



Better Together Policy Forum Briefing Note

When: Friday 19th April 2023 (9:30 – 12:30)

Where: Bowburn Community Centre

Context: This is the eleventh in a series of bi-annual forums, led by the VCS. They are planned to address policy themes which affect our communities. According to the theme, relevant public sector partners and commissioners will be invited to participate with our colleagues from the VCS.

The wider objectives for the Policy Forums are to:

- provide regular opportunities for the VCS to meet with elected members, heads of service and public sector members of the County Durham Partnership: to share intelligence, showcase good practice, and to identify opportunities and gaps in cross sector working relationships.
- enable a wider cross section of VCS providers to engage with the Better Together Forum, as an opportunity to discuss policy, showcase good practice and meet with public sector partners.
- enable more focused discussion and consultation which is relevant and current.
- offer an informed overview from the voluntary sector about how public policy is affecting services in County Durham.

Previous forums have focused on showcasing community led action, exploring impact and actions around mental health, social value, alliance contracting, safeguarding, and connecting communities with health care service delivery with the most recent dedicated to exploring how public and voluntary sectors develop research & insight that builds an inclusive evidence base. They have all generated a continuing discussion between voluntary and public sector partners about how we respond to the needs of people in our communities, and to the changing face of support services, now and in the future.

VCS organisations which take part in the Better Together Network form a nucleus for discussion and good practice exchange.

April Topic: Ageing Well in County Durham: What are the key issues and what are we doing about them? Are we valuing the contribution of VCSE service delivery?

We want to explore how we are supporting our ageing population and what we might do better together.

VCSE organisations make a valuable contribution to the 'ageing well agenda'. Age UK County Durham play a significant role responding to the needs of those 50plus and (alongside many other sector colleagues) are building programmes of work to enable better outcomes. VCSE

colleagues are passionate about meeting the needs of their beneficiaries and benefit from a level of independence that enables them to respond rapidly to the needs of those using their services.

So how are we working together to promote ageing well?

Durham County Council is committed to an assets-based approach in order to better understand the needs of communities. The County Durham Partnership made a commitment to designing public services so that they prevent increasing needs and high-volume demand for statutory services. Whole system approaches and the emerging development of the County Durham Together Partnership requires multi-sector collaboration to support communities with the issues they face.

This Policy Forum has been convened to hear from colleagues, explore health needs analysis and open up conversations to further collaboration, test feelings and build commitments. It can be seen as a starting point for future ongoing connections.

The given aims of the policy forums are to bring public and voluntary sectors together to share thoughts and raise questions/asks (both ways).

The event is an opportunity to share perspectives and engage in an open exchange of views on what the key issues are, how we face them together and how we value delivery; there is a real desire to work together to improve outcomes within our communities.

Better Together Policy Forums have a simple format: a keynote stimulus at the start and then focus on roundtable discussions.

At this forum, we aim to consider the following:

How do we maximize the benefits of collaboration to promote ageing well and improve lives?

To explore:

***Do policy and investment decisions consider the true value of VCSE service delivery?
How can we work better together to build inclusive evaluation of service delivery that informs decision making.***

With roundtable discussions focused on identifying and exploring:

- what are the key drivers to better collaboration
- what is already happening that we are not capturing the potential of and what would facilitate action/progress.
- what does good evaluation/impact/success measurement look like (from all perspectives) and what would be meaningful?
- how can we work on this together?
- what do we need to do to make sure this evidence leads to an inclusive approach to commissioning?