

**Inquiry into the Role of the
Voluntary, Community and
Faith Sector (VCFS)
in Council Led Community
Engagement**

Scrutiny Inquiry Report

Introduction and Scope



Introduction

1. In developing our work programme for 2008/2009 we recognised the important role that the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector (VCFS) has to play in Council led community engagement and agreed to undertake an inquiry on this issue.
2. We wanted to explore the context of, and the drivers for, an inquiry on this issue which we recognised as being complex.
3. We knew that the recently published Empowerment White Paper, 'Communities in Control: Real People, Real Power' sets out new expectations and opportunities for Local Government. These include:
 - extending the duty to involve partner organisations
 - streamlining consultation and engagement with partners
 - supporting and promoting volunteering opportunities
 - improving access to information to support involvement
 - creating opportunities to influence – e.g. participatory budgeting, establishing neighbourhood, community or village councils
 - incentives to encourage voting
 - accountability through scrutiny and public hearings
4. In addition in 2009 the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) will replace the current Corporate Performance Assessment for measuring local authority performance and standards. The new CAA includes clear and significant focus on community engagement and specifically the equality aspects of engagement. Current guidance for the new CAA indicates inspectors will explore and expect to see 'how well councils engage with, involve and empower local people including through the use of the third sector'.
5. Moreover, the Leeds Strategic Plan 2008 - 2011 which incorporates the Local Area Agreement includes improvement priorities and targets linked to engagement and empowerment. (see Appendix 1 attached). These measures recognise the important role and contribution that the VCFS plays in the life of the city and its residents. The indicators drawn from the national indicator set are to be measured by the Place Survey. The first survey to provide a baseline from which progress would be measured was carried out in the Autumn of 2008.
6. As Members of Council we all have our own experiences of voluntary, community and faith sector participation and views about its strengths and weaknesses and the potential for improvement. Pressure to engage with the VCFS is

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coming from a variety of sources including the fact that:

- ◇ There is a Central Government agenda promoting greater levels of engagement including the White Paper referred to in paragraph 3.
 - ◇ The Leeds Strategic Plan 2008-2011 includes an improvement priority and a national indicator on increasing the number of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality (see Appendix 1).
 - ◇ The Council has legal obligations that it must meet in respect of equality legislation.
 - ◇ The Council is required to evidence appropriate arrangements for engaging with all communities.
 - ◇ The Council is a signatory to the Compact for Leeds, where community participation and equal partnerships are key areas of focus.
7. In addition we are aware that Area Committees are about to significantly strengthen their community engagement responsibilities, including a brief to agree Area Community Engagement Plans with the goal of delivering better outcomes from local services.
 8. Other partners and partnerships across Leeds have their own drivers and arrangements for engagement and many of these are also in transition.
 9. We know that within the VCFS there are some well established and some newly emerging networks and structures facilitating effective engagement, but as the Council and other partners undergo transition to new structures and systems, so the VCF Sector is required to adapt to meet changing needs as well as respond to changing resourcing opportunities.
 10. Finally, the recent wave of migrant workers from other European Countries which Leeds has experienced has highlighted the need to engage with new communities as they move to the City, to enable them to establish themselves and to ensure that services are aware of and can respond to changing demands. In reality we need to identify routes to engage with all of the communities in Leeds for the same reasons. The VCF Sector may have a key role to play in delivering this goal.
 11. The drivers and context exemplify the challenges and opportunities of the engagement agenda for Leeds at this time. We consider that the scrutiny focus is timely and provides an opportunity to draw together a number of issues whilst spotlighting some specific areas of focus.

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12. We acknowledge the lead role that the Environment and Neighbourhoods Directorate has for Council lead community engagement with the VCFS and the excellent work that is being carried out and developed in this regard.

13. We recognised whilst developing the terms of reference for this inquiry the importance of looking at specific case studies to help us identify the issues and understand the role of the VCFS. Their experiences would help us to identify what was working and where possible improvements could be made.

14. We are very grateful to everyone who gave their time to participate in this inquiry and for their commitment in helping us to understand and review this matter.

15. We would particularly like to thank the Director of Leeds Voice for her help, support and guidance during our deliberations.

The Scope of this Inquiry

16. In the light of our discussions we agreed terms of reference for this inquiry on 21st July 2008.

17. We agreed that the purpose of the inquiry was to make an assessment of and where appropriate, make recommendations on the following areas:

◇ the opportunities and barriers for engagement that exist for the VCFS and wider community as the Council

and others work towards achieving the LAA targets set for Leeds.

◇ what good practice exists in Leeds and beyond that can be used and developed.

◇ what resources and other support is required by the VCFS in order to play a full role in delivering on the engagement and other targets for Leeds.

◇ the changes that may be necessary in the Council's policy, practice and culture to deliver improved engagement outcomes for Leeds.



Voluntary
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Local partnerships making things happen



Conclusions and Recommendations



18. We wanted to identify what is meant by community engagement and the duties of the Council in this regard. We also wanted to understand the way in which the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector is now a fundamental part of Council-led community engagement. We have summarised the background and our subsequent findings under the following headings:

- A. Community Engagement and Duties of the Council
- B. Engagement with the VCFS to support strategic developments
- C. Engagement with the VCFS to support service development and implementation
- D. Engagement with the VCFS to support Area based Initiatives
- E. Funding to VCFS
- F. Key Issues Identified with Representatives from VCFS

A. Community Engagement and Duties of the Council

19. Community engagement was described to us as an umbrella term that includes consultation, involvement, community capacity building and similar activities designed to enhance citizens' roles in local decision making. Community engagement must include people with disabilities, with different ethnic, cultural, faith or religious heritages, all genders, ages and sexualities.

20. Community engagement is essential to improving services, shaping the future of the city and the quality of life of its residents. It helps to unite local people and communities,

builds citizenship and community pride. It helps the council and its partners understand what communities want from our services.

21. We were informed that the Council's Community Engagement Policy and Toolkit was approved by Executive Board in December 2006. The policy sets out the Council's strategic approach to engagement and consultation which consists of four key components:

- a corporate Community Engagement Policy
- a corporate Community Engagement Toolkit
- a council-wide community engagement networking group
- an on-line consultation portal and information database

22. These components are all linked and complement one another and form an overall approach towards joined up community engagement. The full document was made available to us.

23. We learned that the Council aims to achieve Level 4 of the Equality Standard for Local Government by December 2008.

24. We understand that the Equality Standard is an evidence based assessment framework setting out expectations and benchmarks under a number of key headings: Leadership, Impact Assessments,

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Monitoring, Consultation,
Employment and Procurement.

25. The Standard overlaps with and sets challenges for the engagement agenda. The Council will need to demonstrate that it is monitoring and can evidence who it engages with, to ensure that all appropriate stakeholder communities are involved. Equality is a key element of the new CAA framework. The inspection will consider how well public services know, and are meeting, the needs of the diverse groups within communities; and focus on whether groups and individuals that are vulnerable to discrimination and prejudice receive equitable outcomes.

26. We were advised that the Council's Equality Team is developing a Corporate Equality Assembly and Equality Hubs. These will provide opportunities to engage with a city-wide sounding board for some equality strands. This will not be an appropriate engagement route in all cases and other ways of engaging with diverse and minority communities may need to be explored in specific geographical and thematic areas. We acknowledge that using voluntary, community and faith organisations as facilitators and routes to some communities may be appropriate but will need encouraging and supporting where services have no experience or links.

27. Relationships between the Council and VCFS are embodied in the

Compact for Leeds. Launched in 2003, this document is a voluntary agreement to improve relations between public and voluntary, community and faith sector partners in Leeds. It sets out a framework to facilitate better working and is built around the four key principles of:

- Promoting equal partnerships
- Encouraging effective use of resources
- Recognising and valuing volunteering and community activity
- Improving the quality of communication, consultation and information exchange

28. The Council actively supports work with the sector to review and update the codes of conduct contained within the agreement.

29. Within the VCF Sector in Leeds we were surprised to learn that there are over 3,000 organisations and a large number of these support and facilitate community engagement both formally and informally. A number of organisations provide a representative role at a city-wide level engaging in work to support the development of city-wide plans and policies, whilst others have a specific service, community of interest or neighbourhood focus.

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B. Engagement with the VCFS to Support Strategic Developments

30. We were advised that the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act sets out a stronger role for local government in leading its communities and bringing services together to address challenges working closely with their partners.
31. We acknowledged that the VCFS is a key partner in this 'place shaping' role helping the Council to answer the question 'what are the biggest challenges facing the city and what are we going to do about them?'
32. The VCFS represents the views of service users and residents throughout the city in local forums and bodies at strategic and key decision making levels in the city. Over 100 VCF Sector representatives participate in the partnership and strategy groups of the Leeds Initiative, the city's local strategic partnership. The development of the Sustainable Community Strategy, the Vision for Leeds, and Leeds Strategic Plan 2008-11 including the development of the Local Area Agreement (LAA) could not have been achieved without a robust VCFS framework that speaks for and represents citizens and service users.
33. We know that the partnerships, both with and within the sector, have been strengthened through the work to develop the current LAA supported by Leeds Voice. The process enabled the VCFS to engage equally and consistently in the design process resulting in the identification of the sector's key contributions for each of the new priorities and indicators.
34. We were informed that the Narrowing the Gap Board of the Leeds Initiative has recognized the importance to the city of maintaining a vibrant and thriving VCFS and has recently established a new partnership group to support the sector, the VCFS Partnership Group. The group will be a vehicle for developing and securing a consensus approach to policies, strategies and action which will enable the VCF sector to contribute to the delivery of the Leeds Strategic Plan 2008 -11.
35. The Group will have a focus on the service improvement priorities of community engagement, active citizenship and a thriving VCF Sector.
36. We referred to this during our discussions with representatives from the VCFS including Leeds Voice and thought it useful to attach to our report the terms of reference and the outline work programme for this Strategy Group as Appendix 1.

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C. Engagement with the VCFS to Support Service Development and Implementation

37. There is considerable engagement activity led by Council services taking place on a daily basis. Engagement can be with individual citizens or with and through voluntary, community and faith sector groups to extend the reach and effectiveness of this activity. It would not be possible to detail all the engagement activity involving the VCFS, therefore a sample of these activities has been provided at Appendix 2 using examples provided by Children's Services and Adult Social Services.

38. Children's Services has worked with VCFS organisations to develop more creative ways in which to engage with children and young people from different backgrounds and communities across the city. The examples provided by Adult Social Services demonstrate engagement activity from consultation with service users, involvement in strategy and service development and redesign, through to involvement in decision-making to commission services.

D. Engagement with the VCFS to Support Area Based Initiatives

39. There are a range of engagement activities described in Appendix 3 that have been employed to support the work of the Area Committees in South Leeds. These provide an indication of the VCFS involvement

in area-based community engagement activities. These include the VCFS brokering community engagement and influencing service delivery at the local level; undertaking commissioned community engagement activity; and contributing to Area Delivery Plan priorities and outcomes.

40. The review of Area Working considered by Executive Board in July 2008 set out the need for Area Community Engagement Plans that will set out the planned engagement activity for an area. This will include the production of a community profile; a calendar of planned communication and engagement activity; and an annual report. This annual report will provide the Area Committees with an overview of the engagement activity along with key outcomes delivered in their wards over the last year and the forward plan for the year ahead. This planned approach provides an opportunity to consider and plan for the involvement of VCFS organizations in the delivery of this activity.

E. Funding to VCFS

41. We received details of the total payments made by the Council to the VCFS in 2007/2008 amounting to £114m.

42. We were provided with detailed audited accounts for this period showing grants and other financial

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assistance provided to the VCFS in Leeds in 2007/2008.

43. A summary of this information is set out in Appendix 4 attached.

F. Key Issues Identified with Representatives from VCFS

44. We heard from and met with representatives from Leeds Voice, St Luke's Cares and South Leeds Health for All.
45. Members of our working group visited SLATE (South Leeds Alternative Trading Enterprise), Hope of Africa, the Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha temple and St Luke's Cares Smoothie Bar.
46. We recognised the valuable work being done and the potential opportunities and challenges of working with the VCFS organisations to enhance community engagement.
47. We identified from our discussions with the VCFS a number of common issues and concerns.
48. We applaud the fact that the Council has established a range of policies and procedures that require the Council to engage with the VCF Sector including:
- ◇ Community Engagement Policy (see paragraph 21)
 - ◇ Community Engagement Toolkit (see paragraph 21)
 - ◇ Aspiring to achieve Level 4 of the Equality Standard for Local Government (see paragraph 24)

- ◇ Developed the VCFS Partnership Group (see paragraph 34)
- ◇ Established a community engagement sub-group of the above which includes representatives of Leeds Voice, Leeds City Council and VCFS organisations.
- ◇ Is a signatory to the Compact for Leeds (see paragraph 27)

49. We were concerned that whilst some Council services are already fully engaged and have recognised the value of involving VCFS at an initial or early stage in reviewing services (example Children's Services Commissioning Board), there are other areas, where the VCFS perceive that they have not been involved, or where the degree of involvement and communication were minimal. Whilst we recognise that there may be good reason for this we thought it appropriate for a review to be undertaken.

Recommendation 1:

That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods co-ordinates work across the Council to undertake a Compact for Leeds awareness and compliance self assessment. This will enable the Board to assess the extent to which Council services engage with and recognise the value of VCFS in developing and improving their plans and policies in order to deliver a customer based service.

50. We were repeatedly told during our

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discussions with the VCFS of the significant funding pressures they are suffering as a consequence of the end of the Single Regeneration Budget and the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund and the budget constraints being faced by the Council. Funding has been withdrawn from many organisations including the Sikh Temple as new commissioning requirements are established. We acknowledged that VCFS schemes are highly vulnerable to financial variations. Sustainability of VCFS organisations and projects are essential if they are to be successful.

51. We noted from the funding and grant arrangements summarised in Appendix 4 that many schemes are only funded for a 12 month period which prevents or reduces incentives to develop medium and long term strategies and initiatives. By the time a project is established and staff recruited and trained, in reality there are only six months useful output from a project.

52. It was stressed to us by the VCFS that there has been a marked move in recent years away from a 'grants culture' to a service commissioning and outcomes-based system, with local VCFS organisations recognised and acknowledged as vital partners in a wide range of complex and comprehensive service provision, including the planning and implementation of those services demands stability of funding.

53. We feel that if the Council is genuine about ensuring that the VCFS is business ready for commissioning activities then it

must try and offer greater financial stability by guaranteeing funding for longer periods.

54. It is clear from what we were told by representatives from the VCF Sector that there also needs to be more work undertaken to ensure that project sponsors are supported to develop planned exit strategies and that this should be introduced at an early stage in circumstances where the Council decides to cease funding a particular project to avoid lack of continuity of service, uncertainty for the organisation and project concerned and the potential for bad publicity for the Council when funding ceases.

55. We believe that there is strong leadership within the sector which is supported by the Council and that there is greater co-ordination and collaboration amongst all parties concerned. However, the size, diversity and complexity of the VCFS in Leeds means that sometimes it is difficult for service managers to identify which groups are best placed to support and deliver engagement activity. The potential exists to improve and further strengthen leadership and collaborative arrangements within the sector to improve the service offered to the Council and its partners and for Council service managers to use the skills and knowledge of the sector to greater effect.

56. We were concerned that because of the complexity of this matter

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there was likely to be an element of overlap in services provided by VCFS, if not direct duplication. Some organisations may be competing against one another as a result. Clearly competition can be healthy or destructive but we have not been able from the small sample of VCFS organisations we met to take an informed view on this except to say that further research should be undertaken to support improvements in this area.

establish whether the Council provides a consistent and coherent approach to engaging with the VCF Sector and whether resourcing and monitoring of contracts / funding agreements are effectively communicated and that resourcing opportunities are disseminated properly, fairly and easily understood. The response from the VCF Sector on this complex issue was as expected mixed.

Recommendation 2:

That through the VCFS Partnership Group the Director of Resources and the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods

(a) reviews the period of funding attached to grant awards to VCFS organisations with a view to phasing in 3 – 5 year awards from April 2010 for appropriate schemes.

(b) identifies and provides appropriate support to enable VCFS organisations to develop planned exit strategies to better manage expiry of funding awards

(c) strengthens leadership and collaborative arrangements within the Council and in the VCFS to minimise the potential for the duplication of commissioned activity in order to maximise the effectiveness and efficiency of the services being provided by April 2010.

58. We were informed that advice is available through the Council's and Leeds Initiative's websites on funding and commissioning issues.

59. However, it was generally felt by representatives from the VCFS and accepted by Council officers that more could be done to simplify the funding process and provide better quality advice and support to local VCFS organisations.

60. We were concerned that some smaller organisations would not have the capacity to compete under the commissioning process. We were advised by officers that the level of information required from organisations would be appropriate for the level of funding and risk involved.

61. We noted how some VCFS organisations are working together as a federation of voluntary organisations as in Hull which has brought economic advantages and empowerment.

62. We know that the VCF Sector has been responding to a number of

57. In our discussions we wanted to

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changes in the external environment. This includes the ending of a number of external discretionary grant programmes; a shift in the funding priorities of other programmes; and public sector partners moving to a commissioning approach which can require a changed approach from those seeking resources. The Council and its partners are also subject to changing central government expectations and periodically review and revise their priorities and arrangements to deliver on these. This can create both challenges in terms of managing change but also new opportunities for agencies to work together. To enable the meaningful involvement of the VCFS in delivering community engagement during such periods of change, we feel that greater emphasis and priority should be placed on providing quality training and support to the VCF Sector.

63. We were concerned to ensure that information and support is provided to grass roots community groups. They can provide a real opportunity for communities to come together to meet their local neighbourhood needs and for a different range of voices to be heard. These groups are often dependent on voluntary activity and the leadership abilities and efforts of a small number or single key individual within the community and for this reason can face difficulties in sustaining activity over the longer term. We also recognised that the strength and importance of community groups is not in delivering services to their communities but in articulating effective and coherent responses to change and opportunity so that each locality continues to thrive (rather than recoil as events appear to threaten and even overwhelm them). This contrasts

with voluntary organisations which tend to be agencies tooled up to deal with particular areas of interest and need.

Recommendation 3:

That through the VCFS Partnership Group the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods identifies

(a) what further improvements could be made to simplify the current procedures and processes (including funding) and how the Council in conjunction with the VCF sector could better provide quality support including training and advice to local voluntary organisations.

(b) the impacts of current commissioning strategies on smaller organisations and identifies what safeguards could be developed to prevent losing the valuable services of these smaller organisations that provide a valuable service to the local community.

(c) the opportunities to develop federated or collaborative working across VCFS infrastructure organisations to extend support to a wider range of organisations within the sector and benefit both their organisation and their service user and maximise the impact of public and other resources.

(d) the opportunities to develop targeted information and support to community organisations to support their development and enable them to address local issues.

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64. We referred to the “Compact for Leeds” during our discussions with the VCFS.
65. This "Compact" is an agreement between the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector and the public sector to improve their relationship for mutual advantage. The Compact for Leeds, was launched by the Leeds Initiative in September 2003, and was the starting point for transforming the relationships between the statutory and voluntary sectors. This work has been driven forward by the Compact Implementation Group. It has provided a useful framework document to outline the respective roles of the Council and the VCFS and the expectations of each relative to the other. It has been a very effective tool to support and improve the relationship between the Council and the VCFS.
66. A view was expressed by the VCFS that the “Compact” could be used by all partner organisations to undertake self-assessment awareness and compliance with the Compact Codes of Conduct.
67. We were advised that the Compact Codes needed to be reviewed in the light of changes made to the structure and operation of VCFS.

Recommendation 4:

That through the VCFS Partnership Group the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods

- (a) encourages all signatory partner organisations to undertake a self assessment to monitor awareness and compliance with the “Compact” Codes of Conduct and that this be monitored by the Council from January 2010.**
- (b) reviews the effectiveness of the “Compact” Codes of Practice in 2009/2010 in the light of changes in the environment and infrastructure, and that the outcome be reported to this Scrutiny Board.**

68. Working with the VCF Sector to promote and deliver engagement activity is well established in Leeds and the sector has a real role to play. Arrangements are in place that involve the VCFS at a city-wide level with representation through Leeds Voice on the Leeds Initiative, the local strategic partnership; at a service level there is a wide range of partnerships with service specific expertise; and at a locality level, each of the area committees have varying mechanisms for engaging with the sector to reflect the needs of their communities and the skills of the local VCFS groups.

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69. We are aware that Area Committees are about to significantly strengthen their community engagement responsibilities, including a brief to agree Area Community Engagement Plans with the goal of delivering better outcomes from local services.

70. The role which Area Committees could play in improving and enhancing links with local VCFS organisations by promoting initiatives such as the Extended Schools programme for example, is one that the VCF Sector wants to develop. We feel this should be encouraged.

Recommendation 5:

That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods identifies opportunities and initiatives that will further improve and enhance links with local VCFS organisations to support the delivery of the Area Committee's work in localities and that they be reported to this Scrutiny Board.

71. We acknowledged that a key benefit of working with the VCFS to improve and enhance community consultation and engagement is that VCFS groups are generally community based and have direct contact with large numbers of local people, some of which focus on those groups who can be 'hard to reach'. The sector can offer a means for improving the targeting of engagement and extending its reach. However, we understand that further work is required in some thematic and

geographical areas to map the available resource and expertise to maximize its potential impact.

Recommendation 6:

That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods supports the VCFS Partnership Group to map the available resource and expertise within the sector to improve the targeting and engagement of "hard to reach" groups.

72. A number of VCF Sector organisations expressed a view that they thought there was a gap in youth service provision for 8 to 13 year olds and that this should be investigated through consultation with VCFS groups to identify local needs and offer solutions. It was reported that this was a discretionary service and that the Children's Services Scrutiny Board had undertaken an inquiry on this service for 8 to 13 year olds in 2007/08 which had made a number of recommendations. The final report and recommendations was published in May 2008.

73. We noted that Talking Point, the Council's consultation database, is a tool to help teams across the council share information on consultations currently underway, as well as recording the results of past consultations.

74. We feel that Talking Point needs more publicity and promotion

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amongst Council Staff, Elected Members and the wider community.

Recommendation 7:

(a) That the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development arranges a seminar in 2009/2010 for members on the aims, benefits and use of Talking Point.

(b) That the Chief Officer, Executive Support considers how best to promote this service amongst officers and the wider community.

Recommendation 8

That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods develops a time-tabled action plan to implement any changes identified in 2009/10 and submit these to Scrutiny Board for consideration.

Monitoring Arrangements



Monitoring arrangements

- Standard arrangements for monitoring the outcome of the Board's recommendations will apply.
- The decision-makers to whom the recommendations are addressed will be asked to submit a formal response to the recommendations, including an action plan and timetable, normally within two months.
- Following this the Scrutiny Board will determine any further detailed monitoring, over and above the standard quarterly monitoring of all scrutiny recommendations.

Evidence



Reports and Publications Submitted

- Minutes of Scrutiny Board (City & Regional Partnerships) meeting held on 21st July 2008
- Terms of Reference for the Board's Inquiry dated 21st July 2008
- Report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development with the report of the Chief Regeneration Officer which focused on how the VCFS supports Council engagement activity considered on 25th September 2008
- Minutes of Scrutiny Board (City & Regional Partnerships) meeting held on 25th September 2008
- Fact sheets from South Leeds Health For All and St Luke's Cares circulated to the Board on 23rd October 2008
- Links to the internet circulated to Board Members providing access to additional background documents on
 - ◇ The Ripple Effect : The Economic Contribution of the VCFS in Leeds
 - ◇ A Strategic Review of Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector Representation
 - ◇ The Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector Approach to Reducing Worklessness
 - ◇ Smoothie Bar Business Plan
- Pie chart showing total payments to VCFS 2007/08
- Pie chart providing breakdown by type of funding to VCFS 2007/08
- Headline analysis of VCFS payments 2007/08
- Minutes of Scrutiny Board (City & Regional Partnerships) meeting held on 23rd October 2008
- Notes of VCFS Partnership Group meetings held on 11th December 2008
- Notes of meetings held with the organisations Hope for Africa (16th February 2009) and St Luke's Urban Bar (2nd March 2009)

Witnesses Heard

- Sue Wynne, Head of Regeneration Policy & Planning, Environment & Neighbourhoods Directorate
- Keith Lander, Deputy Area Manager, South East Team. Environment & Neighbourhoods Directorate
- Matthew Lund, Corporate Consultation Manager, Chief Executive's Directorate
- Ms Lisa Wright, Director, Leeds Voice
- Ms Louise Megson, Chief Executive, St Luke's Cares
- Ms Judith Hickman, Operations Manager, South Leeds Health for All
- Mr Richard Lancaster, Priority Neighbourhood Worker, South Leeds Health for All

Dates of Scrutiny

- 23rd June 2008 Scrutiny Board (City & Regional Partnerships) Meeting
- 21st July 2008 Scrutiny Board (City & Regional Partnerships) Meeting
- 25th September 2008 Pre Meeting Scrutiny Board (City & Regional Partnerships) Talking Point Presentation
- 25th September 2008 Scrutiny Board (City & Regional Partnerships) Meeting
- 23rd October 2008 Scrutiny Board (City & Regional Partnerships) Meeting
- 11th December 2008 Voluntary, Community & Faith Sector Working Group Visit to the Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha (Leeds) Temple and South Leeds Alternative Trading Enterprise (SLATE)
- 16th February 2009 Voluntary, Community & Faith Sector Working Group Visit to the Hope of Africa project
- 2nd March 2009 Voluntary, Community & Faith Sector Working Group St Luke's Smoothie Bar



VCFS Partnership Group

Terms of Reference

1. Role and purpose

The VCFS High Level Partnership Group will be a vehicle for developing and securing a consensus approach to policies, strategies and action which will enable the VCF Sector to contribute to the delivery of the Leeds Strategic Plan 2008-11. The Group will have a focus on the following service improvement priorities: -

Service Improvement Priority	Measure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable a robust and vibrant voluntary , community and faith sector to facilitate community activity and directly deliver services • An increased number of local people engaged in activities to meet community needs and improve the quality of life for local residents • An increase in the number of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NI 7 Environment for a thriving third sector • NI 6 Increased number of people participating in regular volunteering • NI 4 Percentage of people who can feel they can influence decisions in their locality

2. Responsibilities

Developing collaborative approaches to support and work with the VCFS organisations in the City to enable the sector play a full and equal part in the delivery and review of the Leeds Strategic Plan 2008-11

Improving the knowledge and understanding of the VCF Sector and the interface between partner organisations and the sector

Sponsoring debate and discussion with all stakeholders on policy, operational and resourcing issues that impact on the viability of the VCF Sector

Contributing to and influencing the service planning and commissioning frameworks of the Leeds Initiative strategy and partnership groups and partner organisations

To work collaboratively on the development of specific policies, strategies and programmes to enable VCF organisations to contribute to identifying service needs,



shaping interventions and participating in service delivery and decision-making processes where appropriate

To monitor progress and evaluate the impact of interventions, capture learning and disseminate good practice across service providers and the VCF Sector

Responding on behalf of the Leeds Initiative to central and regional Government for on third sector policy initiatives

3. Frequency of meetings

Meetings will be held bi-monthly. A schedule of meetings for the year will be drawn up and circulated.

4. Membership:-

- Sandie Keene - Director of Adult Social Services (Chair)
- Ian Cameron - Director of Public Health
- Rosemary Archer - Director of Children's Services
- Mark Milsom - Chief Superintendent, West Yorkshire Police
- Richard Norton - VCFS Strategy Group
- Richard Jackson - VCFS Infrastructure Consortium
- Kathy Kudelnitzky - Leeds Initiative
- Lelir Yeung - Head of Equality
- Sue Wynne - Head of Policy & Planning - Regeneration
- Lisa Wright - Director of Leeds Voice
- Jane Stageman - Senior Policy Manager/ Leeds Area Agreement

Responsibilities of individual representatives are:-

- To attend meetings regularly on an agreed basis
- To consult with relevant staff / networks to inform their contribution to meetings
- To report back through the relevant management structures in their respective organisations
- To share information with relevant staff and networks

5. Linkages

The Group will provide oversight and strategic direction to the VCFS Task Group to enable the delivery of its work programme.

The Group will report periodically to the Narrowing the Gap Board on its achievements and forward work programme

Appendix 1



The Group will engage with partnership and strategy groups of the Leeds Initiative as appropriate and in particular those with responsibility for commissioning services.

The Group will receive information and intelligence reports from the City Council's VCFS Resources Group to inform future strategy to support the delivery of Leeds Strategic Plan Outcomes

6. Work programme priorities

Resourcing

- Establish a shared understanding of commissioning frameworks and approaches employed by partners including the use of terminology relating to contracts, grants and service level agreements.
- Support to increase the capacity of the sector to respond to commissioning opportunities
- Identify new resourcing opportunities to support VCF Sector activity to deliver active citizenship, community empowerment and public services to communities
- Identify opportunities for support other than financial e.g. joint working.
- Compact code of practice - review effectiveness and review in light of changes in environment / infrastructure

Active Citizenship

- Developing a directory of civic participation opportunities, training and support
- Supporting the recruitment and retention of volunteers
- Sustainable asset transfer and delivery of community benefits - development of policy / option appraisal and risk assessment
- Compact code of practice - review effectiveness and requirement to update in light of changes in environment / infrastructure

Community Empowerment

- Map existing key community engagement mechanisms and activities that will contribute to the achievement of NI4
- Identify and disseminate best practice
- Identify new opportunities / challenges to be addressed to contribute to the achievement of NI4
- Identify appropriate shared partnership engagement mechanisms
- Build a shared understanding of residents' perceptions of public service delivery

To be reviewed periodically - 6 monthly intervals minimum.

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VCFS ENGAGEMENT IN SERVICE BASED ACTIVITY

Leeds City Council's Children's Services and Adult Services provide good examples of effective service led engagement, delivered in partnership with the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector.

Children's Services

Children's Services supports the work of Children Leeds, which has developed the Children and Young People's Participation Strategy 2007 in response to a number of initiatives and policies that require organisations to involve children and young people. They include:

- Every Child Matters and the Children Act 2004
- National Service Framework for Children's and Maternity Services 2004
- Youth Matters 2006.

The aims of the strategy are:

- To provide a framework for all organisations across the Children Leeds partnership to assist them in involving children and young people in the design, delivery and review of the services that affect them
- To provide a mechanism for establishing and embedding good participatory practice in Leeds and
- To set out the range of activities underway in Leeds and the support available.

The Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector play key roles in developing and delivering the strategy and supporting and enabling children and young people to take active roles in developing and delivering strategy and services in Leeds e.g. Leeds Children and Young People's Plan 2006-2009 places a strong emphasis on developing services and strategies *with* children, young people and families. A revised plan for 2009-14 is in development. All partners involved in children's services as well as children and young people themselves, will be involved in shaping the plan.

There is an infrastructure which supports the development and implementation of the CYPPS, it includes:

The Strategic Participation Group, which works alongside services to ensure that they involve children and young people. Membership comprises representatives from various statutory and voluntary organisations.

Leeds Participation Team, which is a forum of practitioners who come together to influence and support the work of the strategic participation group. Many of the members are voluntary sector organisations, including:

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- BARCA
 - The Cupboard
 - The Project
 - Getaway Girls
 - The Market Place
 - Youth on Health
 - Youth Point
 - Young Sexual Health Action Group
 - National Children's Homes
- Public sector members include:
- Arts and Regeneration
 - Education Leeds
 - Leeds Careers
 - Youth Service

The Children and Young People's Participation Strategy has led to the development of some creative and effective approaches to engaging children and young people, examples include:

Youth Point, a voluntary sector member of the Leeds Participation Team, delivers a wide range of services for young people in North West Leeds, including youth arts projects, volunteering projects, information and support. Youth Point's 'Make it Happen' project supports young people to be involved in decision making. They provide young people with information about the participation opportunities available to them such as steering group meetings and youth forums and are supported to access those opportunities.

ROAR (Reach Out and Reconnect) – is a city wide partnership group for children and young people to work at a strategic level in the planning and development of services for children and young people. ROAR is not a fixed group, but a forum that involves many different groups working with children and young people. ROAR is facilitated by The Project (voluntary organisation).

Youth Offer: Breeze Youth Promise

Leeds Youth Council (LYC) was consulted in December 2006 about the general principles, expectations and shape of the youth offer. They decided to call it the Breeze Youth Promise and gave the council's youth service a clear steer about what it should look like.

The youth service then consulted 400 service providers through Open Forums in March 2007 based on LYC's steer. It also held a multi agency seminar, attended by 40 people in April 2007, where proposed entitlement statements were devised. The draft entitlement statements were presented to LYC and to Reach Out And Reconnect (ROAR) groups of young people to find out young people's views. LYC and ROAR carried out consultation with 972 young people in summer 2007. This consultation resulted in changes to the entitlement statements proposed by agencies in April.

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LYC and ROAR produced a brilliant promotional Breeze Youth Offer DVD and this was shown in numerous settings. For example it was presented to Scrutiny Board and was shown twice in November at the switch on of the Christmas lights event.

LYC and ROAR have continued to work hard on the Breeze Youth Promise and have made further changes which they believe make it a more deliverable and relevant youth offer. Approximately 30 young people have sustained involvement in this.

LYC has merged two of its sub groups, Enjoy and Achieve and Economic Wellbeing, to form a new sub group responsible long term for the Breeze Youth Promise.

The Breeze Youth Promise is finalised but the young people want it to be formally signed off by LYC (very imminent) before it is officially launched. The next stage for the LYC sub group is to agree a communication strategy.

Adult Social Care

In line with government priorities and strong local tradition, the engagement of the voluntary and community sector plays a key role in the commissioning, design and delivery of services; in promotion of personalised services; and in maintenance of quality. The sector is also a key ally to local statutory organisations in connecting to those who are disadvantaged, socially excluded, or reluctant to access formal statutory services. The overall focus is on health and wellbeing as part of a whole system. New Joint Commissioning arrangements are being set up in which the VCF Sector will be fully represented.

Adult Social Care is supporting engagement in a number of different ways:

Local Involvement Network (Leeds)

The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 brought an end to Patient and Public Involvement Forums (there were three in Leeds) and the national Commission for Patient and Public Involvement on 31st March 2008. The national budget was reassigned by the Department of Health to enable Local Authorities (as required under the Act) to commission an organisation to act as host for a new Local Involvement Network (LINK) in their area. The LINK replaces local PPI forums and also extends to social care.

A procurement exercise has just been completed, led by Adult Social Care, to appoint the host organisation which has involved representatives of the VCF Sector as members of both the Project Team and the Procurement Board. This was handled by the VCF sector with great tact because local VCF organisations were potential or actual bidders.

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The purpose of the LINK as described in the Act is to:

- promote and support the involvement of people in commissioning, provision and scrutiny of local care services (“care services” refers to both health and social care)
- enable local people to monitor and review the standard of local care services and report on how they could be improved
- obtain the views of local people about their experience of local care services and their care needs.

The LINK will have powers to visit local health and social care service (with the exception of social care for children) raise issues of concern in relation to health and social care services with statutory organisations, and the right to make representation directly to Scrutiny Board. An especial responsibility of the LINK is to reach people whose voices are seldom heard.

The LINK includes both individuals and VCF Sector organizations; membership / participation are flexible and subject to local decisions about governance.

Local Authorities were charged with making LINK transitional arrangements to ensure that section 221 activities (Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007) are carried out in the interim period between the dis-establishment of the PPI Forums and the establishment of the LINK. Adult Social Care supported by the local NHS and VCF Sector established a LINK Preparatory Group from 1st April which has been meeting regularly, with commissioned independent support from the Leeds Older People’s Forum.

A Host organisation for Leeds was appointed at the beginning of September (the Shaw Trust) and it is commencing work to establish the LINK on a more formal basis.

It is likely, as the LINK develops, that it will become the source for patient, service user and carer representation on health and social care matters. However VCF representation is likely still to be organised separately, for example through Leeds VOICE.

Specialised Involvement Networks

Adult Social Care, working with Leeds PCT and others where appropriate, supports the **Leeds Older People’s Forum** and the **Leeds Advocacy Network**. It also contributes to the Leeds VOICE Health Forum and the Community Health Development Network.

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Organisations funded by Adult Social Care to focus on Community Engagement

Adult Social Care Services with the Leeds PCT provide funding to Leeds Involvement Project (a voluntary sector organisation) to develop engagement and involvement with the Service User and Carer communities. Using this funding, Leeds Involvement Project supports and maintains a number of Service User and Carer led forums that includes the Alliance of Service User and Carers, Black and Minority Ethnic Disabled People's Consultation Group and the Equipment Users Advisory Group. Some groups (e.g. the Alliance of Service User and Carers also receive direct joint funding from Adult Social Care and the PCT).

Additionally, funding is provided through the Leeds Strategic Partnership and Development Team to support three reference groups, the Disability Reference Group, the Older People's Reference Group and the Black and Minority Ethnic Disabled People's Consultation Group.

The Reference Groups and the Forums supported by Leeds Involvement Project are used by Adult Social Care Services, amongst other statutory organisations, to support their engagement and involvement with Service Users and Carers. Additionally, the Forums as they are led by Service Users and Carers, raise their own issues of concern with Council employees and Elected Members.

Examples of their involvement as representatives of these groups are as follows:

- A representative of the Alliance of Service Users and Carers sits on Scrutiny Board (Social Care)
- The Alliance of Service Users and Carers is working with Adult Social Care Commissioning Services and Independent Sector Providers on the quality of service provision – this is a long term arrangement.
- Representatives from each of the Reference Groups sit on the Leeds Strategic Partnership and Development Boards.
- Representatives of the Equipment Users Advisory Groups sits on the Partnership Board
- A representative of the Alliance of Service Users and Carers Chairs the LINK (Local Involvement Network) Preparatory Group.

Adult Social Care also contributes funding to local community health projects such as South Leeds Health for All and Women's Health Matters which have engagement as one of their primary objectives. Local Healthy Living Centres have a similar role.

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Mental Health

Adult Social Care supports Volition, which is an alliance of voluntary sector organisations that either provide mental health services for or work with people who have mental health needs. It is part of Volition's remit to promote the contribution of the voluntary sector in strategic planning and the development of services. Volition has over 60 members from all areas of the voluntary sector providing services to people in Leeds.

The Independent Disability Council (Leeds)

Adult Social Care Services, together with the Corporate Equality Unit have provided support to the development of the Independent Disability Council (Leeds). The IDC(Leeds) is an organisation of disabled people who are committed to the positive and meaningful involvement of disabled people in the development and delivery of public services. It was launched in July 2008 with the intention of seeking to represent the disabled people of Leeds and Organisations of disabled people through peer led representation.

Service re-design

Adult Social Care services is committed to the involvement of VCF Sector organisations in the re-design of services. The Adult Social Care Business Plan 2008/09 states: "Our vision represents a broad approach to working with partners across the Council, the PCT, and the independent, Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector to ensure the best use of all our resources to improve the wellbeing of the population of Leeds."

All projects and programmes must identify key stakeholders, including VCF Sector organisations, and in many instances, organisations are represented on Project and Programme Boards.

Supporting Wellbeing

Adult Social Care is directed towards the seven Health and Wellbeing outcomes promoted by Government Green and White Papers:

- improved health and emotional well-being;
- improved quality of life;
- making a positive contribution;
- choice and control;
- freedom from discrimination;
- economic well-being; and

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- personal dignity.

These objectives cannot be achieved without the engagement of individuals and community groupings at all stages. They also depend not just on the availability of services but more general community wellbeing. A recent report of the Local Wellbeing Project confirms that wellbeing is enhanced through processes of neighbourhood and community engagement / empowerment through

- providing greater opportunities for residents to influence decisions affecting their neighbourhoods
- facilitating regular contact between neighbours
- helping residents gain the confidence to exercise control

Adult Social Care recognises its role in promoting wellbeing in this way and sees the contribution of the VCF Sector as being absolutely crucial.

Appendix 3



VCFS Involvement in Area Committee Engagement Activity

This appendix presents examples of the way in which area committees in South Leeds have worked with VCF Sector organisations to enhance community engagement activity and improve the delivery of services which seek to take advantage of the extensive history that some VCF Sector organisations have of positive community relationships. These cover 3 aspects of the relationship of the Area Committees and the VCF Sector:-

- The role that the VCF Sector plays in brokering community engagement and influencing services.
- The role of the VCF Sector in delivering commissioned services.
- The role of the VCF Sector in delivering services which contribute to area delivery plan outcomes.

The VCF Sector in South Leeds

South Leeds has an extensive array of VCF Sector organisations. These are distributed throughout the whole area, but exist in either greater numbers, or where they cover the whole area, are more active in the less affluent inner city areas. Many of these organisations, particularly in the faith sector have been in existence for long periods of time, but there are also examples of voluntary based organisations that have been successfully delivering services for tens of years.

This history has been influenced by the relative deprivation of parts of South Leeds and the potential to attract funding. Beeston Hill and Holbeck for example has over the last ten years benefited greatly from funding streams such as the Single Regeneration Budget, Neighbourhood Renewal Funding and European funding. Such funding streams have increased the financial support available for those organisations who are delivering outcomes which accord with the regeneration priorities inherent in the funds objectives.

The role of the VCF Sector in brokering community engagement and influencing services.

The nature of the VCF Sector is both diverse and disparate, and whilst much collaboration takes place there are also elements of competition between organisations. Because of these factors LCC frequently relies on support from VCFS umbrella organisations such as Leeds Voice and Voluntary Action Leeds (VAL). These organisations have in the past been able to attract various forms of funding to underpin the important role that they play in coordinating, supporting and helping to progress and sustain organisations within the sector. However over the last couple of years such funding has become increasingly scarce.

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To ensure that the VCF Sector is able to influence and shape policy and planning, Leeds Voice has developed the South Leeds Super Forum. The forum membership is open to all VCF Sector organisations operating in South Leeds, and as such has the potential to draw upon and include a large number of local people from a great variety of different backgrounds and interests. Amongst other things the Super Forum elected representatives on to the board and sub groups of the South Leeds District Partnership. The forum met in advance of the meetings of the former District Partnership Board and was able to consult with the membership of individual organisations on the content of Board papers. In this manner the VCF Sector was able to contribute in a coordinated manner to the discussions at the Board. With the demise of the District Partnership board the Super Forum will still meet, and coordinate input into the various thematic partnerships that exist in the area.

As changes take place in the ways in which area committees undertake community consultation it is anticipated that the VCF Sector will continue to play a key role in supporting the committees to undertake engagement. Several area committees are making plans to put in place a systematic approach to consulting their communities on the achievement of the Leeds Strategic Plan (LSP) priorities, so far as they are relevant to the area committee area. In South Leeds, this will take the form of a meeting held in advance of the area committee, focusing on one of the key themes from the LSP. The first of these events will take place in September at the Inner South Leeds Area Committee and be led by Children's Services. It is hoped that this will attract a wide audience from the local population and the VCF Sector will be supporting both the content of the event and attempts to attract the audience. Whilst we will need to review the effectiveness of this as an approach as we go along, at this point it is intended to hold similar events, albeit with different themes before each of the South Area Committee meetings. This will enable the committees to have an overview of each of the themes of the LSP. On the whole VCF Sector organisations involved in this form of activity receive no specific payment from the Area Committees.

In addition to such ongoing activities, the VCF Sector also play an important role in assisting with time limited or service specific engagement activity. There are numerous examples of this, however the most ambitious scheme to take place in South Leeds over recent years involved Leeds Voice undertaking participatory appraisal research in 2006. This programme of consultation was designed to influence the priorities and spending profile for the Intensive Neighbourhood Management (INM) programme delivered as part of the Safer Stronger Communities Fund Programme. Local people were trained to lead the consultation and they planned and delivered the project with the assistance of a team of staff from Leeds Voice. The team stood at bus stops, outside shops and schools and many other places to talk to local residents and hear their views. This approach involved over 1,000 people, a full evaluation report was written by Voice which helped to determine

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the priorities and projects that formed the INM programme which has subsequently been implemented over the last two years. The participatory appraisal programme received a national award for good practice in relation to adult learning.

The role of the VCF Sector in delivering commissioned services.

The South Leeds Area Committees have taken an approach to the use of their well being funding which seeks to commission services in accordance with the priorities identified in their Area Delivery Plans. Such priorities are at least in part based upon a local interpretation of the LSP. Some of these services, for example the mobile youth bus commissioned from St Luke's Cares, and the 'I Love South Leeds' Festival commissioned from Health for All, may be designed to promote engagement amongst other priority outcomes, in these examples reducing anti social behaviour and promoting cohesion. However, there are other examples of the VCF Sector delivering commissioned services which primarily focus on engagement activity. For example, South Leeds Area Committees have since 2005, developed small scale action plans designed to improve the most problematical neighbourhoods (Neighbourhood Improvement Plans commonly known as 'NIPs'). Community development activity takes place, to engage the local community as fully as possible in this work, prior, during and following the conclusion of the NIP. In 2006, both South Area Committees agreed funding for one 'Priority Neighbourhood Development Worker' post in each area. Health for All were commissioned to manage the project and employ the workers. The project has been very successful and has since secured two further years of funding from the Area Committees. The Development Workers have played a crucial role in the successful implementation of several NIPs as well as supporting 'in bloom' groups, and they provide a useful link between the residents of Leeds, the Council in general and in particular the Area Committees.

The role of the VCF Sector in delivering services which contribute to ADP outcomes

Many VCF Sector organisations deliver services which accord with stated area committee priorities or contribute to the achievement of ADP outcomes, without recourse to well-being support. The most frequent example of this probably relates to activities for young people. Supporting the delivery of services to young people, with the aim of promoting community cohesion, and diversion from anti-social behaviour, has been a consistent priority for South Leeds Area Committees. Indeed a scrutiny enquiry in 2006 found that approximately 30% of the overall revenue allocation to the ten Area Committees was spent on such activity, and many community consultation exercises frequently cite services for young people as being a key priority.

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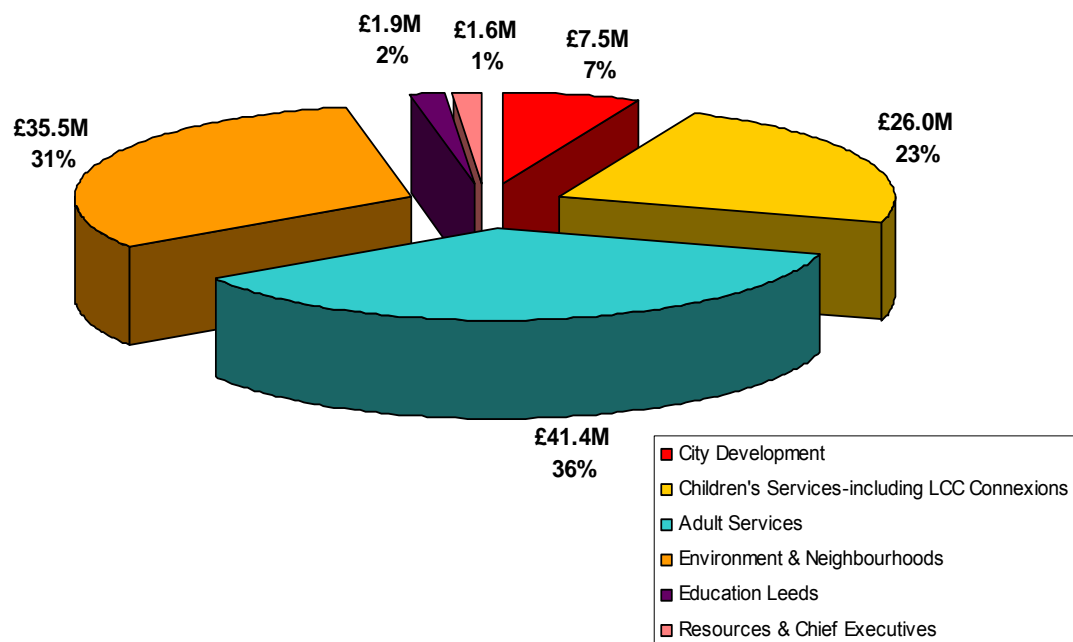


In South Leeds, several organisations provide such services. One of these is the Hamara Healthy Living Centre, which provides traditional open access youth clubs two nights per week, sports activity aimed at promoting cohesion by linking up young people in LS11 and LS10, whilst encouraging Asians youths to become involved in rugby. They also run holiday clubs, junior gym based training, accredited coaching awards courses, information advice and guidance sessions, and focused cohesion work. Whilst Hamara, clearly have their own mechanisms for capturing these outcomes and there is some links with the statutory youth service there is no clear overall process for capturing the detail of such outcomes. Hence it is difficult to be entirely prescriptive in describing (to central government for example) the extent of such activity.

Appendix 4



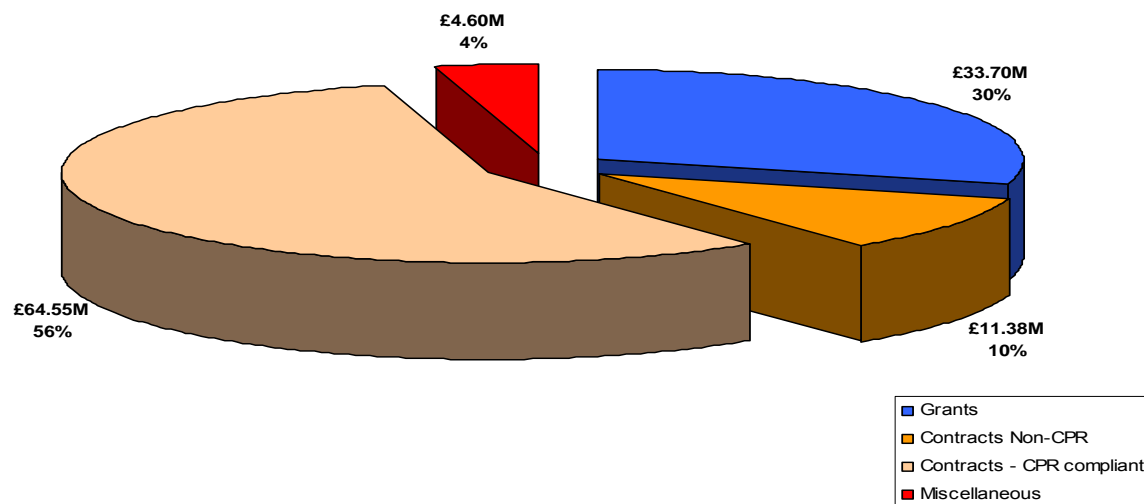
Total VCFS Payments 2007/8 - £114M



Appendix 4



Breakdown by Type of Funding - £114M



Appendix 4



Grants to VCFS 2007/8 - £33.7M

