



**Transforming Public Services
with the VCS
Skills, Economy and Growth Scrutiny
Commission**

Policy and Strategic Delivery Team
July 2023

Introduction

- Aspirations of the VCS Strategy and the opportunities and learning presented by the pandemic
- Continuing to work in a relational, collaborative, whole systems way
- How this new way of working supports the delivery of the Council's Strategic Plan
- What we are learning from elsewhere
- The opportunities and challenges to fully adopting this way of working across the Council and by partners organisations

From theory to action during the pandemic

- **VCS Strategy** - 'To transform the way the Council works, we need to work in partnership with the sector to develop new ways of working, designing, testing and learning together. This cannot be achieved simply by describing the transformation needed or writing it into commissioning specifications'
- We started to test this with the **review of advice services**
- The **pandemic** gave us the opportunity/required us to do this - all constraints and traditional 'thinking' about how to deliver for residents fell away as we were in new territory and had to test and learn together
- This was most evident through the development of the **Community Partnerships Network**, particularly the roles of food and advice partners
- This way of working was outlined to [Scrutiny in March 2021](#)

New ways of working

Voluntary and Community Sector

- Support, develop and sustain community action at a local level so that it can best meet needs and strengthen local relationships.
- Prioritise interventions that help residents and communities to navigate the changes caused by the pandemic and CoLC and importantly prevent difficulties escalating and enable emergence out of the crisis.
- Maintain and extend levels of collaboration and trust developed within the sector and with public agencies

Example - Poverty Reduction - working with the VCS

Build on the enabling role we have played with organisations in the food network and community partnerships network, to develop sustainable models and ways of working with VCS that change power dynamics in the relationship. This includes:

- Capturing learning from the ways of working during the pandemic and bringing these together with insight from frontline practitioners and residents to develop approaches to build capacity and trust in the sector and the Council and partners (recognising that we are all working to achieve the same thing).

Poverty Reduction - working with the VCS

- Identifying and connecting up resources and initiatives with the residents journey at the centre to make better use of assets to provide more consistent 'good help' (learning from the advice services review, for example)
- Using this insight to continue to develop our grants programme, and to inform and influence the way Council and partner services fund (commissioners and procurement) and work with organisations to increasingly work in more collaborative/ partnership way of working

Change and transformation for the Council

Strategic Plan - describes how we need to change as an organisation to meet those challenges.

- **Community development** - solid understanding and step change in ways of working with communities to redress inequalities
- **Relational ways of working with people** - person centred approaches, the value of co-production, trauma informed practice, value of relational ways of working
- **Systems thinking** - focusing on the change we want to see, think and lead as a system, delivery methods and accountability based on what matters
- **Leadership** - Value and embed the leadership style that is needed to lead in diverse communities and tackle inequalities

Learning from elsewhere

- Systems thinking is informing how many public services are exploring new ways to deliver services
- The [New Local Network](#) facilitates much of the sharing of knowledge and practice as well as organisations such as [Lankelly Chase](#) and [Human Learning Systems](#)
- Examples of developing good practice can be found in [Gateshead](#) , [Birmingham](#) and [Manchester](#) Councils as well as in the [NHS](#)

Opportunities and challenges to this way of working

“An outcome is the product of hundreds of different people, organisations, and factors in the world all coming together in a unique and ever-changing combination in a particular person’s life. Very few of these people, organisations or factors are under the control or influence of people who undertake public service. All of this means that you can’t plan to “deliver” an outcome in the same way as you can plan to “deliver” a workshop.”

From Human Learning Systems: A practical guide for the curious

Centre for Public Impact: Toby Lowe and Chandrima Padmanabhan
Healthcare Improvement Scotland: Des McCart and Karen McNeill

Opportunities and challenges to this way of working

- New delivery methods and accountability that flow from what matters with a focus on shared learning and adapting to what works for residents and communities, not what can easily be plotted out or measured
- Building resilience and strong communities where residents can shape their future rather than the deficit model that places the resident as passive receiver of services and focuses on 'need' rather than strengths
- The person-centred approach to supporting residents has not traditionally been properly resourced as budget holders often work in silos

Opportunities and challenges to this way of working

- Stability and reassurance for organisations to respond to current community or neighbourhood related challenges, whilst having the flexibility to collaborate, plan and shape new approaches to address needs
- Funders/commissioners do not traditionally support the sort of community development activity that delivers outcomes beyond the lifetime of the resource/funding
- Recognising the unique preventative role of the VCS and the ability to provide the early help that stops issues escalating