



Better Together VCS Policy Forum

Social Value

Report on a VCS led forum involving VCS organisations, public sector partners and commissioners held on Friday 13th September 2019

This Forum was convened to look at the current landscape surrounding social value, in a national and local context, and what opportunities and challenges it might offer the VCS in the current working climate. The Forum looked at social value in public sector procurement and commissioning, explored how the VCS might be responding to social value in day to day work, and considered how the County Durham Approach to Wellbeing might be used to gather evidence of social value.

Key Points: Introduction

The workshop was chaired by Jo Laverick, Executive Director of [Durham Community Action](#) and the VCS representative of the [County Durham Partnership](#) Board. Jo also chairs the bi-monthly meetings of the [Better Together VCS Forum](#).

People attending the Forum, and the organisations represented, made up a diverse mix of public sector and both large and small voluntary sector organisations.

The starting point for the Policy Forum was a mixed range of understanding and view points about what social value means, and where it's relevance lies in the work of the delegates and their respective organisations.

The Social Value Landscape: National & Local Context – [link to presentation](#) Darren Knowd, Chief Procurement Officer, Durham County Council

An overview of Social Value, what this means in terms of procurement and what the opportunities may be for the VCS in County Durham

The presentation considered:

- What is Social Value and the national agenda
- [The National TOMs Framework](#) (Themes, Outcomes, Measures) – a minimum reporting standard for measuring social value
- North East Regional Work via [NEPO](#) and some Durham examples
- Looking ahead to possible [Alliance Contracting](#) – Based on relationships, trust and shared purpose

Using a Wellbeing Approach to add Social Value – [link to presentation](#) Jane Sunter, Public Health Strategic Manager, Durham County Council

The presentation considered the new County Durham Approach to Wellbeing and the opportunities to use the framework to gather evidence of social value:

- An approach based on three components and six principles
 - Informed by evidence and local conversations
 - Built around people and place (Principles 1-3)
 - Supported by systems (principles 4-6)
- Applying the principles will help provide an evidence base which may be used in future Alliance Contracting within Adults and Health Commissioning

**Evidencing & Developing Social Value - A VCS Perspective – [link to presentation](#)
Cat Miller, Services Manager, Alzheimer’s Society**

A presentation from a VCS Provider perspective outlined how their organisational values and behaviours framework is embedded in all they do and how this links to social value:

- Reduces impact on statutory services
- Positive impact on the local economy
- Strengthening of community based support and resources

Roundtable Discussion

Participants were asked to consider three questions. Key messages are summarised below:

1. What Corporate Social Value outcomes would best benefit your organisation and beneficiaries?

- Money/donations/ Sponsorship (opportunity to raise company profile)
- Pro-bono Support
 - Donations of Volunteer time
 - Professional Expertise – HR, Finance, Governance, Bid-writing
 - Trustees for Boards
 - Goods - Equipment
 - Facilities – office space/meeting venues
- Donations to food banks, although rather they didn’t exist
- Campaigning for social justice [powerful people using their influence]
- Employment of local people with progression/promotion route
- Providing opportunities for work placements/education/training
- Purchasing locally
- Businesses understand/become more aware of social issues e.g. financial problems, Carers, Domestic Violence etc of their staff leading to appropriate referrals/policy development
- Social Value Portal: “I can give ……” Idea/corporate offers - Needs someone to perform coordination function – vetting/assurances

2. How can VCS organisations be supported to demonstrate impact and social value outcomes for commissioners?

- Expertise and tools
- Peer learning – network or support
- Infrastructure support – critical friend – offer advice on keeping it real
- How to prove need for face to face services - Demonstrate concrete examples

- Longer contracts – more opportunity to demonstrate outcomes
- Co-production of measurement frameworks
- HACT – [Housing tool & Social Value](#) – impact on individuals

- Support to understand the National TOMS Framework
 - To understand how much social value matters in tendering (what weighting is it 10% overall?)
 - Is this truly social value for the community?
 - How is the national task group going to have conversations with national funding forums to ensure VCS isn't being pulled in two directions?

- Support to understand Alliance Contracting
 - Will it be equal shared risk if its shared decision making?
 - Overcome the challenge of keeping each set of trustees happy whilst embarking on alliance model
 - VCS need to be allowed to add in the resource to be allowed to take part e.g. small but important – but don't have the time/staff
 - Clarity of expectations/clear specification
 - How to have honest conversations

3. How might the Wellbeing Approach be used to add social value and demonstrate impact and outcomes?

- Promoting wellbeing is fundamental - social/physical/mental wellbeing
- Opportunity to showcase what VCS do already
- Measuring distance travelled
- Share existing evidence base
- Audit tool for measurement needs to be simple/not onerous for small organisations
- Very much about supporting people to not be accessing statutory services – how do we measure that e.g. snow clearance – less falls admission to A&E

Key messages from the VCS for Commissioners

- Specialist transport for those with more chronic illness
- Involvement in employee volunteer schemes – lunchtime driving
- Costs to individuals of day care
- Referrals coming too late – need more nursing care
- Cuts – the really isolated have been affected more
- Impact of changing service e.g. affects carers lack of respite – sometimes lower attendance if free
- Need to read up on generational diversity – changing population with different needs
- Longer contracts – more opportunity to demonstrate outcomes
- Clear/realistic specifications

Key messages from Commissioners for the VCS

- Offer to continue the dialogue and follow up informally with VCS regarding shaping the commissioning process. Now the relationships have been established there is an intention to keep talking about opportunities for training, shaping and influencing social value across the County.
- Keep it real!

Next Steps

- This summary paper to be circulated with a cover note to key cross sector partnerships in the County, in particular: County Durham Partnership Board, and Area Action Partnerships.
- The paper will also be circulated via VCS led partnerships: Advice in County Durham, Better Together, Volunteer Coordinators' Forum, and Share and Learn Network. All partners are invited to share the report with members of their own local or professional networks.
- Follow up meeting to be convened to pick up on current opportunities to influence current contracting/ procurements. Outcomes will be disseminated via Better Together Network.

[The Better Together Forum](#) brings together senior representatives of larger or specialist VCS organisations with a countywide remit to share best practice and look for new opportunities to collaborate.

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For further information click [here](#) or see www.durhamcommunityaction.org.uk