

Briefing for Police and Crime Commissioner

Topic: Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS)

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Purpose of briefing

To appraise the new Commissioner of the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) across Durham and Darlington.

Background

The use of the term voluntary and community sector in this strategy refers to groups and organisations that are:

- Independent and constitutionally self-governing, usually with an unpaid voluntary management committee, sometimes accessing or receiving public sector funding for their day to day operations.
- Value-driven – they exist for the good of the community or their beneficiaries, to promote social, environment and cultural objectives in order to benefit society as a whole, or particular groups within it.
- Not for financial, re-investing any surpluses in order to meet their objectives.

Voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations are also sometimes known as ‘the third sector’ or civil society organisation and can vary enormously in size, from small local groups run exclusively by volunteers, who may also be members or service users, to larger national charities that are household names such as Age UK or Barnardo’s.

VCS organisations operate in diverse and wide-ranging fields including many that work in health and social care, community leisure and recreation activities, environmental work, arts, sport, education, campaigning and advocacy and may be faith-based organisations. They may be registered with the Charity Commission and may include trusts and foundations, social enterprises, community interest companies, mutuals and cooperatives.

There are well over a thousand VCS organisations in Durham and Darlington, and many of those do not exceed annual turnover that requires registration with the Charity Commission.

The VCS groups operating in Durham and Darlington can be categorised as follows:

- Specialist support organisations providing major services in specialist areas on a regional footprint, such as to older people, children and young people, people with disabilities and so on. Examples include Changing Lives who provide accommodation and support services, and Harbour who provide domestic abuse and sexual violence services to victims as well as behaviour interventions to perpetrators.
- Infrastructure organisations who provide back office and generic support, advice, help and training for volunteers and front line VCS groups. An example of this is the Durham Community Action.
- Front line: smaller and localised organisations and community groups, providing services which support individuals within local communities. These may also be known

as grass roots community groups, or civil society groups. Examples include the Just for Women Centre in Consett.

The VCS are a valuable and essential component within community safety and stability. Their funding is often precarious because they do not receive direct grant funding and are more reliant on raising income through charitable donations or applications to trust bodies.

PCCs typically provide funding support to VCS organisations where there is a demonstrable link between their delivery, community safety, victim support, reducing reoffending and the strategic priorities set out in the Police & Crime Plan.

Decisions Needed

Funding applications made to the OPCVC Commissioning Board will need to be ratified by the new PCVC.

In addition, the PCVC will need to give consideration to whether the grant support that has been provided to enable community action grants will continue to be provided.

Partnership Involvement

The VCS is partnership focussed by nature, and key representatives feature at many of the local governance groups such as One Darlington Partnership and County Durham Partnership.

Police Involvement

The Police value to work and services provided from VCS partners, for example the 700 Club in Darlington, or HALO, which provides services to victims of illegal cultural harms.

Organisations to Meet

Durham Community Action – infrastructure support organisation

Darlington Cares - infrastructure support organisation

700 Club – outreach and support for adults with complex needs

HALO – illegal cultural harms service

Harbour - VAWG service, accommodation, support, whole family approach, perpetrator interventions

Safer Communities (currently delivering the Victim Care and Advice Service)

Cornforth Partnership (Domestic Abuse - DA)

Foundation (DA)

Just for Women Centre (DA & Sexual Violence - SV)

Pride (DA & SV)

Shaid (DA)

Changing Lives (accommodation, support to those with complex needs, SV)

Darlington MIND (mental health and SV services)

Rape & Sexual Assault Counselling Centre (SV)

