

**Developing the
Voluntary Sector Role
in Public Service Delivery
in South Tees**

Consultation Report

Gordon Associates UK Ltd.
July 2004

Foreword

Following the Treasury's cross cutting review of the role of the voluntary and community sector in service delivery (published in September 2002), a number of new national initiatives have emerged to support development of the sector's role in delivering public services.

This agenda presents a challenge to "umbrella" (or infrastructure) organisations with a role in providing support services to the wider sector. The voluntary sector has a history of providing innovative and flexible responses to local needs. But the perception of voluntary development agencies in the Tees Valley was that local organisations delivering front line services were heavily reliant on short-term funding and grant aid. We wanted to test this view by assessing the current extent of contract-based funding and to investigate the need for work on our part to increase the sector's role in public service delivery.

The infrastructure bodies covering the South Tees area were successful in obtaining a grant through Government Office for the North East to undertake this work. The research brief included an examination of the extent to which commissioning processes were accessible to the sector and the support needed to develop the capacity of local voluntary and community organisations to engage in contracts.

The completion of this research has coincided with the publication of Home Office good practice guidance on procurement of services from the voluntary and community sector, "Think smart...think voluntary sector!" This guidance reinforces the message of our local study.

We welcome the findings and recommendations as providing a solid basis for developing the role of voluntary and community organisations in delivering public services in the South Tees area. We are particularly encouraged by the support of key individuals from commissioning agencies. An important dialogue has now been started and we look forward to working together on the common agenda of ensuring delivery of the best possible public services to our communities.

Dinah Lane

**On behalf of Middlesbrough Voluntary Development Agency,
Redcar and Cleveland Voluntary Development Agency
and Tees Valley Rural Community Council**

Acknowledgements

The Steering group, which commissioned this research, and the consultants, would like to thank all those who participated in the process, whether by returning questionnaire, taking part in telephone interviews or attending one of the groups. At a time when many people feel that they are suffering from "consultation overload" the time given to share views and experiences is appreciated. The steering group would also like to thank Government Office North East who funded this work.

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Contents

1.0	Introduction	5
2.0	Consultation process/methods	8
2.1	Aims	8
2.2	Management of the consultation process	8
2.3	Questionnaire survey	8
2.4	Telephone interviews	9
2.5	Focus group with BME groups	9
2.6	Meeting with commissioners	10
2.7	Constraints	10
3.0	Findings	11
3.1	Sector Profile	11
3.2	Current involvement in contracting/SLAs	12
3.3	Procurement process/policies	14
3.4	Partnerships and joint procurement processes	16
3.5	Who identifies community needs and how	16
3.6	Barriers to voluntary & community sector involvement in public service delivery	17
3.7	Infrastructure needs	21
3.8	Local infrastructure support	27
3.9	Social enterprise	28
3.10	Relationships	29
4.0	Recommendations	31
5.0	Conclusions	32
Appendices		
(a)	Questionnaire	33
(b)	Topic Guides for interviews	37
(c)	Data from questionnaires	40
(d)	List of organisations involved in the research	48
(e)	think smart .. think voluntary sector Exec. Summary	49
(f)	The consultants	51

1 Introduction

The South Tees voluntary development agencies and the Tees Valley Rural Community Council were awarded early spend monies from the Home Office Infrastructure Fund by Government Office North East (GONE). This award was for the establishment of an exemplar project to explore ways in which infrastructure organisations can best support the voluntary sector to increase its role in public service delivery. The aim is to provide a snapshot of the preparedness of the voluntary and community sector and the statutory authorities in the South Tees area to engage with the government priority in relation to the provision of public services; to produce recommendations for an approach to procurement and the provision of infrastructure support services; and to inform activity in the South Tees districts, with the potential for wider application across the region and elsewhere.

Background

In the South Tees area of the Tees Valley, there are currently working two district-based local development agencies, Middlesbrough Voluntary Development Agency (MVDA) and Redcar & Cleveland Voluntary Development Agency (RCVDA), and a Tees Valley wide rural community council, Tees Valley Rural Community Council (TVRCC). They all provide capacity building support to the wide range of communities and voluntary groups within their remit, and RCVDA and TVRCC have “incubated” a number of voluntary/community projects that have become successful independent organisations. (MVDA is fairly newly established and still developing core services.) They work in partnership across a number of areas, including jointly commissioned research and project development and management where appropriate. Although there are over 600 voluntary organisations active in South Tees, it is estimated that relatively few deliver services under contract or Service Level Agreement.

The three organisations recognise that not all local communities or voluntary groups are strong enough to develop and maintain sustainable services from scratch, and need capacity building support in order to be successful in the tendering process. Some potential service-providing organisations operate across the boundaries of the two local authorities, which may not have integrated policies in relation to procurement of services from the sector. In addition, a potential lack of understanding of the constraints on local groups may lead to local authorities favouring national voluntary organisations or the private sector in the tendering process.

MVDA, RCVDA and TVRCC jointly commissioned this research into current experiences of tendering and procurement processes and the future infrastructure support needs of local voluntary and community organisations seeking to develop a role in public service delivery. This report offers a detailed account of the consultation process, the findings and the recommendations arising out of those findings.

The context of Government Policy and Strategy

In September 2002, the Treasury published "The role of the Voluntary and Community Sector in Service Delivery: A Cross Cutting Review". It identified a lack of capacity, and patchy public investment in sector infrastructure as barriers to increasing voluntary and community sector (VCS) involvement in public service delivery and recommended that a coherent strategy should be developed to underpin capacity in the sector. This has led to a number of central Government initiatives, including "Futurebuilders", an investment fund to help VCS organisations to contribute to 5 key government public service priorities:

- ❖ Health and social care
- ❖ Crime
- ❖ Community cohesion
- ❖ Education and learning
- ❖ Support for children and young people

The Cross Cutting Review also led to two initiatives led by the Home Office Active Community Unit:

- ❖ The Community Capacity Building Review, aimed at streamlining programmes tackling deep-seated problems in neighbourhoods and local areas, and
- ❖ The Infrastructure Strategy intended to develop a sustainable baseline of infrastructure support, to address duplication and gaps in support at national and regional levels, and guide government investment in infrastructure support up to April 2006.

The ACU has recently published "ChangeUp" a capacity building and infrastructure framework for the voluntary and community sector.

A key theme in these government initiatives is driving forward programmes to improve the quality and responsiveness of public services, emphasising the added value the voluntary and community sector (VCS) can bring to the design, planning and delivery of services. The Cross Cutting Review also explored how central government could work more effectively with the voluntary and community sector to deliver high quality services, and identified barriers the sector face in securing contracts. The review called on the Active Community Unit of the Home Office to develop good practice guidance on the procurement of services and for all Departments to agree a common approach in line with the guidance. This guidance was published in June 2004 "think smart... think voluntary sector!" (an executive summary of which is reproduced as Appendix E to this report). Interestingly the findings and recommendations contained in this national document are very similar to those identified by the South Tees research.

The Office of Government Commerce (OGC) have produced a comprehensive toolkit for Government procurement professionals entitled "Successful Delivery Toolkit" which helps to alleviate some of the problems faced by the voluntary and community sector in the successful delivery of service contracts. Further information can be obtained from: www.ogc.gov.uk/sdtoolkit

A wide range of reports and guidance have been produced regarding the Government's relationship with the voluntary and community sector and other suppliers of public services. These are:

- ❖ The Compact on Relations between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector in England
- ❖ Guidance to Funders: improving funding relationships for voluntary and community organisations.
- ❖ Smaller Supplier ... Better Value
- ❖ Government – Supporter and Customer
- ❖ Getting Better Delivery
- ❖ Making a Difference – Reducing bureaucracy in Central Civil Government Procurement
- ❖ Kelly report – increasing competition and improving long-term capacity planning in the Government market place.

2 Consultation Process/Methods

2.1 Aims

The aim of this research has been to provide specific recommendations about commissioning/procurement processes and the sector's support needs. It has involved discussion with commissioners, alongside mapping current voluntary and community sector activity in public service delivery and research into capacity building needs among existing and potential providers. Particular attention has been paid to the needs of black and minority ethnic (BME) groups and the implications for rural areas.

2.2 Management of the consultation process

The consultation process has been managed by a Steering Group of representatives from Middlesbrough Voluntary Development Agency (MVDA), Tees Valley Rural Community Council (TVRCC), and Redcar & Cleveland Voluntary Development Agency (RCVDA).

The Steering Group were responsible for preparing the bid to Government Office North East and for drawing up the tender specification and assessing applications received from consultants. The consultants Gordon Associates UK Ltd. were selected, and work commenced on the study in April 2004.

There have been three Steering Group meetings with the consultants to agree the detail of the work and to discuss the postal questionnaire and topic guides for telephone interviews. The consultants have prepared progress reports at the end of each month. On-going contact has been maintained using the telephone and email as the work had tight timescales and communication needed to be facilitated very quickly.

2.3 Questionnaire survey

A key aspect of the consultation process was the design and delivery of a questionnaire to voluntary and community groups in the South Tees Area. The groups were identified from the mailing lists of the three infrastructure organisations involved in this study. The aim of the questionnaire was to ensure that a wide range of groups in the area could be involved in the process and could contribute to the findings.

The consultants worked closely with the Steering Group to agree the design for the questionnaire. (See Appendix A) The questionnaire was piloted with a small number of groups in April 2004 to ensure that the form was easy to understand, and used appropriate language to encourage both quantitative

and qualitative data. The pilot groups provided useful feedback by email and by telephone and as many as possible of their comments were incorporated in the final design of the questionnaire.

A £100 prize was used as an incentive to encourage groups to return their questionnaires. This was drawn at an event to present draft findings and recommendations.

Just over 600 questionnaires were circulated with a stamped addressed envelope. Exactly 100 questionnaires were returned, giving a response rate of approximately 16%. This is considered to be a reasonable response rate when compared with rates generally achieved by postal questionnaires. The response was from a wide cross section of types of organisations, spread across the geographical area.

Analysis of the responses is included in the Findings Section of this report and actual figures from the data may be found in Appendix (d)

2.4 Telephone interviews

A number of telephone interviews were conducted as part of the process, allowing for more in-depth information to be gathered on an individual basis. Topic guides were prepared and agreed with the Steering Group to provide a structure for the interviews. (See Appendix (b))

It was agreed with the Steering Group that interviews should include:

- ❖ A sample of 14 voluntary and community organisations, whose contact details were provided by the three organisations making up the Steering Group. The sample, whilst not a random one, was selected to include groups working with a range of client/issue groups, size of group, and geographical spread.
- ❖ Separate interviews with representatives of the three infrastructure organisations making up the Steering Group
- ❖ Interviews with key commissioning agencies including representatives from the Learning and Skills Council, the PCTs in Middlesbrough and Langbaugh, and the local authorities in Middlesbrough and Redcar & Cleveland. In all 13 telephone interviews were carried out with commissioning agencies.

2.5 Focus group with BME organisations

There appears to be little information available about the infrastructure needs of the black and minority ethnic groups serving communities in the area. A focus group was organised in Middlesbrough, where issues specific to those voluntary and community groups could be addressed.

2.6 Meeting with Commissioners

The Steering Group thought it important that the commissioning agencies should be involved in the process at every stage. Ideally, they would have met with agencies at the time of submitting the application for funding, and sought involvement throughout the project, but the tight timescales made this impossible. However, telephone interviews with agency representatives provided the opportunity to gain their views and a meeting was arranged on 21st June 2004 to present and discuss the draft findings before the final report was prepared.

2.7 Constraints

Had more time been available for this work the Steering Group and the consultants would have preferred to involve a wider range of consultation methods, with perhaps more focus groups held around the geographical area. The timescales also contributed to difficulties in setting up interviews with appropriate representatives of some of the commissioning agencies. However, overall we are confident that the methods used ensured that voluntary and community groups in the South Tees area and commissioning agencies had the opportunity to become involved in the process and express their views. The methods used have provided a large amount of useful data that is analysed in the next section of this report.

3 Findings

3.1 Sector Profile

There is an extensive, diverse range of voluntary and community organisations in the South Tees area, small and large. They deliver services in development & housing, arts, culture & sport, health & social care, childcare, law, crime, civil rights & information, education & research, and the environment. They serve the whole range of client, age and issue groups.

600 organisations were contacted, using the databases of the three infrastructure organisations as a mailing list. However, it is acknowledged that there are many more organisations across the South Tees area, particularly small community groups whose details are not included on those lists.

Size of organisations

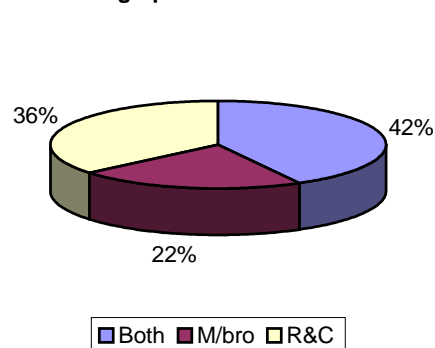
The size of organisations varied enormously from groups with no paid staff to those with large numbers of staff and volunteers. Of those interviewed by telephone, the smallest had 1 member of staff and 12 volunteers, the largest had 36 staff and between 50 and 60 volunteers. Altogether the 14 groups interviewed had a total of 132 staff and 267 volunteers. If those figures were extrapolated to estimate the number of staff and volunteers involved in the South Tees area, it would demonstrate the substantial workforce employed by the sector and the vast contribution in kind, of time, effort and commitment of volunteers, adding to the prosperity and social cohesion of the local communities.

Geographical spread of groups

Of the 100 organisations responding to the questionnaire, their services covered:

Redcar & Cleveland	36%
Middlesbrough	22%
Both	42%
Specific villages/wards	24%
Rural	8%
Urban	32%
Both Rural and Urban	58%

Geographical area covered



Legal status of groups

Registered Charities	68%
Companies Limited by Guarantee	32%
Industrial & Provident Societies	3%
Other	22%

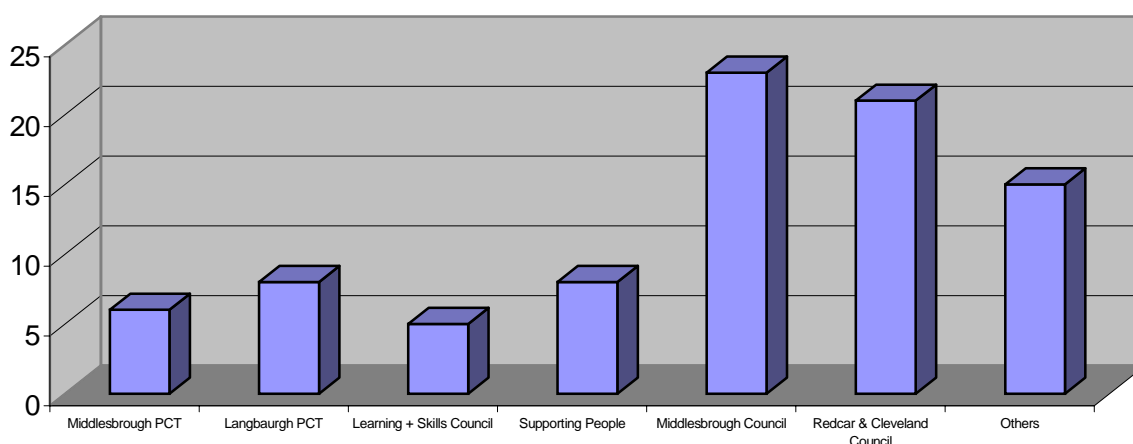
Organisations providing specialist services to black and minority communities

17% of the responding organisations indicated that they provide a specialist service for black and minority ethnic (BME) communities. Of these 17 groups, 14 were registered charities, 5 companies limited by guarantee, 1 housing association and 2 "other". None of these groups considered their service to be primarily rural, 7 focused only on the urban areas and 10 covered both urban and rural. 2 groups focused their activities on specific wards in the South Tees area.

Members of the focus group for black and minority ethnic groups were surprised that as many as 17% of respondents claim to deliver a "specialist" service for BME communities. They recognised that many organisations try to make their services accessible to BME communities, but they thought that this could not be described as providing a "specialist" service.

3.2 Current involvement in Contracting or Service Level Agreements

Many organisations are already involved in the delivery of a range of public services under contract or service level agreement (SLA with statutory organisations. Those who responded to the questionnaire contract with the following agencies:



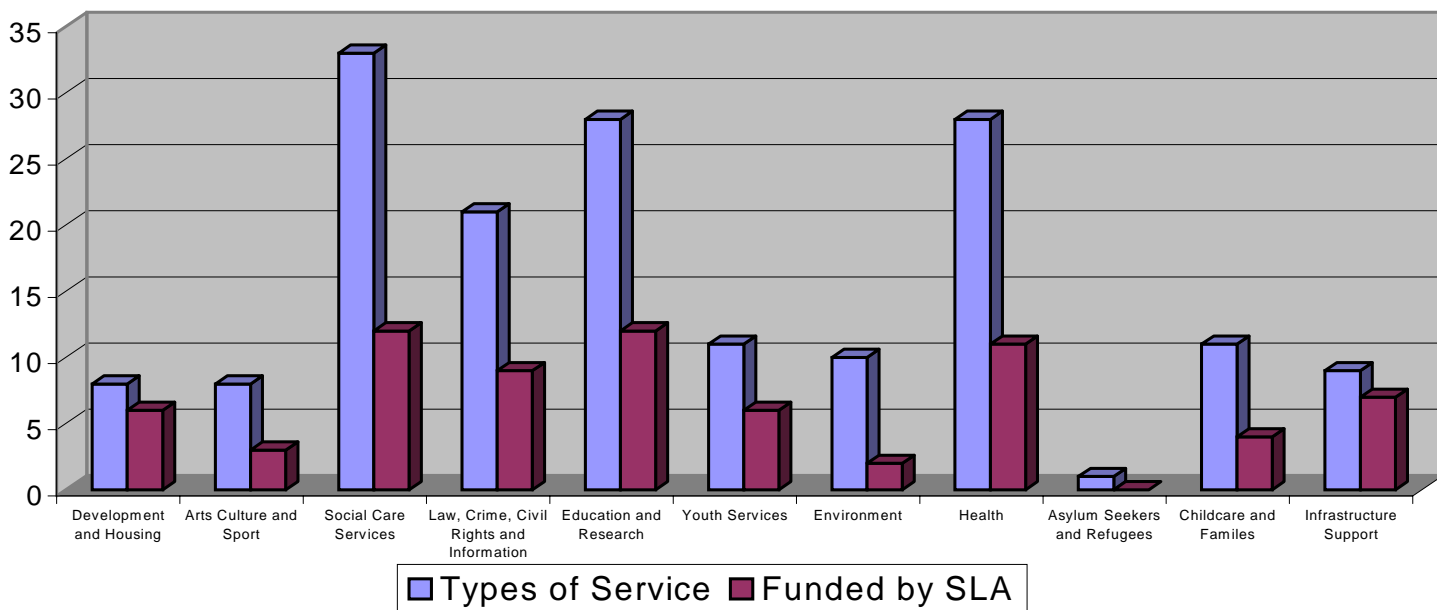
Of the groups responding, 80% would like to increase the service they deliver under contract or SLA, and 35% of those not currently providing a service under contract or SLA would be interested in doing so.

As can be seen from the graph below a huge proportion of the activities delivered by voluntary and community groups is **not** funded by contract or service level agreement. Of the 14 groups interviewed by telephone, 10 received most of their funding from a variety of grant giving sources. Only 4 organisations received the majority of their funding from contracts or SLAs with only 1 of those wholly funded by contract.

There were a wide variety of other sources of funding, such as:

- ❖ New Opportunities Fund
- ❖ Charity Trusts
- ❖ Client Fees
- ❖ Local Fundraising
- ❖ Comic Relief
- ❖ SRB and ESF

The types of services delivered by groups responding to the questionnaire and in particular those services funded through contracts and/or SLAs is as follows:



Issues and Concerns raised by respondents:

- ❖ Voluntary and community organisations think they are seen as a “cheap option”.
- ❖ The sector has “under-sold” itself by providing poorer pay and conditions than similar jobs in the statutory sector.
- ❖ The services delivered by voluntary organisations are often as good as, if not better than those delivered in the statutory sector.
- ❖ The sector often delivers “two services for the price of one” eg. a learning disabilities project (providing day-care, support and training) also providing a recycling service.
- ❖ Districts are often reluctant to fund organisations without an office base in their area, or without mention of the district in the name of the organisation.
- ❖ The impact of cash-flow problems on organisations with very little in reserve.
- ❖ Many organisations do not know how to put together a tender, especially in the timescales often required.

3.3 Process of tendering/procurement policies

Voluntary sector experiences of current processes

- ❖ Many organisations described negative experiences of tendering for services.
- ❖ The statutory sector does not always apply the same rules to itself as to the voluntary sector.
- ❖ Contracts are frequently geared up for private sector businesses, with contract managers being experts on contracts, not on services
- ❖ The process is slow and drawn out, providing no feedback and lacking in transparency.
- ❖ There should be a move away from having a small group of preferred providers.
- ❖ Good practice was highlighted by an organisation that has a contract with the Legal Services Commission. They described the process as “rigorous” but “very even-handed and open”.

Voluntary and community organisations asked that they be treated as professionals in the process and seen as partners working together with statutory organisations for the good of service users and residents of the area.

Openness and transparency

There is a mis-match in opinions as to how open and transparent the processes are. Most of the statutory sector representatives interviewed considered that their procurement processes were open and transparent. However, some voluntary sector interviewees spoke about lack of information and of a “level playing field”.

This point has been taken up by the Audit Commission Inspection Report for Middlesbrough’s Supporting People programme which states, “external service providers consider that they have not received the level of information and guidance they require. Not all know about the provider forum and more would have liked training.”* The report goes on to say “There is an uneven playing field for service providers in terms of access to information, with internal service providers given access denied to external providers”.

Current local processes

One local authority spokesman explained that the Authority was currently reviewing procurement procedures, trying to purchase, where possible, services from local businesses/organisations, whilst still using open tendering principles. However, there was concern about whether those local businesses/organisations were able to deliver the services, and the viability and sustainability of some groups. He also recognised that the process of putting in a tender was not easy for people who were not familiar with the paperwork etc. The most important factor for him was that the service meets the criteria of the tender. He explained, “When the local authority is buying a service, it needs to ask *“what will they deliver, not what do they want to*

* Audit Commission Inspection Report to Middlesbrough Council “Supporting People” March 2004

deliver." If tender specifications do not fit with the aims of that organisation, "they shouldn't bid for the money" However, other statutory interviewees recognised the importance of organisations understanding of the needs of the people they served, and of delivering quality services and support to those people.

Langbaugh PCT representative explained that very few mainstream-funded services go out to tender, as most health service commissioning is from other health organisations. Where the voluntary sector is contracted to deliver services it is usually through clear criteria and processes. However, the PCT does administer what was the Health Action Zone funding, which is focused on health priorities, plus an easy access small grants pot (with minimal paperwork to apply and monitor), that goes into the community to back up health priorities. She hopes the PCT will continue to provide this pump priming money.

It was apparent that within some commissioning organisations, (and even within the same department) there can be a different understanding of the organisation's processes and/or policies, and some confusion about the difference between grants "with conditions attached" and contracts.

Redcar & Cleveland Council took the decision a few years ago to stop grant aid and only contract for services. Most services are now contracted out and voluntary and community involvement is as follows:

- ❖ Residential & day services for people with disabilities – 8% contracted with voluntary & community sector. (for example - Leonard Cheshire and Mencap etc)
- ❖ Children's services – 77% contracted with sector (for example Barnardos, Teesside Special Friends, Specialist Adoption services etc)
- ❖ Adult services (eg daycare, respite, employment projects etc) – 79% contracted with sector
- ❖ Domiciliary care – 25% contracted in sector (for example Anchor Housing)

Their procurement and commissioning strategy is clearly established, governed by Council standing orders. All tenders are advertised in the local and specialist press. Expressions of interest are invited and bids evaluated in an open process involving users and carers. Voluntary and community sector bids are judged alongside all other tenders. The process was described as rigorous, and fairly bureaucratic.

A number of voluntary and community organisations surveyed highlighted Social Services (in both local authorities) as being more in tune with the sector. One interviewee said other agencies/departments should "look at the Social Services model". It was thought that they made more effort to build relationships with the sector,

"The service delivery has been excellent – we couldn't do without them – if they disappeared tomorrow we would be in a real mess"
Telephone interviewee

recognising that this is in their best interests because Social Services are more dependent on the sector to deliver complementary services. A Social Services spokesman backed up this point, adding that, as the Council are now only working with the top 3 bandings of Social Care, cutting out the “moderate need” band, there is now more reliance on the voluntary and community sector to provide preventative, supportive, befriending support.

3.4 Partnerships & joint procurement processes between agencies

The Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) bring people together to facilitate strategic thinking and working in each district. They are not involved in joint procurement processes or the issuing of contracts themselves. Where the LSP agrees funding for projects that involve contracting of services, the appropriate Local Authority acts as lead agent and will adopt its own contracting arrangements.

Both Social Services departments and PCTs spoke about partnership work they had been involved with; stressing that this was now the norm. Most of the work is now carried out under agreements, rather than pooled budgets (which one PCT spokesperson confessed made him feel “twitchy”) Both Social Services departments said that they were “some way down the road” to joint procurement processes, but “not quite there yet”.

3.5 Who identifies community needs and how?

- ❖ A plethora of methods is used for gathering information about the needs of service users and local communities.
- ❖ One statutory sector representative said that he felt aggrieved when he heard people say that the Council doesn’t listen after all the “door knocking” they do. However, the Audit Commission Inspection Report in March 2004 with regard to the Supporting People initiative in Middlesbrough said “The engagement of users is underdeveloped as are the visible means for communicating with users and potential users”.
- ❖ The statutory sector focuses primarily on its statutory requirements.
- ❖ There is a dichotomy between priorities defined from perceived needs influenced by national thinking and local communities speaking up about their needs.
- ❖ The LSP identifies needs through thematic groups, but is specifically concerned with gaps in public services around defined priorities such as crime/health etc., rather than just “any identified needs”.
- ❖ Lack of funding for preventative services.
- ❖ Voluntary sector “representatives” sit on a range of different groups but there is concern about how “representative” this is, and whether there is an adequacy of communication between representatives and the wider sector.

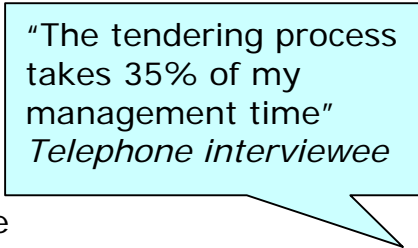
“Our service is in the *nice to have* category, rather than an *essential* service”
Telephone interviewee

- ❖ Although there appeared to be a range of methods used by both the statutory sector and the voluntary and community sectors there was confusion about who does, or should, identify needs and how this should be done.

3.6 Barriers to Voluntary and Community Sector's involvement in public service delivery

The Process

The most significant barrier to involvement in contracts/SLAs highlighted, by voluntary sector respondents, is the process itself. Organisations working with scarce time and resources find it very difficult to engage in the overly bureaucratic, time consuming tendering processes. Respondents highlighted the amount of paperwork, and the complex monitoring and evaluation systems. Respondents highlighted a lack of information, clarity of procedures and access to the right people to discuss the possibility of contracts or SLAs.



"The tendering process takes 35% of my management time"
Telephone interviewee

There was confusion about the difference between contracts, SLAs and grants amongst voluntary organisations, and in some cases departments within local authorities. It was also identified that the two local authorities have different approaches to procurement and commissioning.

Funding

Another major issue is that of core funding and sustainability. Voluntary organisations perceive a lack of understanding in the statutory sector about the difficulties around funding. However, many statutory sector representatives identified the same issues as the voluntary sector representatives. Some of these are:

- ❖ Building sustainability on the basis of sale of specific services. Core funding is needed to ensure the sustainability of local organisations with the capacity to deliver services.
- ❖ The Voluntary Sector should not demand a "level playing field" on one hand, and expect special treatment on the other; they should ensure that they build all costs into their service tenders.
- ❖ The amount of time and effort spent in looking for alternative funding sources, having to "reinvent" services to attract funding for new and innovative projects rather than in supporting tried and tested quality organisations.
- ❖ Time spent "fire-fighting" leaves little time to develop and plan for the future.
- ❖ Organisations find it difficult to recruit and retain skilled staff when only short-term contracts are on offer.
- ❖ Statutory funders' budget constraints have reduced the availability of flexible grant funding for groups, requiring funding to be more focused on specific service delivery.

- ❖ Issues relating to cash-flow; the fact that groups may have limited reserves and that local authorities are “not speedy at paying”.
- ❖ Agencies should open up mainstream funding recognising the value of “soft outcomes”.
- ❖ The voluntary sector can be extremely effective in leveraging other funding streams into the local community.

A statutory sector representative acknowledged that in order to have sustainable organisations in place to deliver SLAs, some level of investment in the sector was necessary, perhaps in the form of grants, at least in the first place, to enable organisations to build a firm foundation on which to contract to deliver services. It was accepted that the change from grants to contracts had affected sustainability.

However, one of the downsides of the statutory sector’s awareness and concern about funding levels in the voluntary sector is that commissioners are more inclined to look to the bigger groups, where “there is less risk, the money is safe and well looked after”.

“Part of the challenge of my job is to minimise risks”
Telephone interviewee

It was also recognised that national funding priorities bringing external funding into the area, whilst welcome in one respect, could sometimes have a detrimental effect on the local voluntary sector. For example, a childcare project found that Charity Trusts were backing away from funding childcare as they assumed that childcare was now well funded by the government through Sure Start.

Capacity

Some respondents saw lack of appropriate infrastructure support as a barrier to their involvement in service delivery (a topic covered in more detail under section 3.8), needing information and practical support on a range of topics to help to build their capacity.

Another issue highlighted was that of responsibility and accountability. Some funders require voluntary organisations to carry indemnity insurance – an additional cost few groups can afford. However, local authorities highlighted their need to minimise risks.

Organisations also pointed out that they often work with clients who fall through the statutory sector net. Examples were given of statutory organisations making referrals to services, but not being prepared to fund them. One service said that over 50% of referrals come from the statutory sector but the service cannot develop further without financial support. They explained that the service has waiting lists, and that they no longer advertise the service, as they cannot deal with the increased demand.

Volunteers

The issue of working with volunteers to deliver contracts/SLAs was raised by a number of respondents. Many spoke of the difficulty in recruiting volunteers. Others said that there were some services where the dependence on volunteers would be risky, that there was a need to be clear about the quality of service required, and that the management of volunteers was a skilled job.

There was concern that volunteers were being used to provide a “cheap” service or that the use of volunteers might “do local people out of a job”.

We need to change the image of the voluntary sector so that we are seen as professionals who use volunteers because it is a good thing to do – not just a cheap option”
Telephone interviewee

However, organisations did not want to underplay the value of volunteering both in the services they provide and in the benefits to the volunteer and to the community.

Assumptions and lack of understanding

There is lack of knowledge and many assumptions on both sides. For example, some voluntary sector agencies have expectations about the resources and money the statutory sector has available. It was explained that in the past there used to be more flexibility around the edges, but that funding has been pared down to the bone, and is allocated against strict criteria. The statutory sector saw it as important to develop relationships to manage those expectations.

There are also assumptions about the ability of anyone to represent a sector which is so large and diverse, ranging from small local community groups to larger branches of national charities.

Communication

Many people spoke about the need to improve channels of communication between the sectors. The voluntary sector indicated that it could contribute more to overall service planning and provision if its representatives were trusted and treated as equals. There was a desire for meaningful partnerships, where the skills of lateral thinking developed in the voluntary sector could be used for the benefit of all sectors.

Many respondents referred to an “us and them” approach, and the fact that the “purchaser/provider” situation underlined the imbalance of power in the relationship. Most thought that the relationship could and should be improved, pointing out, “we are all working to the good of the service users”.

The profile of the voluntary and community sector

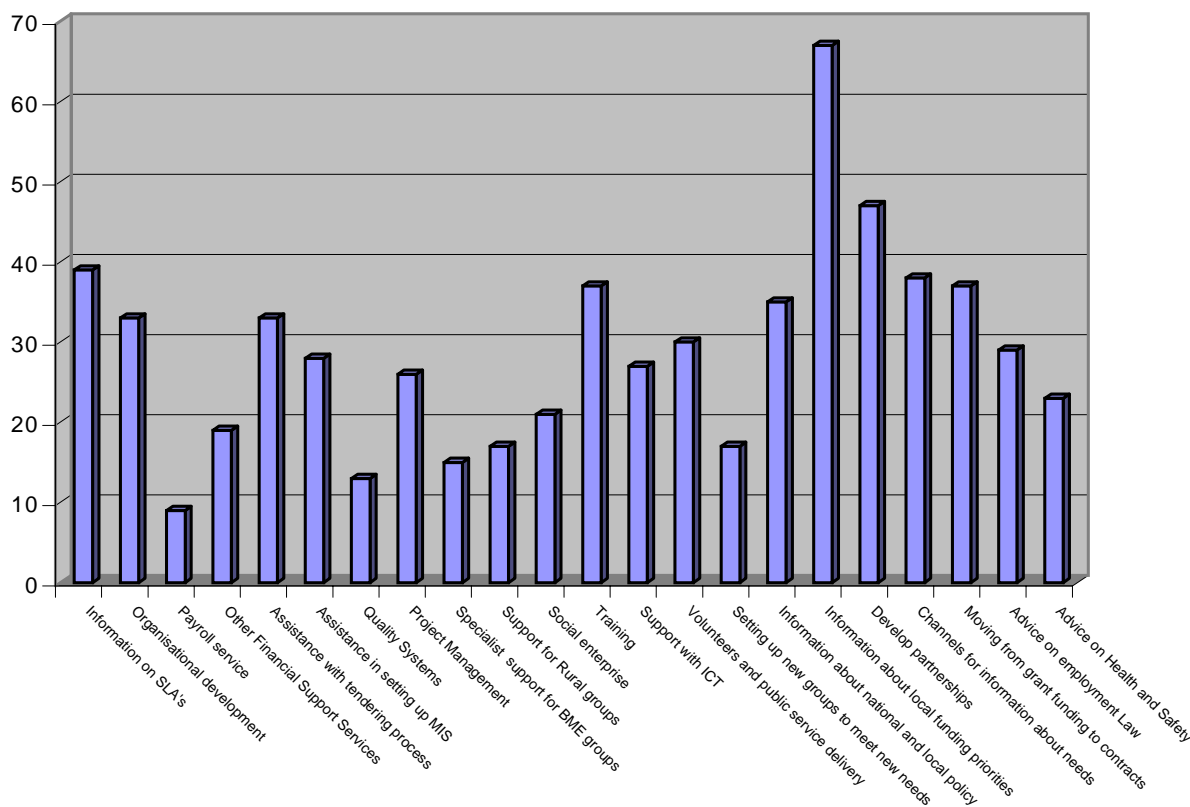
- ❖ A number of statutory sector interviewees thought that the profile of the voluntary and community sector could be raised; that it could be missing a trick if it is so busy delivering services that it fails to promote itself.

- ❖ One respondent thought that the sector was not as proactive as it used to be, that it had “lost its voice in recent years”.
- ❖ Another interviewee said that parts of the sector were too vocal, and there was concern about whether the sector was truly representative of the communities they serve.
- ❖ There was a perception amongst some in the statutory sector that the voluntary sector is unprofessional, but one representative said that the sector had to “be more professional than the professionals to be considered.”
- ❖ There was concern that the sector would lose its unique role, that it would be made to “fit into a box” by the demands of funders, contractors, monitoring and rigid conditions.
- ❖ There was also concern that innovative ideas would be stifled if the sector were forced to change.
- ❖ Some thought that the sector was not professionally managed and that it lacked management/leadership and “business” skills.
- ❖ Others said that the product delivered was sometimes “poor”.
- ❖ It was suggested that there should be fewer, larger organisations.

3.7 Infrastructure needs

Appropriate local infrastructure support was seen to be vital by all the organisations canvassed. Even organisations that were part of a national network, receiving support through that route, could see the value of having a healthy local development agency (LDA).

The chart below shows what types of support organisations responding to the questionnaire needed.



The statistical data was strengthened by the comments added to the questionnaires and in the telephone interviews carried out with voluntary and community organisations and with the statutory sector. Interestingly both sectors gave very similar examples of infrastructure support needed, which could indicate a greater understanding between the two sectors than each would claim.

Funding Advice

It is hardly surprising that issues around funding should be high on everyone's agenda. A point of contact where organisations could get information about different funding opportunities, current priorities, and practical assistance in making applications was seen as important. One organisation said, "We are a small organisation, we can't afford subscriptions to journals etc., and we are afraid that we might miss out on a new fund". A statutory sector respondent acknowledged that organisations usually had to have secure funding in place before they were in a position to tender to deliver services, and access SLA funding. The "funding scene" is becoming more and more complex, making it difficult for all but the very large organisations to keep up to date. LDAs are better placed to carry this information; and make it available for smaller groups.

However, many recognised that the provision of information about funding alone was not the answer. The continual reduction in public spending means that the voluntary and community sector needs to be educated in "business skills" and to explore new ways of approaching sustainability, such as social enterprise (See Section 3.9) A voluntary sector representative suggested that the focus on "business acumen" is an anathema to some in the traditional voluntary and community sector, but as one statutory interviewee put it "The Council is not going to just send cheques out any more"

Advocating for the sector

Organisations thought that the LDAs were in a good position to lobby for the sector, and to put forward the views of the whole sector. It was suggested that a collective voice might help achieve a more structured approach to funding across the Tees Valley, and to negotiate on issues such as realistic core funding, flexible outputs and outcomes etc. Organisations would like the LDAs to put forward the case for more opportunities to experiment with different ways of working and of addressing the needs of users and carers. They could provide a two-way channel of communication with commissioners and planners to help improve relationships and the development of trust and understanding between the sectors.

It was also suggested that a stronger collective voice would help to draw attention to new needs and could act as a central point for the research and dissemination of information about the voluntary sector and local communities.

"There are so many small agencies making a small but valuable contribution, and they need a common voice"
Telephone interviewee

Practical support

Many organisations highlighted the need for good quality accessible information and support on a range of appropriate topics. Employment law and good employment practices, financial management, legal advice and technical support regarding ICT - are all areas where external support is needed.

Organisations also need help in setting up and maintaining good monitoring and evaluation procedures, establishing clear audit trails and generally building skills around management information systems.

One statutory interviewee talked about "Futurebuilders" funding and expressed the concern that there would not be the organisations around with the capability of drawing down the funding.

Futurebuilders is a new £125 million government investment fund which aims to increase the role that the voluntary and community sector plays in the delivery of public services. (website: www.futurebuilders-england.org.uk)

Another had noticed the difference in quality of voluntary organisations around the country in areas such as training, supervision and definition of staff roles. He added that he thought groups should be helped to think about what were suitable activities for volunteers, and what would be more appropriate for paid staff, and that this was a role for infrastructure organisations.

Support for Trustees

There was concern about the range of different expertise available on voluntary Management Committees. One interviewee explained, "You take pot-luck with some organisations – you need to know what's going on behind the scenes". Some were described as "excellent", with people bringing to the role a wealth of experiences from all "walks of life" while others thought their main responsibility was to attend a meeting from time to time.

Training

The need for training for voluntary sector staff and managers was highlighted by respondents from both sectors. One voluntary sector interviewee added, "there's lots of free training around – we just don't have the time to attend". A need for more face-to-face, in-house support was identified with LDAs acting as "management consultants" to the sector.

Development of smaller organisations

More support is needed at the "bottom level", working with the small local groups, particularly in disadvantaged communities. It was suggested that attention is now focused on projects that can demonstrate economic benefits, that could deliver jobs or "progression" rather than taking a wider community development view.

"The smaller groups are the 'social glue' of our communities"
Telephone interviewee

Volunteering

One statutory sector interviewee said that she thought that there was a need for more trained volunteers to be coming forward, as it always seemed to be the same people who were doing all the work. She suggested that an organisation that could raise the profile of, and promote the benefits of volunteering, would be valuable to local organisations but also to local residents. (RCVDA currently has an established volunteer bureau, MVDA does not at present but Middlesbrough does not at present and is currently seeking funding to establish one)

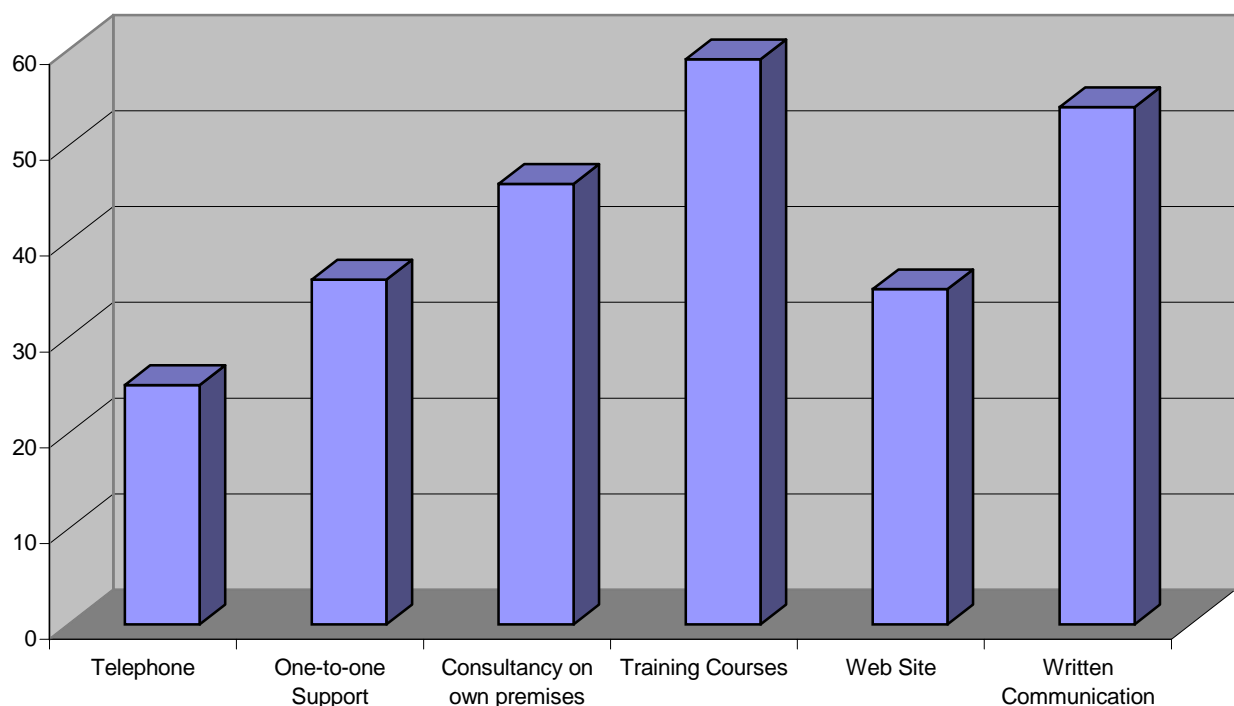
Networking

The need was also identified for opportunities for the voluntary and community sector to come together, to share good practice and develop partnerships and consortia, to deliver public services. There are examples of consortia in other parts of the country, sharing core administrative, management information systems, and financial management functions. As has been demonstrated earlier in this report, the voluntary and community sector is very large and diverse, and the opportunities for people from within the sector to meet and better understand each other would be valued.

LDAs could also facilitate the linking of commissioners and funders with service providers, to share ideas and try to simplify processes for the benefit of all. One of the statutory sector interviewees said that more central government funding should be made available to infrastructure organisations to help to ensure continuity and independence.

How support should be delivered

Voluntary Organisations expressed the following preferences for how they would like to receive support from infrastructure organisations:



It is interesting to note that although organisations highlighted the fact that they can spare little time for training, training is at the top of the list as a preferred method of delivery.

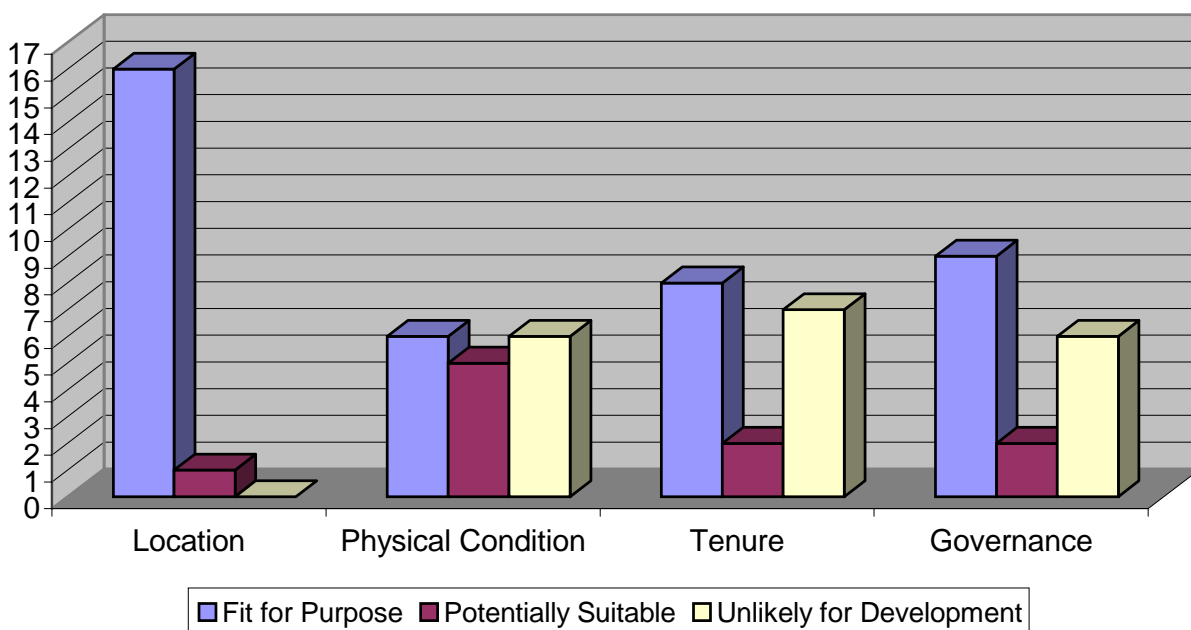
Needs of Rural Voluntary and Community Organisations

Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE), the national membership body of Rural Community Councils, has produced a report on the Status of Funding for Village Halls (2003). This document states that "Village halls play a major part in underpinning the social fabric of rural life". They are community facilities that are often "owned, as well as managed, by the local community. They provide a focus for activities which improve the social cohesion of rural life including activities that are essential to the maintenance and improvements in delivering services that, in more urban areas, are considered to be the function of local authorities and statutory agencies".

There is an assumption in Futurebuilders and the Capacity Building Infrastructure Strategy programmes that responsible community asset management is the key to civil renewal. ACRE emphasises that this can already be demonstrated most clearly in rural areas where village halls take on the essential role of supporting a wide range of public service delivery including "childcare, healthcare, education and services aimed at the young and elderly". However, several studies have shown that the "fit for purpose" and management of village halls is extremely variable, and service procurers would need to have information about the viability of each unit before using them as a service base.

Given the significance of village halls and rural community centres to service delivery in rural areas, this study has included the survey of 17 village halls and rural community centres to assess their suitability for development as physical hubs for the delivery of public services. This work was carried out by Peter Bryan Project Management Services, and builds on, extends and updates, a pilot study commissioned by ACRE in September 2003, as well as work undertaken by North East Rural Community Council Village Halls Advisors.

As can be seen from the graph below, whilst the location is in most cases fit for purpose, the remaining categories show that work would be required to make many centres fit for purpose. The physical condition of six centres, the tenure of seven and the governance of six would need to be addressed before further development could be considered. Four of the halls met all four conditions, and another four would only need relatively minor improvements/changes to bring them up to standard.



In the telephone interviews, very few of the statutory organisations said that they provided services that were targeted exclusively at the needs of rural organisations with the exception of funding to the Rural Community Council. However, many funded services serving both the urban and rural areas of Redcar & Cleveland, and spoke of their efforts to offer equal access to services regardless of where people lived. One Community Regeneration Officer interviewed worked solely in rural areas. She thought that people tended to have the same problems as in urban areas but that they were more spread out, and in many cases more hidden.

The main issues raised by interviewees regarding work in the rural areas were lack of transport, cost and time of travel and lack of access to services. One interviewee spoke about the isolation of some villages and that ideally there would be an outreach centre people could easily get to, but the problem would be where to site it, amid the collection of villages around Skelton. Some organisations have considered whether it is better to provide an outreach centre or to “bus people in” to a central point with more facilities. One interviewee said that transport problems were a “bit of a myth” as he thought if a service is attractive, people would find a way to get to it. (Although he did acknowledge that there were problems with Dial-a-ride which will not cross boundaries).

It was also reported that people were often reluctant to attend meetings in the evenings, especially in winter and that although there is a perception that rural areas are “safer” than urban areas, workers had felt threatened working alone in East Cleveland on occasions.

It was thought that work with the smaller groups was not considered as important as the bigger ones, especially those which could be seen to deliver targets relating to economic regeneration.

“Organisations don't spring up as a finished article over-night”
Telephone interviewee

However, it was reported that organisations in rural areas don't "spring up as a finished article over-night". They need a great deal of support, over time, to nurture people's ideas and help them to develop them into viable projects. They may not lead to jobs; they could link to tourism; but their contribution to community cohesion is just as important.

Needs of black and minority ethnic organisations

There were some differences of opinion about the need for "specialist" services focusing on BME communities. Some respondents thought it important to make sure that generic services are made more accessible, and that in some cases putting an emphasis on separate services could be divisive. However, the representatives of BME communities involved in the focus group and telephone interviews thought that there is a strong argument for specialist services. It was reported that members of BME communities are often more "comfortable", and feel more confident, accessing services which are culturally appropriate. However, they also thought that more work needs to be done to facilitate equal access to "mainstream" services for BME communities. It was acknowledged that efforts were being made to address access issues amongst service providers, but "just sending your staff away on an awareness raising course, is not enough".

People don't know what they could ask for, or how to go about getting help"
Telephone interviewee

Existing specialist BME voluntary and community organisations said that sometimes they felt that they were being "used" in the following ways:

- ❖ To provide cheap interpretation services
- ❖ To provide an opportunity for funders to "put a tick in the box" to show they were funding projects within BME communities (whilst providing very low levels of funding)
- ❖ To provide a "name" on partnership funding bids for statutory, and in some cases other voluntary and community, organisations whilst providing little information or involvement in the projects.

It was agreed that there is a need to build the capacity of BME organisations to enable them to become more involved in the delivery of services under contract or SLA. Interviewees also explained that they would like to be more involved in the process at an earlier stage of needs identification and procurement processes.

It was suggested that infrastructure agencies could be more pro-active in raising awareness of their services among BME communities to explain what the organisation does and what it could offer. Some respondents saw a need for a specialist infrastructure service, in addition to generic support, which could focus on BME voluntary and community groups and their specific capacity building needs.

3.8 Local infrastructure support

It was felt that the issue of infrastructure support in South Tees had not been properly addressed since Cleveland County was re-organised. Prior to the local government review there had been a local development agency in each of the four districts, with the exception of Middlesbrough. Cleveland Council for Voluntary Service, being based in Middlesbrough had provided the local development function for the town through its Volunteer Bureau. After reorganisation, Cleveland CVS became Teesside CVS, and later One Voice Tees Valley (OVTV) but continued to do some voluntary development work in Middlesbrough.

Middlesbrough now has its own independent Voluntary Development Agency in the early stages of development. Some interviewees felt that this lack of local infrastructure in Middlesbrough had held the voluntary sector in the district back from forming a meaningful relationship with the local authority and getting involved with the modernisation agenda. It was felt that there was a need to work together for the benefit of the residents of the district. It was also thought that more work needs to be done to embrace the true purpose of the Local Strategic Partnership and how it communicates with the sector.

Now that there is a voluntary development agency in each district, and the Rural Community Council, focusing on the rural areas of the sub-region, there is a new energy in the sector and new opportunities for them to work together (as evidenced by the collaboration over this research)

There is some confusion about the role of OVTV, and what its future focus should be. A number of interviewees felt that there was a need to clarify how infrastructure organisations linked across the sub-region and how they relate to the regional and national structures. However, it was thought to be important to build on the good practice that exists in the area, using existing networks rather than adding more confusion. Respondents spoke of the need for co-ordination between the different agencies and for strong strategic leadership to ensure that the needs and views of the sector in the area were accurately represented.

The voluntary and community sector is sometimes expected to speak with "one voice", and interviewees spoke of their frustration that statutory organisations expect this. They explain that it would be extremely unlikely that anyone would ever be able to "represent" such a diverse sector totally. They feel that this demonstrates a lack of understanding of the sector and how it works. The role of the infrastructure organisations is to facilitate a voluntary sector view and to assist the flow of information to and from the sector, rather than being seen as the sole representative of the sector.

Communication could be significantly improved if more use was made of ICT. As access to information is always an issue, it was thought that more could be done to improve this by electronic means. One interviewee spoke about the need to think laterally about how organisations could work together across the

South Tees area, bringing together people from the rural areas, and from some of the most deprived urban areas to address a whole range of needs.

The issue of having a strong, independent voluntary sector development infrastructure that is funded in such a way that it is independent and does not need to compete with its own members for funding was emphasised. In order for this to happen, it needs funding to enable it to focus on providing infrastructure support, rather than service delivery. The exception to this would be the development of new projects which are eventually “floated off” to become independent organisations as appropriate.

Funding for infrastructure Support

Views on this varied. The following points were made:

- ❖ If organisations had to pay for infrastructure support, many interviewees thought it would be another barrier they had to face.
- ❖ Having to fundraise in order to pay for help to access further funding would defeat the object.
- ❖ If organisations had to pay for infrastructure services they would need to include this in their budgets when making funding applications. It was concluded that it would be more sensible for the infrastructure organisations to be given appropriate funding direct rather than having to collect charges.
- ❖ Some organisations said that they would be prepared to pay a membership fee, on a sliding scale to reflect the size of the organisation and ability to pay.
- ❖ Of the few organisations that said they would be prepared to pay for services, one said they would do so if the service was specific to their needs and was cheaper than they could access elsewhere.
- ❖ One of the statutory sector interviewees thought that more central government funding should be made available to infrastructure organisations to help to ensure continuity and independence.

The point was strongly made that infrastructure organisations should be funded in such a way that they could offer consistent support, be independent and did have to compete with their members for funding or contracts.

3.9 Social enterprise

Very few statutory sector representatives surveyed had knowledge of, or a great deal of interest in, social enterprises. However, social enterprises are increasingly being recognised as a key and growing part of the economy.

Social Services spokespeople from both local authorities thought that some of their contractors might come under the category of social enterprises but that they did not identify them separately from other contractors.

Local authority Regeneration Officers were supportive of the concept of social enterprise.

Others were not too clear on the definition of what was a social enterprise and what was not. One local authority interviewee said that he had a “jaded view” of not-for-profit organisations – he was slightly wary of them, and had checked the background of Directors carefully. He said that he was sceptical about whether they were really not-for-profit.

However, voluntary and community sector infrastructure organisations were very interested in the social enterprise model and could see that this could be a useful avenue for developing sustainability for many organisations. They thought that public service procurement processes should recognise social enterprise and support the infrastructure development of enterprises to be fit for purpose when bidding/tendering.

“If we had the business support agencies that the private sector has – think what we could do. They just tag social enterprise on to someone else’s job.”
Telephone interviewee

They could see that there was some work to be done with the Charity Commission to clarify the “trading” aspects of their work, and that some organisations might not immediately fit the model, but that the sector should keep an open-mind to the possibilities that could be open to them.

Voluntary sector representatives could give examples of good practice elsewhere in the country, especially in Scotland, where priority had been given to the development of social enterprise infrastructure.

“Social enterprises are businesses with primarily social objectives whose surpluses are principally reinvested for that purpose in the business or in the community, rather than being driven by the need to maximise profit for shareholders and owners.

Social enterprises tackle a wide range of social and environmental issues and operate in all parts of the economy. By using business solutions to achieve public good, the Government believes that social enterprises have a distinct and valuable role to play in helping to create a strong, sustainable and socially inclusive economy.

Social enterprises are diverse. They include local community enterprises, social firms, mutual organisations such as co-operatives and large scale organisations operating nationally or internationally. There is no single legal model for social enterprises. They include companies limited by guarantee, industrial and provident societies and companies limited by shares, some organisations are unincorporated and others are registered charities”.

(Social enterprise – a strategy for success, Department of Trade & Industry 2004)

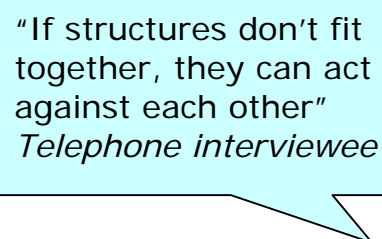
3.10 Relationships

In general, the statutory sector representatives considered that they had a good relationship with voluntary and community organisations. However,

many voluntary and community representatives thought that the relationships fluctuated depending on the personalities involved. They were concerned that contracts should be allocated on merit rather than on who they knew.

All respondents talked about wanting to work together, to improve communication, and have a more co-operative approach. They spoke of a need for education on “both sides”, to reduce bureaucracy. A voluntary sector interviewee spoke about improving communication between the different layers of involvement from neighbourhood “patches”, through to LSP, Tees Valley Partnership, sub-regional groupings, and regional government, with an emphasis on changing the status quo, and making processes more open and accountable.

There was also confusion about how the LSPs linked with regional government and where the Tees Valley Partnership fits, how local views are input, and how accountable the structures are. It was suggested that there is a danger of developing tensions and that if the structures don't fit together, they can act against each other.



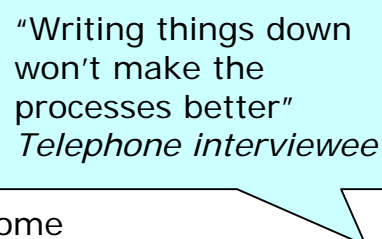
“If structures don't fit together, they can act against each other”
Telephone interviewee

It was agreed by all that there needs to be a “corporate approach” to the sector by both local authorities, and that developing Neighbourhood Renewal Strategies in each district should be a high priority. It was also suggested by voluntary and statutory interviewees that local authorities should have a corporate voluntary sector liaison officer with responsibility for an overview of relationships between the sectors.

Compacts and Protocols

Both local authorities have Compacts with the voluntary sector. This was described as a positive process with lots of consultation, which had improved relationships with the voluntary sector.

Middlesbrough Council has recently established a Select Commission to review relationships with the voluntary sector, including implementing the compact. However, one local authority officer acknowledged that “compacts are the kind of thing that people work on and they get put away on a shelf and everyone carries on and does what they've always done”.



“Writing things down won't make the processes better”
Telephone interviewee

Redcar & Cleveland's representative thought that some of the current work around producing a protocol with the LSP was causing some confusion, with people unsure about the difference between the compact and the protocol.

The point was made that all these things take time and there was a concern that the papers will look good, but they won't be seen as “working documents”.

4 Recommendations

General Recommendations

- ❖ A dialogue should be started between commissioning agencies and the voluntary and community sector to facilitate better understanding of the context of public service delivery and capabilities, and capacity of voluntary and community organisations.
- ❖ This dialogue should include a review of the sector's involvement at all stages of planning, procurement and commissioning of public services. There should be clarity about the role of the sector, and the sphere of influence of such involvement.
- ❖ Both voluntary and community sector agencies and commissioners should ensure that services are costed and contracts/SLAs are negotiated, in a basis of full cost recovery. The focus should be on the quality and appropriateness of service, recognising that the cheapest option does not necessarily represent best value for money.
- ❖ Links should be made between local authority areas to co-ordinate commissioning activity where this can contribute to improved service delivery.
- ❖ Further work should be undertaken to examine the likely impact on local communities of the potential loss of services through withdrawal of funding for services that are not statutory priorities.
- ❖ Culturally appropriate services should be available to black and minority ethnic communities and; if needed, specialist infrastructure support provided to build the capacity of the BME sector to deliver public services.
- ❖ Further work should be undertaken on the feasibility of developing village halls and rural community buildings as hubs for potential social enterprises and public service delivery.

Individual voluntary & community organisations should:

- ❖ Seek to inform themselves about local priorities and commissioning procedures.
- ❖ Engage with commissioners and other voluntary sector providers to share good practice and drive up standards in service delivery.

Voluntary sector infrastructure organisations should:

- ❖ Ensure that they preserve the integrity and independence of their support to voluntary and community organisations. This cannot be achieved if they find themselves competing with their members for contracts.
- ❖ In addition to core capacity-building services, continue to develop specific practical services to increase the sector's involvement in the delivery of public services, including, where appropriate, specialist infrastructure support for BME groups.
- ❖ Take a lead in establishing good practice standards and in developing appropriate quality systems within the sector.

- ❖ Increase voluntary and community capacity to deliver public services by facilitating partnerships between agencies and the development of consortia bids, where appropriate.

Commissioning agencies should:

- ❖ Establish clear processes and procedures, which should be consistently applied throughout their organisation.
- ❖ Openly communicate processes and procedures to the sector, giving as much time as possible for organisations to develop bids individually, or work with other organisations to submit consortia bids.
- ❖ Engage with the sector at the stage of needs analysis to ensure that commissioning is fully informed and to encourage innovation in the design of services and in thinking “outside the box”.

5 Conclusions

This consultation process has been as comprehensive and inclusive as was possible with the time and resources available. A range of voluntary and community organisations gave their views and commissioning agencies were able to describe current processes and to comment on the research findings.

The study has identified some areas of good practice and some areas of concern. A number of recommendations have been made about how relationships can be improved and how future processes can be developed.

The need for improved communication between all concerned is the key issue. There is a great deal to be done in the coming months but there is a level of commitment and expertise in place to resolve the issues, focusing on the outcome of improved public services in the South Tees area.

Appendix A

South Tees Voluntary Sector Public Service Delivery Project

Does your organisation provide a service for your community? Do you contract or receive grant funding? Tell us more.

£100 Prize Draw

Complete and return this questionnaire to enter a prize draw to win £100 for your organisation. The draw will take place at the event to present the findings of this research on the **13th July 2004**

Tell us about your organisation

Contact person	
Name of Organisation	
Address	
Postcode	
Telephone Number	
E mail	

What is your legal status? Please tick all which apply.			
Registered Charity	<input type="checkbox"/>	Company limited by guarantee	<input type="checkbox"/>
Housing Association	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

Which borough do you cover? Please tick all which apply.			
Middlesbrough	<input type="checkbox"/>	Redcar and Cleveland	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you work in specific villages or wards, please give details.			

Please tick one box.	Rural	Urban	Both
Do you consider your service to be:			

Please tick Yes or No	Yes	No
Do you provide a specialist service for Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities?		

How would you describe the main activities of your organisation?
Eg childcare, advice, housing

Do you currently have a contract or service level agreement (SLA) with any of the following? Please tick any which apply			
Middlesbrough Primary Care Trust		Middlesbrough Council	
Langbaugh Primary Care Trust		Redcar and Cleveland Council	
Learning and Skills Council		Other (please specify)	
Supporting People			

Please give details of current service you provide under contract or SLA?

Please tick Yes or No	Yes	No
Would you like to increase or expand your services?		

Please tick Yes or No	Yes	No
If you are not currently providing a service under contract or SLA would you be interested in doing so?		

What would help or hinder you to deliver services?

What (if any) are the barriers to getting involved in service delivery?	
Eg tendering processes, monitoring arrangements.	

What would help you to become involved or expand your involvement in service delivery? Please tick any which apply	
Information on SLAs (What they are and how they work)	
Help with developing your organisation	
Payroll service	
Other Financial Support Services	
Assistance with tendering process	
Assistance in setting up Management Information Systems	
Help with Quality Systems	
Project Management	
Specialist development support for Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups	
Specific help for groups working in rural areas	
Specific help for the development of community based social enterprise	
Training	
Support with ICT	
Volunteers and public service delivery	
Help with setting up a new organisation to meet new needs	
Information about national and local policy	
Information about local funding priorities	
Linking organisations together to develop partnerships to deliver services	
Clear channels for feeding in information about community needs	
Legal services for example:	
Help in moving from grant funding to contracts	
Advice on employment Law	
Advice on Health and Safety	
Any Other Support (please specify)	

Tell us about how you would like this support to be provided? Please tick any which apply	
Telephone	
One-to-one support	
Consultancy on your own premises	
Training courses	
Website	
Written communications eg newsletters	
Other (please specify)	

BME groups: Please give details of any specific support required to increase your involvement in public service delivery.

Rural groups: Please give details of any specific support required to increase your involvement in public service delivery.

What, if any, are the key points you would like made to Statutory Bodies/funders to increase voluntary sector involvement in service delivery?

Thank you very much for your time. If you would like to make further comments please feel free to attach additional sheets. Please return this questionnaire by 28th May 2004 in the stamped addressed envelope provided.

Thank you
South Tees Public Service Delivery Project

Appendix B

Topic guide for telephone interviews with voluntary and community organisations

Name Organisation

Role in organisationDate

1. **Can you start by telling me about your organisation:** For example:
 - Where are you based and which geographical area do you cover? (which local area? Across the region? Nationally?)
 - Do you work in the rural areas of the South Tees?
 - Do you work specifically with Black Minority Ethnic communities?
 - Who do you work with (clients/age group/issues etc)?
 - Tell me about the kind of services/activities you provide?
 - How many staff do you have? (full-time equivalents)
 - Approximately how many volunteers?
2. **Please tell me how you are funded:** For example:
 - Do you have a “contract” or “Service level agreement”? If so, who with?
 - How long have you had this contract/SLA? How secure do you believe your contract is?
 - In the last 2 years, have you lost a contract for a service? If so, please tell us what the service was and why you think the funding was lost?
 - Tell us about your experiences of the tendering process. What was good? What was bad? How do you think the process could be improved?
 - Do you receive grant funding. If so, who with?
 - Approximately what % of your income comes from grants? And what % from contracts or service level agreements? What % from other sources?
 - Have you had any information/support from organisations to obtain funding/access contract/SLA funding such as Tees Valley Rural Community Council, Redcar & Cleveland Voluntary Development Agency or Middlesbrough Voluntary Development Agency.
3. **Please tell us about the needs of the people you work with:** For example:
 - How do you identify the needs of your clients/service users?
 - Tell us about how you pass on information about those needs to funders/contractors?
 - Are there any unmet needs in the communities you work with, that your organisation would like to deliver services to meet? If so, please give us an example.
 - If you work in the rural areas are there any specific needs of your users/ any particular issues in delivering services in those areas?
 - If you work with Black and Minority Ethnic communities, are there any specific needs of your user group/any particular issues in delivering services.
4. **Please tell us about your needs, as an organisation:** For example:
 - Do you think you would be interested in contracting or agreeing a service level agreement to deliver services (if you do not already do so)? If you already do would you like to expand these services?
 - What are the barriers (apart from funding) to your getting involved in contracts/service level agreements?
 - What do you think would help you to develop?

- What services/support would you like to see? How would you like that support to be provided?

5. **How do you think the help and support you receive should be funded:** For example:

- Do you think organisations such as Middlesbrough Voluntary Development Agency, Redcar & Cleveland Voluntary Development Agency and Tees Valley Rural Community Council should be funded to provide you with support/information etc. when you need it?
- Do you think voluntary organisations like yours should pay for the support services you receive? If so, how much? And what methods do you think would be appropriate – a membership fee, payment for individual services, payments on a sliding scale (depending on the size of your organisation/your ability to pay?)

South Tees Public Service Delivery Project

Topic guide for telephone interviews with Current/potential Commissioning Agencies

Name Organisation

Role in organisationDate

Which area do you cover?

1. How would you describe your relationship with the voluntary and community sector?
2. Can you tell me about the current level of activity of the voluntary and community sector in your public service delivery?
3. Can you describe how social enterprise organisations are involved in public service delivery? (if at all)
4. How do you currently identify needs of clients/service users in your area?
5. Is the voluntary and community sector involved in Advocating for service users (ie identifying needs and representing the views of users and carers with regard to their preferences in terms of service delivery?) If so, please give details. If not, are there plans to develop this in the future?
6. Please tell me about your procurement or commissioning strategy and procedures?
7. How do you work in partnership with other agencies?
8. Do you have integrated procurement policies and protocols for working with other agencies?. To what extent are your strategic plans informed by other agencies (including the voluntary sector)
9. How do you promote your strategy and procedures with the voluntary and community sector?
10. Do you see any problems/barriers working with the sector? If so, what is your role in supporting organisations to develop and maintain sustainable services?
11. What is your current role in supporting organisations to develop and maintain sustainable services? Do you currently fund any general support for the voluntary and community sector through your local development agency or umbrella body?
12. In your opinion, what are the infrastructure/support needs of the voluntary sector?
13. Do you fund/provide any specialist services for members of BME communities?
14. Do you fund/provide any specific services targeted at rural areas?
15. Can you describe how you have been involved in developing a “Compact” with the sector?
16. Please describe any examples of good practice, or innovation in the provision of public services by the voluntary and community sector that you have supported?
17. Any other general comments?
18. Is there anyone else in your organisation I should speak to?

Thank you very much for your time.

Appendix C

Total Number for Redcar & Cleveland only: 36
 Total Number for both Redcar & Cleveland and Middlesbrough: 42 (36 + 42 =78)

What is your legal status? Please tick all which apply.			
Registered Charity	56	Company limited by guarantee	24
Housing Association	2	Other	15
		Ind and Prov Soc	0

If you work in specific villages or wards, please give details.
14 in specific wards

Please tick one box.	Rural	Urban	Both
Do you consider your service to be:	9	13	55

Please tick Yes or No	Yes
Do you provide a specialist service for BME communities?	12

Do you currently have a contract or service level agreement (SLA) with any of the following? Please tick any which apply			
Middlesbrough Primary Care Trust	4	Middlesbrough Council	12
Langbaugh Primary Care Trust	8	Redcar and Cleveland Council	21
Learning and Skills Council	3	Other (please specify)	5
Supporting People	7	Legal Services Com	1
		Housing Association	1
		Sure Start	2

	Yes
Would you like to increase or expand your services?	61

	Yes
If you are not currently providing a service under contract or SLA would you be interested in doing so?	27

What would help you to become involved or expand your involvement in service delivery?	
Please tick any which apply	
Information on SLAs (What they are and how they work)	32
Help with developing your organisation	26
Payroll service	9
Other Financial Support Services	17
Assistance with tendering process	24
Assistance in setting up Management Information Systems	19
Help with Quality Systems	9
Project Management	18
Specialist development support for Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups	10
Specific help for groups working in rural areas	17
Specific help for the development of community based social enterprise	14
Training	28
Support with ICT	21
Volunteers and public service delivery	24
Help with setting up a new organisation to meet new needs	12
Information about national and local policy	24
Information about local funding priorities	51
Linking organisations together to develop partnerships to deliver services	34
Clear channels for feeding in information about community needs	24
Legal services for example:	
Help in moving from grant funding to contracts	25
Advice on employment Law	19
Advice on Health and Safety	15
Any Other Support	4

Tell us about how you would like this support to be provided?	
Please tick any which apply	
Telephone	15
One-to-one support	28
Consultancy on your own premises	33
Training courses	43
Website	25
Written communications eg newsletters	40
Other	1

Total Number for Redcar & Cleveland only: **36 (46% of total of 78)**

Total Number for *both* Redcar & Cleveland and M'bro: **42 (54% of total of 78)**

What is your legal status? Please tick all which apply.			
Registered Charity	72%	Company limited by guarantee	31%
Housing Association	2.5%	Other	13%
		Ind and Prov Soc	0%

If you work in specific villages or wards, please give details.
18% in specific wards

Please tick one box.	Rural	Urban	Both
Do you consider your service to be:	11.5%	16.5%	70.5%

Please tick Yes or No	Yes
Do you provide a specialist service for BME communities?	15%

Do you currently have a contract or service level agreement (SLA) with any of the following? Please tick any which apply			
Middlesbrough Primary Care Trust	5%	Middlesbrough Council	15%
Langbaugh Primary Care Trust	10%	Redcar and Cleveland Council	27%
Learning and Skills Council	4%	Other	6%
Supporting People	9%	Legal Services Com	1%
		Housing Association	1%
		Sure Start	2.5%

	Yes
Would you like to increase or expand your services?	78%

	Yes
If you are not currently providing a service under contract or SLA would you be interested in doing so?	35%

What would help you to become involved or expand your involvement in service delivery?	
Please tick any which apply	
Information on SLAs (What they are and how they work)	43.5%
Help with developing your organisation	33%
Payroll service	11.5%
Other Financial Support Services	22%
Assistance with tendering process	31%
Assistance in setting up Management Information Systems	24%
Help with Quality Systems	11.5%
Project Management	23%
Specialist development support for Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups	13%
Specific help for groups working in rural areas	22%
Specific help for the development of community based social enterprise	18%
Training	36%
Support with ICT	27%
Volunteers and public service delivery	31%
Help with setting up a new organisation to meet new needs	15%
Information about national and local policy	31%
Information about local funding priorities	65%
Linking organisations together to develop partnerships to deliver services	43.5%
Clear channels for feeding in information about community needs	31%
Legal services for example:	
Help in moving from grant funding to contracts	32%
Advice on employment Law	24%
Advice on Health and Safety	19%
Any Other Support	5%

Tell us about how you would like this support to be provided?	
Please tick any which apply	
Telephone	19%
One-to-one support	36%
Consultancy on your own premises	42%
Training courses	55%
Website	32%
Written communications eg newsletters	51%
Other	1%

Total Number for Middlesbrough only: 22

Total Number for *both* Redcar & Cleveland and Middlesbrough: 42 (22 + 42 =64)

What is your legal status? Please tick all which apply.			
Registered Charity	46	Company limited by guarantee	25
Housing Association	1	Other	10
		Ind and Prov Soc	3

If you work in specific villages or wards, please give details.
7 in specific wards

Please tick one box.	Rural	Urban	Both
Do you consider your service to be:	2	26	36

Please tick Yes or No	Yes
Do you provide a specialist service for BME communities?	14

Do you currently have a contract or service level agreement (SLA) with any of the following? Please tick any which apply			
Middlesbrough Primary Care Trust	6	Middlesbrough Council	23
Langbaugh Primary Care Trust	6	Redcar and Cleveland Council	10
Learning and Skills Council	4	Other	6
Supporting People	4	Legal Services Com	0
		Housing Association	1
		Sure Start	2

	Yes
Would you like to increase or expand your services?	55

	Yes
If you are not currently providing a service under contract or SLA would you be interested in doing so?	21

What would help you to become involved or expand your involvement in service delivery?	
Please tick any which apply	
Information on SLAs (What they are and how they work)	22
Help with developing your organisation	20
Payroll service	4
Other Financial Support Services	13
Assistance with tendering process	22
Assistance in setting up Management Information Systems	18
Help with Quality Systems	8
Project Management	14
Specialist development support for Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups	13
Specific help for groups working in rural areas	4
Specific help for the development of community based social enterprise	9
Training	21
Support with ICT	19
Volunteers and public service delivery	16
Help with setting up a new organisation to meet new needs	10
Information about national and local policy	23
Information about local funding priorities	43
Linking organisations together to develop partnerships to deliver services	34
Clear channels for feeding in information about community needs	26
Legal services for example:	
Help in moving from grant funding to contracts	26
Advice on employment Law	18
Advice on Health and Safety	14
Any Other Support	4

Tell us about how you would like this support to be provided?	
Please tick any which apply	
Telephone	17
One-to-one support	22
Consultancy on your own premises	31
Training courses	41
Website	23
Written communications eg newsletters	36
Other	3

Total Number for Middlesbrough only: 22 (34% of total of 64)

Total Number for *both* Redcar & Cleveland and M'brough: 42 (66% of total of 64)

What is your legal status? Please tick all which apply.			
Registered Charity	72%	Company limited by guarantee	39%
Housing Association	1.5%	Other	15.5%
		Ind and Prov Soc	4.5%

If you work in specific villages or wards, please give details.
11% in specific wards

Please tick one box.	Rural	Urban	Both
Do you consider your service to be:	3%	41%	56%

Please tick Yes or No	Yes
Do you provide a specialist service for BME communities?	22%

Do you currently have a contract or service level agreement (SLA) with any of the following? Please tick any which apply			
Middlesbrough Primary Care Trust	9%	Middlesbrough Council	36%
Langbaugh Primary Care Trust	9%	Redcar and Cleveland Council	16%
Learning and Skills Council	6%	Other	9%
Supporting People	6%	Legal Services Com	0%
		Housing Association	1.5%
		Sure Start	3%

	Yes
Would you like to increase or expand your services?	86%

	Yes
If you are not currently providing a service under contract or SLA would you be interested in doing so?	33%

What would help you to become involved or expand your involvement in service delivery?	
Please tick any which apply	
Information on SLAs (What they are and how they work)	34%
Help with developing your organisation	31%
Payroll service	6%
Other Financial Support Services	20%
Assistance with tendering process	34%
Assistance in setting up Management Information Systems	28%
Help with Quality Systems	12.5%
Project Management	22%
Specialist development support for Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups	20%
Specific help for groups working in rural areas	6%
Specific help for the development of community based social enterprise	14%
Training	33%
Support with ICT	30%
Volunteers and public service delivery	25%
Help with setting up a new organisation to meet new needs	16%
Information about national and local policy	36%
Information about local funding priorities	67%
Linking organisations together to develop partnerships to deliver services	53%
Clear channels for feeding in information about community needs	41%
Legal services for example:	
Help in moving from grant funding to contracts	41%
Advice on employment Law	28%
Advice on Health and Safety	22%
Any Other Support	6%

Tell us about how you would like this support to be provided?	
Please tick any which apply	
Telephone	26.5%
One-to-one support	34%
Consultancy on your own premises	48%
Training courses	64%
Website	36%
Written communications eg newsletters	56%
Other	5%

Appendix D

Voluntary Organisations
Action for Blind People
Age Concern Teesside
All Saints Church
Arthritis Care
Azaad Youth Project
Barnardos Secos
Campaign for Homosexual Equality
Care for Bereaved Parents
Carers Club
Child Deaf Youth Project
Cleveland Afasic
Cleveland Cultural Association
Cleveland Family Mediation Service
Cleveland Ironstone Mining Museum
Cleveland Scout Council
Cleveland Youth Housing Trust
Coatham House
Community Campus
Community Computer Technicians Ltd
Community Transport (Middlesbrough)
Community Ventures Ltd
CSV
CSV/Retired senior vol programme
Disc Ltd
Dyslexia Support (Middlesbrough)
East Cleveland Youth Housing Trust
Echo Web
Engaging Young People Project
First Step
FROG
Generation Centre
Gisborough Priory Project Ltd
Grangetown Netball
Groundwork South Tees
Guisborough Methodist Church
Guisborough Town Pride
Healthy Living Centre R&C
Hemlington Community Partnership

Voluntary Organisations
Holy Trinity Parochial Church Council
Home start Teesside
Hope Foundation
James Cook University Hosp Voluntary Services
Junction – Young Carers Project
Kemplah Day Centre
Langridge Initiative Centre
Linthorpe Rd Methodist Church
Liverton Village Hall
Loftus Community Forum
Loftus Playgroup
Longlands & Marton Grove Community Council
Make a Change
Middlesbrough & District Temperance Society
Middlesbrough CAB
Micro Café Skelton
ME Support in Cleveland
Middlesbrough Domestic Violence Forum
Middlesbrough Environment City
Middlesbrough Football Club Community Project
Middlesbrough Live at home scheme
Middlesbrough MIND
Middlesbrough Voluntary Development Agency
Moorsholm Memorial Hall
My Sister's Place
New Horizons (Teesside)
Nightstop Teesside
Normanby Community Forum
North Ormesby 2001 Ltd
One Voice Tees Valley
Playgroup Network
Pride in Eston Ward Forum
Prospect Place Sheltered Housing
Redcar Amateur Sports and Boxing Club
Redcar & Cleveland CAB
Redcar & Cleveland Disability Action Group
Redcar & Cleveland MIND
Redcar & Cleveland Women's

Voluntary Organisations
Aid
Redcar & Cleveland Voluntary Development Agency
Regen School North East
Respite Care Project
Saltburn Community and Arts Association
Scope on Teesside
South Bank Tomorrow
South Bank Women's Centre
Special Friends
Tees Valley Counselling Trust
Tees Valley Cruse Bereavement Care
Tees Valley Housing Group
Tees Valley Rural Community Council
Tees Valley Wildlife Trust
Teesside Hospice Care Foundation
Teesside Muscular Dystrophy Campaign
Teesside Positive Action
The Albert Centre
The Circuit (Active Media UK)
The Doorways Project
Tom Leonard Mining Museum
Training for work programme
TVSP East Cleveland ARCS
Unite Ltd
Victim Support & Witness service Teesside
West Middlesbrough Neighbourhood Trust
Winthorpe Rd Community Resource Centre
Wise Group
Women's Support Network
Zetland Dam Resource (St John Ambulance)
Statutory Bodies
Representatives of:
Middlesbrough Council
Redcar & Cleveland Council
Middlesbrough PCT
Langbaugh PCT
Learning and Skills Council

Appendix E

For “think smart think voluntary sector” document (both the full report and executive summary) see www.ogc.gov.uk. Developed by the Office of Government Commerce, Home Office Active Community Unit and Commercial and Procurement Unit.

Appendix F

The Consultants

Gordon Associates UK Ltd. is a company specialising in training, consultancy and research in the voluntary, community and not-for-profit sectors. The Gordon Associates' team working on this project was:

Kath Gordon (Director)

Kath has a degree in Education & Community Studies from Leeds University, is a qualified DipSW Practice Teacher and a Further Education Teacher. She is also an Associate of the Charities Evaluation Service and a PQASSO approved Mentor and Trainer.

Kath has extensive experience of the voluntary and community sector gained over 30 years as a volunteer, a trustee, a project manager, a trainer and as a consultant. She has worked for a number of infrastructure organisations including the North Yorkshire Forum for Voluntary Organisations (a sub-regional development agency), and for a Research and Consultancy Company. This work has included an evaluation of day care services for Mencap, and a baseline survey for Surestart.

Kath set up Gordon Associates in 2003 delivers a range of training and consultancy to the voluntary sector. A recent major project with a colleague working under the trading name of "Learning Works" was a piece of action research for the Cheshire & Warrington Voluntary Sector Learning Forum. A current Learning Works project is with the National Association of Councils for Voluntary Service, identifying quality standards, and piloting an audit process to assess standards for infrastructure organisations.

Chris Mitchell (Associate)

Chris has a degree in Philosophy and Psychology from Nottingham University and a Further Education Teacher's Certificate. Chris divides her time between teaching for North Yorkshire's Community Education service and working as an Associate with Gordon Associates.

Chris is an Information Technology specialist delivering training and consultancy to the voluntary and community sector and to small businesses. She has advised organisations on the management of information and designed bespoke databases and spreadsheets.

She was involved in the above-mentioned Cheshire & Warrington Voluntary Sector Learning Forum project, designing a questionnaire circulated to 3,000 organisations and analysing the results.