

NYSP Thriving Third Sector Steering Group

18 June 2010

Gary Fielding	North Yorkshire County Council
Kay Ritchie	North Yorkshire County Council
Sue Vasey	North Yorkshire Learning Consortium
Nigel Staton	Whitby Disablement Action Group
Kate Tayler	North Yorkshire Forum for Voluntary Organisations
Jacqui Abrahamsen	The North York Moors National Park Authority
Rachel Bowles	Harrogate Borough Council
Gill Cashmore	Selby District Association for Voluntary Service
Bob Curry	North Yorkshire Forum for Voluntary Organisations
Seamus Breen	North Yorkshire County Council
Alex Bird	Age Concern
Peter Pearson	Craven Advocacy

Apologies

Nikki Orrell	Cambridge Centre
Clare Slater	on behalf of Janet Waggott, Chair of Stronger Communities TP
Kevin Holt	Northallerton and District Voluntary Service Association

Introductions

Gary Fielding proposed that he continue to Chair the Group prior to the discussion on an Independent Chair for the Group. This was agreed.

Terms of reference

The Group discussed the reasons why the Group was needed to ensure that the draft terms of reference reflected the core purpose. Reasons given were;

- a) Building trust and respect especially given the current and future funding environment would require all partners to make difficult decisions about they would meet community needs in the future
- b) To ensure there we have the checks and balances in place to ensure fair and transparent processes are in place (a place to appeal decisions?)
- c) Multi-agency problem-solving group to move the NYSP forward
- d) Making the most of the opportunities available
- e) Increasing understanding of what the voluntary and community sector is and what contribution it makes
- f) Links with the Stronger Communities Thematic Partnership
- g) Joint discussion about which public services may move to the VCS
- h) One conversation with clear messages, reached with a shared understanding of what they mean
- i) Clear expectations of each sector
- j) Oversight of Compact principles

It was noted that the Thriving Third Sector Steering Group should ensure that the Compact principles underpinned all discussions and decisions. The Group should also have a role in supporting partners to implement these principles and to provide an forum where partners from both sectors could raise concerns about practices, processes and decisions which didn't follow these principles. Given the overlap in membership, it would not make sense to have two groups carrying out this function and it was agreed that the Compact Steering Group would be notified of this decision and be invited to consider transferring its functions to the Thriving Third Sector Steering Group.

The North Yorkshire County Council/NHS North Yorkshire and York/VCS liaison group functions were also discussed. It was agreed that given the overlap in functions, it would not make sense to continue to run the liaison group and that its functions should transfer to the Thriving Third Sector Steering Group.

The group noted the need to maintain a distinction between the service provision role of the VCS and its community development role. The Big Society is an agenda which reflects the work the VCS in North Yorkshire has been undertaking for many years. Whilst it was not yet clear what support would be available from central government to implement this agenda, community development and empowerment are challenges facing both sectors. It was agreed that collaboration should be explored and that expectations would need to be managed in both sectors and the wider community.

It was recognised by all partners that any investment will require funding to be withdrawn from other services/projects. The rationale for these decisions needs to be clearly linked to strategic priorities and will require leadership from within the VCS to ensure that the sector is recognised as responding to community need, not statutory sector directives.

The value of the intelligence and community based information that the VCS can bring to these discussions was recognised. The leadership role of VCS representatives to ensure messages were heard and negative operating cultures are challenged was viewed as being as important. This would include more efficient means of collaborating within the sector.

The role of joint needs analysis and problem-solving as part of the full commissioning cycle would need further consideration by the group. Both sectors need to challenge assumptions and misunderstandings arising from the language used around the commissioning agenda. The activities which have been initiated through the health and social care Dialogue would need to be taken forward by the Group as part of the functions from the North Yorkshire County Council/NHS North Yorkshire and York/VCS liaison group. The status of a common decision-making tool for contracts and grants was queried. The group noted the need to retain a balanced agenda as only a small proportion of the VCS in North Yorkshire receive support or undertake contracts from the statutory sector.

It was agreed that the draft terms of reference should be revised to reflect the discussion and then be re-circulated for comment.

Actions

- a) KR to contact Compact Steering Group members.**

- b) SB to notify members of the North Yorkshire County Council/NHS North Yorkshire and York/VCS liaison group**
- c) KR to follow up with partners to establish the status of discussions**
- d) KR to revise terms of reference and re-circulate to members before the next meeting.**

Membership

It was agreed that the momentum and shared understanding gained by current group members was valuable and that any revisions to the membership would need to ensure that this was maintained. It was agreed that there should be a core membership of the group. This would be made up from leaders across both sectors. This membership could be supplemented with co-opted members as the group focussed on particular themes. It would also be necessary for the group to consider other forums where the business of the group could be done to ensure the most efficient use of resources.

VCS representation needed to reflect the skills and experience of the individual more than the organisation they were based with. These representatives would need to have credibility within the sector and would have a responsibility to communicate the key messages to the sector. The VCS is responsible for ensuring it is happy with its representation. A key messages document would be produced and agreed to facilitate this after each meeting and a clear forward programme of business to be discussed would be circulated in advance to enable representatives to inform themselves for the discussion.

It was important that the group remained balanced between the sectors, but that exact number limits for the membership should not be set. There should not be more statutory sector members than VCS representatives.

Members noted that although the group had originally been proposed to support achievement against the Local Area Agreement National Indicator 7 (creating and environment for a thriving third sector), this terminology did not have meaning for most partners in both sectors, particularly the VCS. The Government were no longer using this terminology either and it therefore made sense for the group to be renamed. Suggestions were invited from all partners.

It was agreed that an Independent Chair was essential, given the difficult decisions that would need to be taken over the coming years. It was accepted that the most effective process to identify the Chair would be through a search, rather than open recruitment process. All suggestions were welcome and a shortlist would be drawn up and circulated to group members. All were invited to voice any objections to short listed candidates and then the current Chair would approach candidates for a discussion. The post would be unpaid, but travel expenses would be covered.

Given the pace of change in policy and funding arrangements for both sectors, it was agreed that bi-monthly meetings would be most appropriate. Thirsk was the preferred location for meetings.

Actions

- a) GF to coordinate statutory sector core membership**
- b) VCS to coordinate VCS membership**

- c) All to come up with suggestions for a new name for the group
- d) KR to draft a key messages update following the meeting
- e) KR to draft a forward business plan for the group
- f) All to suggest individuals for the Independent Chair role
- g) KR to draw up and circulate short list
- h) All to voice any objections to short listed candidates
- i) GF to discuss role with short listed candidates

Date and agenda of next meeting

The date of the next meeting was set for Thursday 12 August, from 10.30 am – 12.30 pm in Thirsk (venue to be confirmed). The agenda for the meeting would include;

1. Update on the health and social care Dialogue and commissioning
 - a. Seamus Breen and Judith Knapton
 - b. Children and Young People's Services Commissioning plans
 - c. VCS position and view from 'the coal face'
2. Implementing the 'asks' – headlines on statutory sector spend through the VCS
3. Forward plan discussion

Kay Ritchie, Senior Policy and Partnerships Officer – 1 July 2010