10)
- Women only (1)

- Adult & Community Learning (7)
- Economic Development (2)
- Employment Support (6)
- Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) (3)
- Training & skills (11)

Leisure and Environment

- Arts, music and drama (9)
- Community Buildings (23)
- Environment and conservation (8)
- Heritage (3)
- Sport, leisure and recreation (16)

Social Welfare

- Community Transport (6)
- Crime and community safety (1)
- Domestic abuse (1)
- Emergency / humanitarian aid (1)
- Housing/Homelessness (3)
- Poverty (3)
- Prisoners/ex offenders (1)
- Refugees and Asylum (4)
- Veterans and Armed Services (1)