

## Feedback from VSF discussions re NCVO

### Barriers and Enablers

#### Barriers

- Corporate red tape impacts small organisations – hard to know who do we chat to?
- Trust – will I be listened to?
- Interest often shown in our work and our priorities but often there is no follow through, and we feel ignored.
- Ensure language and terminology is accessible by not using acronyms.
- Lack of shared direction
- We are forced into silo working as we have to look inwardly when our funding is withdrawn, in order to survive.
- Not treated as an equal e.g. layers within DWP
- Government departments not aligned so create layers of bureaucracy
- Lack of communication and consultation with VCSE – e.g. ENICs and reduced threshold
- Lack of respect regarding cost to VCSE
- Entrenched culture in statutory organisations which considers the VCSE sector to be less able/professional
- Expectation that the VCSE sector will always fill the gaps left by statutory cuts
- Expectation that the VCSE sector can do things cheaper – normally we can – but it's not appropriate to not even meet Full Cost Recovery.
- Money = power so the power sits within the statutory sectors

Example – Hampshire County Council were offering grants for the Household Support Grant but would not include any costs towards organisational overheads including insurance etc which is essential to enable the project work to be delivered.

#### Enablers

- Having a clear point of contact
- Ability to understand who is likeminded in terms of priorities and aims leading us to join forces – co-production
- Bringing RVS and Hart Voluntary Services together is a great start
- Meaningful consultation at the start
- Change of attitude to the sector
- Culture change

## What do we want the covenant to include?

- Build on what we already have rather than create new for new sake
- Mechanism so all organisations feel included – there is the worry will smaller charities be forgotten again.
- Accountability on both sides
- Clarity on what is meant by ‘independent’?
- Can’t monitor principles – need SMART objectives
- Equal partnership – collaboration
- Charities are holding the country together
- Government commitment to listen
- Social media
- Granularity under principles too vague
- Don’t promise and then not deliver
- Is this accessible to everyone on the website?
- Facilitating local forums that are representative
- Agreed framework for consultation with accountability and shared principles
- Acknowledge need for committed funding
- A framework for engagement as included in the Compact Agreement, eg notice to be given to VCSE re cuts etc
  
- Participation
  - lack of understanding on how it works and what it does what do you get by joining/signing up?
  - What does it mean?
  - If a council doesn’t sign how are things actioned?
  - Clarity on the covenant
  
- Recognition
  - no consultation,
  - engaging people,
  - engender value for people otherwise it just becomes a piece of paper,
  - who is accountable for carrying it out?
  - Recognise that cash flow is an issue for smaller VCSE groups. It is essential to pay us promptly and not to take months whilst working through bureaucratic systems
  - Why Civil Society? We identify as VCSE/VCFSE Sector.
  
- Transparency
  - widely disseminated on various websites,

- good information = good decisions,
- easy to find information
  
- Partnership
  - Ensure that local authority and NHS contracts/tenders are achievable by non-statutory organisations; remove unnecessary barriers which exclude us

### **Looking ahead**

- Memorandum of understanding
- Build trust through transparency
- Ensure both sides are accountable for outcomes
- Clear purpose – currently this feels very broad, what is the aim of the covenant?
- Transparency
- Resource – who will lead this initiative, will resource be provided and maintained?
- Paid Participation
- An equal seat at the table
- 360 feedback – live to see if/how it is working – is it 'fit for purpose'?
- National network of VCSE fora, via the framework of CVSs (NAVCA)
- Mechanism to ensure true representation
- Transparency of consultation networks