

Up for change?

***An Evaluation of the
South West
Voluntary and Community Sector
Infrastructure Early Spend Programme***

2004



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EVALUATION
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An Evaluation of the South West Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure Early Spend Programme 2004

1. Executive Summary

1.1 The National and regional context

H.M. Treasury's Cross Cutting Review (CCR) into the role of the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) in Service Delivery (2002) identified the lack of capacity and investment in voluntary sector infrastructure. It found that infrastructure and capacity building support for the voluntary and community sector (VCS) was crucial to the sector's ability to play a full part in service planning and delivery but that it was patchy in coverage and quality, and lacking in sustainable funding particularly at a local level. The CCR made recommendations for strengthening the capacity of the sector to deliver public services.

The Government established a budget of £93 million to be invested in the VCS to ensure that it has the capacity to participate in shaping and delivering high quality public services. Of that £93 million £6.25 million was made available nationally as "Early Spend" revenue funding to support the development of an infrastructure strategy for the VCS in England. Primarily the funding was aimed at supporting development work in local areas with very little or no VCS infrastructure. Nationally £1 million was invested in the Exemplar Fund to *"develop ideas and proposals on building and sharing good practice, delivering support services in new and innovative ways and redesigning the way services are delivered to improve sustainability, efficiency and effectiveness."* This fund was delivered nationally by the Active Communities Directorate, on behalf of the Home Office. In those regions where Early Spend was taken up, funding was to be distributed locally through the Government Offices (GO) of the regions.

Government Office for the South West (GOSW) was one of the regions that decided to work with the Early Spend Programme. £500,000 was to be allocated to VCS organisations throughout the region to identify how the sector could work better together to support frontline service delivery organisation. Projects taking part in the programme had to be completed and evaluated in 5 months. A further £100,000 was made available for a VCS infrastructure mapping exercise.

1.2 The Overall Aim of the Early Spend Programme

The Early Spend Programme in the South West was concerned with strengthening and improving existing infrastructure organisations and identifying and tackling 'gaps' in infrastructure. This was in line with the national criteria for the programme.

Eligible organisations needed to be legally constituted voluntary and community organisations who already worked in partnership with others or who were looking to work in partnership with other organisations such as the public sector, to build sustainability and gain commitment for future funds.

Specific consideration was given to projects where infrastructure organisations were developing programmes, which addressed at least one of the following activities:

- ❑ Actual planned commitment of commissioners and funding agencies to invest in the sector, including match funding agreements with the Active Communities Directorate Programme.
- ❑ Awareness across the sector (at local, sub-regional or regional levels) of the need to pursue income generation.

The organisations funded needed to show:

- ❑ Examples of emerging good practice in collaboration and joint working between infrastructure organisations
- ❑ Examples of good practice in collaboration and joint working between infrastructure organisations
- ❑ Examples of good practice in collaboration between the sector and funding agencies
- ❑ How the work funded benefited the sector
- ❑ Actual planned increases in the range and level of support given to frontline organisations to enable them to participate more effectively in service planning and delivery.

The criteria stated that because of this tight timescale there could not be an open bidding process. Instead GOSW intended to commission projects from amongst expressions of interest submitted by organisations with projects that were ready to start immediately. The expressions of interest were to be assessed by GOSW and then considered by a Regional Steering Group. The Regional Steering Group was made up initially of representatives of 11 organisations, this included representation from statutory bodies and members of the VCS who had a role to play in regional infrastructure support.

Successful applicants to this programme were to be treated as 'pilot projects' with no commitment to funding from the longer-term investment programme, now identified as the Main Spend 'ChangeUp' Programme. However, organisations were advised to consider the period of the Early Spend Programme as '*a chance to emerge as critical in developing the sector.*'

Twenty one organisations were funded through the Early Spend Programme in the South West to undertake a variety of projects such as developing a funding strategy for an emerging equalities organisation, the development of a regional network for organisations undertaking recycling work, developing databases, websites and mapping of infrastructure provision at a subregional level.

1.3 The Aims of the Evaluation and its methodology

The aims of the evaluation as laid out in the evaluation brief were to establish a baseline for evaluation with projects funded under the South West infrastructure Early Spend programme. It was hoped that the evaluation would identify:-

- ❑ Examples of good practice especially of working in collaboration and joint working between infrastructure organisations
- ❑ Show innovations of improvements in the capacity and skills of infrastructure organisations
- ❑ Innovative working and proven ways of solving issues by doing things differently
- ❑ Failure and problems in delivery
- ❑ Additional infrastructure resources and implications
- ❑ Value for money

The capacity of the evaluation to identify the above examples was dependent on the projects selected for funding having these aims as the outcomes of the projects to be funded.

The evaluation was undertaken using five consultants employed by the Evaluation Trust. The Evaluation Trust assisted with the design of the monitoring forms for GOSW to ensure that they contained information relevant to the evaluation, so as limit the paperwork and to make the process as straight forward as possible. A selection of 13 of the 21 organisations funded under the Early Spend Programme was studied in depth, with two more contributing through in depth interviews with the project leader. The organisations were selected on the basis of a range of geographical coverage, types of work undertaken, types of client groups covered, sizes of organisations undertaking the work and collaborative partnerships.

In depth structured interviews were held with a selection of key stakeholders, including beneficiaries. Because of the tight timescale it was not possible to examine the impact of the programme in any way, but instead to look at the perceived potential benefits as outlined by those interviewed, who were connected to the projects. A total of over 70 face-to-face interviews were undertaken.

Informal interviews and observations also took place at the two infrastructure events organised by the South West Forum. Information gathered through these sources was used both as background and to inform the main body of the report. Members of the Steering Group were interviewed through questionnaire and telephone interviews. It was also felt to be important to seek the views of those organisations who applied but who were not successful under the Early Spend Programme. It was recognised that this could be a sensitive area so, in recognition of this, those organisations were offered a brief questionnaire which was e-mailed to these organisations. They were also offered the opportunity of telephone interviews.

In order for the organisations interviewed to be able to speak freely about their experiences and to give 'honest' views, organisations taking part were advised that as far as possible their anonymity would be preserved. Where this might not be possible or appropriate, organisations would be given the chance to read the report and it would be altered if they felt that any of the information compromised them.

1.4 Findings

A. Process for delivering the programme

- ❑ The interpersonal skills of the two Government Office staff were integral to ensuring that the application process went as smoothly as possible, in what were quite difficult circumstances. Having such good staff to front this Programme also improved relationships between GOSW and the VCS. These relationships should be built upon for the Main Spend Programme.
- ❑ The Early Spend Programme, as stated within the literature, was not an open bidding process. This was not obvious to those applying for the funding and those potential applicants. This led to the programme being criticised, perhaps unfairly, as not having an open process. GOSW needs to be much clearer that bidding to the Main Infrastructure Programme is not an open process, and therefore should not be judged as such, if unfair criticism of the process is to be avoided.
- ❑ In recognition of the difficulty that organisations may experience when costing such a programme, GOSW should continue with their method of retaining 10% of the funding, which will give them some flexibility

for those organisations that both overspend and under spend. However, utmost care should be taken to ensure that costings within bids are as close as possible to actuals

- ❑ The Main Spend Programme should not necessarily be restricted to those organisations that benefited from the Early Spend Programme. There is some evidence to suggest that organisations that have a role to play in infrastructure development did not apply, for a variety of reasons beyond their control, and may now be excluded unfairly from the Main Spend Programme. This issue could perhaps be tackled by providing information days so that as many people as possible could hear at first hand about the Main Programme. This does however require very careful handling. The process of organisations expressing an interest in the programme prior to being invited to submit a full bid may still be the best process, but any process used must be very clear.
- ❑ The Steering Group members and those people who have taken part in the national development of the ChangeUp Programme should be encouraged to 'share their wisdom'. However, Steering Group members need to ensure that they get the training and information that they need, in order to be clear about the criteria for the programme and about their own role in the process.
- ❑ Steering group members who are closely associated with any organisation applying to the Main Spend Programme, should not take part in the setting of the criteria or in the selection of groups to be funded, as they will have or could be seen to have a vested interest in the process. It is not sufficient that they just absent themselves from the decision-making meeting. The process does not just need to be fair- it needs to be viewed as fair by the rest of the sector.

B. Collaborative Working

- ❑ Where partnerships have been initiated between organisations that already have a history of working together in harmony, the encouragement of these partnerships through joint working can have enormous benefits. Benefits cited include:
 - Raising the profile of the organisations.
 - Giving organisations a status and legitimacy
 - Extending memberships and networks to the mutual benefit of all.

Positive partnerships that have been developed through the Early Spend Programme should be supported and developed where appropriate.

- ❑ Rural Community Councils and Councils for Voluntary Services need to come to a mutual understanding about their roles. As infrastructure

bodies they need to examine their working relationships, if they are to maximise the benefit from the Main Spend Programme.

- ❑ While promoting community cohesion is to be encouraged, for certain organisations with very specialised memberships, they are sometimes the only organisations who can reach their members and work with them effectively. This is particularly true for some members of BME communities, LGBT communities and organisations operating within areas of high levels of deprivation whether urban or rural.

C. Gaps in provision

- ❑ **Needs of Particular Communities:** One of the most pressing needs for infrastructure support within the VCS is support for marginalised communities, in particular LGB(T) communities, BME communities and those working with people in 'marginalised' communities including those on low incomes. Gaps in infrastructure provision for specialised communities are well documented and evidence within the projects undertaken. This points the way to areas that must be given priority for future support, if there is to be a more equal playing field and distribution of resources. Geographical gaps were the subject of the main mapping exercise.
- ❑ **The need for training:** The lack of appropriate training provision was highlighted by the majority of organisations. The need for training for workers particularly those working at the grassroots level was a recurring theme. The need for ICT training was evident not just for staff and paid workers, but also for those wishing to make use of the services. This is of particular importance because of the nature of the region and the difficulties of communication. Among other training gaps identified was training in evaluation skills, training for community activists, training for trustees, training in governance issue, and project management training. The future funding of training if performance improvement is to be achieved is of vital importance to the sector.
- ❑ **Other gaps identified:** Other gaps identified included the need for Human Resource (HR) provision; the need for information on funding, the need for increased networking. All of these need closer examination with regard to what opportunities are already on offer through other initiatives such as Creating Excellence, South West Forum Regeneration Network and others. It may be possible for some of the initiatives to be supported jointly through Creating: Excellence and ChangeUp. This needs to be explored if a significant number of the gaps are to be resourced.
- ❑ **Equality Issues:** With regard to support around policy and planning in connection with equality issues the sector has the opportunity within

the Main Spend Programme to build on the work undertaken in the Early Spend Programme and to become a leading player in the field of equality along with other funders and funding streams that may wish to support this activity.

D. New Ways of working

- ❑ **Face to face working:** this was a strong theme within the Early Spend Programme in the South West. A number of organisations, through the work funded, were given the opportunity to undertake face-to-face work and many commented on the value of this and their desire to continue with this way of working in the future if the need for support is to be met . Some consideration should be given to funding the capacity of organisations to undertake face to face work if this is the most effective and appropriate way to work their client groups. This may be of particular importance to 'marginalised' communities who need to build trust and confidence.

- ❑ **Future Strategies:** Within the reports by the funded projects are a number of forward looking strategies including the use of hubs both as specialist centres of service delivery on a county basis and as a way of delivery services at a subregional level. These strategies are worth further examination if new ways of working are to be tested.

- ❑ **The use of consultants:** Generally the use of consultants was seen more as a necessity than desirable, unless the consultants worked in a very specialised field or in a collaborative way with the groups. Organisations felt that with more time they would have preferred to do the work themselves and the benefits of the work with regard to knowledge and skills building would have remained within group. For the Main Spend Programme which will be delivered over a longer period, less use of consultants would appear desirable and better value for money.

1.5 Overall conclusions about the programme in relation to ChangeUp

The Early Spend Programme was delivered over a five-month period from February 2004 - end of June 2004, while the Framework for the Main Spend Programme, now known as ChangeUp, was being developed and finalised centrally by the Active Communities Directorate (ACD). Views from organisations that did not receive funding from the programme, echo some of the concerns of the sector around enforced changes being imposed that will alter its face forever, in a desire to make the sector 'fit for purpose'- that purpose being to deliver the Government agenda.

However, despite some of the open criticism of the Government's intentions, the experience of the delivery of this programme in the South

West Region has been overwhelmingly positive-from the sector's appreciation of the GOSW's approach to the delivery and management of the programme, to the sector's own determination, energy and stoicism at delivering of such an extensive programme in such a short timescale.

The Main Spend Programme, ChangeUp, as stated in the documentation is likely to *'build on what is already working well', 'clarifying gaps and what needs to change'*. The Early Spend Programme in the South West had the aim of undertaking early assessment profiles of the sectors' needs and weaknesses, and there is much evidence within the evaluation that this was carried out. As a result of the Early Spend programme, the sector is now far better informed about itself, about its membership and the needs of that membership. Gaps in infrastructure provision for specialised communities are well documented and evidence points the way to areas that must be given priority for future support, if there is to be a more equal playing field and distribution of resources. Geographical gaps were the subject of the main mapping exercise.

ChangeUp is looking specifically for **performance improvement** among frontline organisations and is seeking ways of doing this. The Early Spend Programme in the South West also sought initial improvements in infrastructure support and capacity. Organisations funded through the Early Spend Programme in the South West Region, formed new partnerships and collaborative ways of working. They built on existing partnerships to the benefit of their membership and raised the profile of the sector and its credibility with statutory agencies.

New strategies have been developed for the delivery of infrastructure support in certain areas, using local and specialised hubs as delivery tools. Potential new and more effective ways of working have been identified, from the development of web based tools providing information and skills exchange, to increasing the use of workshops and face to face work.

To enable the workforce to develop, ChangeUp has identified that there should be a greater range of **'accessible professional development'**. This was one of the key themes from the Early Spend Programme in the South West which was seeking the development of new training and support programmes. Some skills building did take place within the programme, but the greater issue was the identification of the need for training and the indication of the types of training that are required. The need for training for workers particularly those working at the grassroots level was a recurring theme. The need for ICT training was evident not just for staff and paid workers, but also for those wishing to make use of the services. This is of particular importance because of the nature of the area and the difficulties of communication.

Within the funded projects, is a proposed strategy for equipping and skilling the frontline organisations within the VCS in part of the region in

ICT skills. and to ensure that there are facilities in place to improve access and usage of ICT. There are also strategies that have been developed around delivering infrastructure support through hubs of expertise. While accepting that 'one size fits all' is not always an appropriate way forward, there are some strategies within the work funded that are specific to certain geographical areas that could be used as models and adapted to fit a different or wider geographical spread. This will also be influenced by the current national research.

ChangeUp acknowledges that the VCS plays an important **role in delivering public services and in building strong, cohesive and self-determining communities**. Frontline services often work with those most at risk from exclusion, and ChangeUp identifies that what people need most when it comes to support is '*affordable face to face support*'. This was a strong theme within the Early Spend Programme in the South West. A number of organisations through the work funded were given the opportunity to undertake face-to-face work and many commented on the value of this and their desire to continue with this way of working in the future if the need for support is to be met. The recognition of the importance of face-to-face interaction, whether it is through workshops events or delivering the service through one to one meetings, means that organisations need the capacity to work in this way.

The Early Spend Programme wished to see an **increase in opportunities for citizen participation**. This was achieved in two ways through the Early Spend Programme in the South West. One way was by the organisations improving routes of communication not just between themselves and their members, but also by improving their own communications with the statutory agencies, through which they will be able to feed the views of the members. Organisations also raised their profiles and gained credibility through the programme.

The other way that the sector increased opportunities for citizen participation was through increasing the opportunities for volunteering. Three of the projects funded were seeking to increase participation of marginalised communities in volunteering. All showed innovation in this field and have provided good and different models of engagement.

Discussions and collaboration between the sector and funding agencies were more difficult to deliver within the timescale and very few new funding relationships were developed. However, raising the profile of the sector and quantifying needs, are both benefits which move funding relationships forward over a longer period of time, and give potential funders a better insight into priorities.

The Early Spend Programme in the South West was seen as an opportunity for the sector and a challenge for all involved. It was a challenge that the sector rose to and delivered well on. There was

significant praise within the sector for the way in which the programme was delivered and managed by GOSW. It is now important to build on the information gathered in this programme, to look at the needs identified and the strategies developed, and see how this can be best used in informing the future programme and development of the sector.

1.6 Recommendations

A. Process for delivering the programme

- ❑ The improved relationships between GOSW and the VCS should be built upon for the Main Spend Programme.
- ❑ GOSW needs to be much clearer that bidding to the Main Infrastructure Programme is not an open process, and therefore should not be judged as such, if unfair criticism of the process is to be avoided. Any process used must be very clear.
- ❑ GOSW should continue with their method of retaining 10% of the funding, which will give them some flexibility for those organisations that both overspend and under spend, whilst ensuring that costings within bids are as close as possible to actuals.
- ❑ The Main Spend Programme should not necessarily be restricted to those organisations that benefited from the Early Spend Programme. There is some evidence to suggest that organisations that have a role to play in infrastructure development did not apply to the Early Spend Programme, for a variety of reasons beyond their control.
- ❑ The Regional Steering Group members and those people who have taken part in the national development of the ChangeUp Programme should be encouraged to 'share their wisdom'. However, Steering Group members need to ensure that they get the training and information that they need, in order to be clear about the criteria for the programme and about their own role in the process.
- ❑ Regional Steering Group members who are closely associated with any organisation applying to the Main Spend Programme, should not take part in the setting of the criteria or in the selection of groups to be funded, as they will have or could be seen to have a vested interest in the process. It is not sufficient that they just absent themselves from the decision-making meeting.

B. Collaborative Working

- ❑ Positive partnerships that have been developed through the Early Spend Programme should be supported and developed where appropriate.

- ❑ Rural Community Councils and Councils for Voluntary Services need to come to a mutual understanding about their roles. As infrastructure bodies they need to examine their working relationships, if they are to maximise the benefit from the Main Spend Programme.
- ❑ While promoting community cohesion is to be encouraged, for certain organisations with very specialised memberships, they are sometimes the only organisations who can reach their members and work with them effectively. This is particularly true for some members of BME communities, LGBT communities and organisations operating within areas of high levels of deprivation whether urban or rural.

C. Gaps in provision

- ❑ **Needs of Particular Communities:** One of the most pressing needs for infrastructure support within the VCS is support for marginalised communities, in particular LGB(T) communities, BME communities and those working with other people in 'marginalised' communities including those on low incomes. These must be given priority for future support, if there is to be a more equal distribution of resources.
- ❑ **The need for training:** The lack of appropriate training provision was highlighted by the majority of organisations interviewed, particularly for those working at the grassroots level. This is of particular importance because of the nature of the region and the difficulties of communication. The future funding of training if performance improvement is to be achieved is of vital importance to the sector.
- ❑ **Other gaps Identified:** Other gaps identified included the need for Human Resource (HR) provision; the need for information on funding, and the need for increased networking. All of these need closer examination with regard to what opportunities are already on offer through other initiatives such as Creating Excellence, South West Forum Regeneration Network and others.
- ❑ **Equality Issues:** The sector has the opportunity within the Main Spend Programme to build on the work undertaken in the Early Spend Programme and to become a leading player in the field of equality.

D. New Ways of working

- ❑ **Face to face working :** Some consideration should be given to funding the capacity of organisations to undertake face to face work if this is the most effective and appropriate way to work their client groups. This may be of particular importance to 'marginalised' communities who need to build trust and confidence.

- **Future Strategies:** Within the reports by the funded projects are a number of forward looking strategies, including the use of hubs both as specialist centres of service delivery on a county basis and as a way of delivery services at a subregional level. These strategies are worth further examination if new ways of working are to be tested.
- **Use of consultants:** Generally the use of consultants was seen more as a necessity than desirable, unless the consultants worked in a specialised field or in a collaborative way with the groups. For the Main Spend Programme which will be delivered over a longer period, less use of consultants would appear desirable and better value for money.

E. Increasing Opportunities for Citizen Participation

- **Volunteering.** Within the projects funded are good examples of increasing opportunities for citizen participation particularly among marginalised communities and the benefits that this can bring. Provision of opportunity is patchy throughout the region and more consideration may need to be given to supporting volunteering opportunities along with other funding that may be on offer.
- **Giving people a voice:** A number of projects have members whose views need to be heard in the developing and delivering of services. Increased knowledge and communication capacity will enhance the ability of those organisations to increase citizens' participation in developing service delivery.

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2. Background

2.1 Introduction

H.M. Treasury's Cross Cutting Review (CCR) into the role of the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) in Service Delivery (2002) identified the lack of capacity and investment in voluntary sector infrastructure. It found that infrastructure and capacity building support for the voluntary and community sector (VCS) was crucial to the sector's ability to play a full part in service planning and delivery but that it was patchy in coverage and quality and lacking in sustainable funding particularly at a local level. The CCR made recommendations for strengthening the capacity of the sector to deliver public services.

The Government established a budget of £93 million to be invested in the VCS to ensure that it has the capacity to participate in shaping and delivering high quality public services. Of that £93 million £6.25 million was made available nationally as "Early Spend" revenue funding to support the development of an infrastructure strategy for the VCS in England. Primarily the funding was aimed at supporting development work in local areas with very little or no VCS infrastructure. Nationally £1 million was invested in the Exemplar Fund to *"develop ideas and proposals on building and sharing good practice, delivering support services in new and innovative ways and redesigning the way services are delivered to improve sustainability, efficiency and effectiveness."* This fund was delivered nationally by the Active Communities Directorate, on behalf of the Home Office. In those regions where Early Spend was taken up, funding was to be distributed locally through the Government Offices (GO) of the regions.

2.2 The Funding Available

Each region had the option to apply for an allocation of the Early Spend funding. Not every region took up the option initially. The short time scale for the delivery of the Early Spend Programme is thought to be one of the main reasons that not every region felt in a position to move forward with this.

Government Office for the South West (GOSW) was one of the regions that decided to work with the Early Spend Programme. £500,000 was to be allocated to VCS organisations throughout the region to identify how the sector could work better together to support frontline service delivery organisation. Projects taking part in the programme had to be completed and evaluated by the end of July 2004. A further £100,000 was made available for a VCS infrastructure mapping exercise.

2.3 The Overall Aim of the Early Spend Programme

The Early Spend Programme in the South West was concerned with strengthening and improving existing infrastructure organisations and identifying and tackling 'gaps' in infrastructure. This was in line with the national criteria for the programme.

Eligible organisations needed to be legally constituted voluntary and community organisations who already worked in partnership with others or who were looking to work in partnership with other organisations such as the public sector, to build sustainability and gain commitment for future funds.

Specific consideration was given to projects where infrastructure organisations were developing programmes, which addressed at least one of the following activities:

- Actual planned commitment of commissioners and funding agencies to invest in the sector, including match funding agreements with the Active Communities Directorate Programme.
- Awareness across the sector (at local, sub-regional or regional levels) of the need to pursue income generation.

Possible early project indicators were listed as follows:-

- Progress toward greater collaboration between infrastructure agencies to develop the sector
- Development of coalitions of infrastructure agencies
- Development of new training and support programmes
- Early assessment profiles of sector needs and weaknesses
- Early commitment to funding from Local authorities, Local strategic partnerships etc
- Discussions and collaboration between the sector and funding agencies on long term investment plans for the sector
- Indications of improvement in the capacity and skills in some local groups and an increase in the availability and take up of development opportunities
- Initial improvements in capacity in the community and increased levels of participation in service planning and delivery
- Increased and or improved infrastructure support for VCO's delivering services
- Increase and or improved infrastructure support for VCO's involved in citizen participation
- Increased VCO service delivery and opportunities for citizen participation.

Organisations were not expected to cover all of these indicators within their projects but rather to demonstrate a range of these at the end of the funded project. The organisations funded needed to show:

- ❑ Examples of emerging good practice in collaboration and joint working between infrastructure organisations
- ❑ Examples of good practice in collaboration and joint working between infrastructure organisations
- ❑ Examples of good practice in collaboration between the sector and funding agencies
- ❑ How the work funded benefited the sector
- ❑ Actual planned increases in the range and level of support given to frontline organisations to enable them to participate more effectively in service planning and delivery.

2.4 The Application Process

The timescale of the programme from application to 'end of spend' lasted only 5 months. The criteria stated that because of this tight timescale there could not be an open bidding process. Instead GOSW intended to commission projects from amongst expressions of interest submitted by organisations with projects that were ready to start immediately. The expressions of interest were to be assessed initially by GOSW and then considered by a Regional Steering Group.

2.5 The Regional Steering Group

The Regional Steering Group was made up initially of representatives of 11 organisations, this included representation from statutory bodies and members of the VCS who had a role to play in regional infrastructure support. (See Appendix 1 for List of original Steering Group bodies). The Regional Steering Group has since increased significantly in size as further suitable organisations have been identified

Successful applicants to this programme were to be treated as 'pilot projects' with no commitment to funding from the longer-term investment programme, now identified as the Main Spend 'ChangeUp' Programme. However, organisations were advised to consider the period of the Early Spend Programme as '*a chance to emerge as critical in developing the sector.*'

Twenty one organisations were funded through the Early Spend Programme in the South West to undertake a variety of projects such as developing a funding strategy for an emerging equalities organisation, the development of a regional network for organisations undertaking recycling work, developing databases, websites and mapping of infrastructure provision at a subregional level. The subregional mapping was taking place alongside a major mapping exercise that was being undertaken at a regional level. The main aim of the regional mapping exercise was to build

a regional picture of the main infrastructure services both from a 'functional' and an 'organisational' perspective. The regional mapping exercise is not part of this evaluation. (More details of projects funded can be found in appendix 2)

2.6 Aims of the Evaluation

The aims of the evaluation as laid out in the evaluation brief were to establish a baseline for evaluation with projects funded under the South West infrastructure Early Spend programme. It was hoped that the evaluation would identify:-

- Examples of good practice especially of working in collaboration and joint working between infrastructure organisations
- Show innovations of improvements in the capacity and skills of infrastructure organisations
- Innovative working and proven ways of solving issues by doing things differently
- Failure and problems in delivery
- Additional infrastructure resources and implications
- Value for money

The capacity of the evaluation to identify the above examples was dependent on the projects selected for funding having these aims as the outcomes of the projects to be funded.

In addition to the above it was hoped that information gathered through the evaluation would be of practical value to both the VCS and the public sector. The approach to gathering the information needed to be clearly documented so that the work could be repeated in the future to establish progress. It was recognised that the restriction on timescale meant that it would not be possible to evaluate all of the projects in depth.

2.7 Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation was undertaken using five consultants employed by the Evaluation Trust. An overview of the programme was taken by studying the application forms of all of the organisations funded, looking at the type of work they were aiming to undertake. At the end of the funding programme, further information was taken from the progress reports. It was decided not to use any further questionnaires within the process of the evaluation. This decision was taken due to the tight timescale and the existing requirements for form completion already within the programme itself.

The Evaluation Trust assisted with the design of the monitoring forms for GOSW to ensure that they contained information relevant to the evaluation, so as to prevent organisations taking part in the Early Spend

Programme from having to complete any more paperwork than was necessary and to make the process as straight forward as possible. Information was then taken from these monitoring forms to inform the evaluation.

A selection of 13 of the 21 organisations funded under the Early Spend Programme was studied in depth, with two more contributing through in depth interviews with the project leader. The organisations were selected on the basis of a range of:

- geographical coverage,
- types of work undertaken
- types of client groups covered,
- sizes of organisations undertaking the work
- collaborative partnerships.

In depth structured interviews were held with a selection of the following for each funded organisation- the person/s who made the original application to the Early Spend Programme; the main person responsible for the delivery of the programme funded; the person who delivered the project (if this was a different person); a trustee from the organisation; and, where appropriate, beneficiaries or potential beneficiaries of the funded project. Again because of the tight timescale it was not possible to examine the impact of the programme in any way, but instead to look at the perceived potential benefits as outlined by those interviewed, who were connected to the projects. A total of over 70 face-to-face interviews were undertaken.

Informal interviews and observations also took place at the two infrastructure events organised by the South West Forum. Information gathered through these sources was used both as background and to inform the main body of the report.

It was felt important also to look at the process of the Early Spend Programme so that this information could be used to assist the planning of the Main Spend Programme. To undertake an evaluation of the application process, questions were asked of the 13 organisations that took part in the in depth study of their projects. Also members of the Steering Group were interviewed through questionnaire and telephone interviews.

It was also felt to be important to seek the views of those organisations who applied but who were not successful under the Early Spend Programme. It was recognised that this could be a sensitive area so, in recognition of this, those organisations were offered a brief questionnaire which was e-mailed to these organisations. They were also offered the opportunity of telephone interviews.

In order for the organisations interviewed to be able to speak freely about their experiences and to give 'honest' views, organisations taking part were advised that as far as possible their anonymity would be preserved. Where this might not be possible or appropriate, organisations would be given the chance to read the report and it would be altered if they felt that any of the information compromised them.

2.8 The Scope of the Evaluation

In connection with the aims of the Early Spend Programme the report focuses on the following key areas: -

- The application process
- Collaboration and joint working
- Benefits and early outcomes
- Infrastructure resource implications and gaps identified
- Value for money
- Aspects of the Early spend programme



One of the aims of the programme was to get people more involved and to give them a voice.
(Photo courtesy of Barton Hill Settlement)

3. The Evaluation- the application process

3.1 How did organisations hear about the programme?

The Early Spend Programme was not to be an open bidding process however the route by which organisations heard about the programme did vary. Members of two organisations had been involved with the Home Office at a national level in a consultative capacity leading up to the development of the programme. These two organisations thought they had a very clear understanding of the aims of the Early Spend Programme and its importance and connection to the later Main Spend Programme.

“We could not afford to have reservations about applying to the Early Spend Programme as we would then have been excluded from applying to the Main Spend”

While the Early Spend Programme was to be important in informing the Main Spend Programme it actually was not the case that those organisations that had not taken part in the Early Spend would be excluded from the Main Spend Programme but it was a quite common misconception. Other organisations heard through the South West Forum, through direct contact with GOSW who sent out the criteria to a number of organisations via e-mail, and other routes including direct conversations with staff from GOSW. One organisation gathered the information from a web based funding advice service, and another from a newsletter aimed at youth organisations. Three of the organisations interviewed became members of the Steering Group, but this is not the route that the majority of the interviewed organisations identified as the source for receiving the first tranche of information about the Early Spend Programme

Only two of the organisations interviewed clearly linked, at the very initial stages of this funding, the importance of the Early Spend Programme to informing the Strategy for the Main Spend Programme. These were the two organisations that referred to themselves as being in a ‘privileged’ position by their links on the national consultative groups. Other organisations, both those who received funding and those who did not receive funding, did not seem to be so aware of the direct link of the Early Spend Programme to the Main Spend Programme. One organisation referred to the fact that, had they been aware that there was such a strong connection between the Early Spend Programme and the Main Spend Programme, then they would have identified a different piece of work to have undertaken with the funding. Most organisations seemed unclear about the link between the Early Spend Programme and the Main Spend Programme.

3.2 Reasons for organisations applying for funding

The two organisations that had a national involvement in the programme development, clearly applied to the fund because they realised the implications that this had for getting their organisations, and the needs of the infrastructure organisations within their geographical location, 'into the framework' for being considered for the larger Main Spend Programme. In addition to this they both had a strong desire to do the best for their members and to develop the infrastructure within their own geographical area.

Other organisations were already working on projects around developing infrastructure which funding from the Early Spend Programme would enable them to undertake. These were often activities for which there was little capacity within their existing resources. One CVS for example, was already working in partnership with the local authority on the local Compact, and brought other development agencies into the framework in an attempt to 'bring them up to speed on the Compact'. Their project also looked at the strengths and weaknesses of the development organisations within their County, so that work could be undertaken to bring some sense and equity to the infrastructure service delivery, and to develop a strategy for future delivery of infrastructure support.

Other organisations, particularly those working with marginalised groups such as BME communities, people working in areas of low incomes and deprivation, and those working with Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgendered (LGBT) communities, applied to the fund because of their own recognition of the virtual total lack of infrastructure support that these communities have.

'We saw it as a real opportunity to do some capacity building for our service users'...

'The BME Community has grown rapidly without any infrastructure support. It is vulnerable and has only grown in the inner cities. We needed to strengthen our capacity for the members of our Network who need help and support'.

All the organisations working in this field already had a good concept of the work that needed to be undertaken but had not had the capacity to undertake this work prior to accessing funds from the Early Spend Programme. Two organisations referred to the fund as "*manna from heaven.*"

Other organisations viewed the Early Spend Programme as an opportunity to work together with other development agencies to bring about change in the infrastructure, and to bring some sustainability to their organisation. For several organisations the projects funded involved

information gathering on infrastructure needs. This information gathering would assist them at a later date with funders to identify areas that needed resourcing.

'We have been wanting to do this piece of work for three years, and we have been struggling with it on top of our jobs. We saw the resources as an opportunity to do a study to prove that infrastructure is necessary.'

To summarise, organisations applied to the Early Spend Programme for a variety of reasons. Some to obtain information around the need for infrastructure support within their geographical area or for their specific user group; others aimed not just to gather information but also, through the funding, to build the infrastructure capacity for communities for which there is little or no existing infrastructure support. A number of organisations were seeking to build capacity and sustainability of their own organisations to enable them to be able to offer a better service to their members. There was an overwhelming sense of responding to an opportunity amongst the organisations funded

3.3 Reservations about applying for funding and clarity of criteria

The organisations that took part in the Early Spend Programme had little reservation about applying for the funding. The main reservation was, understandably, around the tight time scale for the delivery of the projects. However, despite the tight timescale, most organisations felt that the benefits of being able to undertake the work far outweighed the difficulties of trying to keep to the timescale.

Most organisations felt that they were only able to have confidence in their ability to complete the work within the timescales because they had already been working on the project or had been planning to undertake the work but had previously been unable to access funding for this work. One organisation was facing a post expiring in June:

'Timing was critical for us to survive as a project....we were developing this piece of work anyway.'

Having the available staff with the suitable skills was another factor that minimised organisations' reservations about applying for the funding. One staff member had to cut short his travels to the Far East to undertake the work, but without his particular skills the organisation would not have felt confident about going ahead with the project.

3.4 Other Concerns identified

Some concern was shown for those more vulnerable infrastructure organisations that may not have had sufficient capacity to bid for the Early Spend Programme because of the tight timescale and delivery times. There was further concern voiced, as the links between the Early Spend Programme and the Main Spend Programme were becoming more obvious, that significant numbers of organisations may have been excluded from the Main Spend Programme because they did not take part in the Early Spend Programme. There was also some concern around those organisations 'not in the know' who would have found the criteria much more difficult to understand.

"The criteria should have been clearer. It was OK for those members of the Steering group, who probably had a much clearer idea at a much earlier stage than others and so could have started working on a bid. Some of the organisations already knew that they would get a grant before they applied. It had all been agreed. It was not an open process. GOSW invited some people to apply and put them in a privileged position"

This was a minority view however and not necessarily correct however it does reflect the wider concern about the programme from those who did not take part, or were not successful in their application.

However, the vast majority of those organisations interviewed, most of who were on the Steering Group or who had been involved at a national level, found the criteria quite clear. Where organisations had difficulty with the criteria or needed clarification due to their own circumstances, they found the staff at GOSW to be clear in their advice and extremely helpful and approachable.

3.5 The Role of GOSW

All of those interviewed gave overwhelming praise to the staff at GOSW. There was an appreciation of the fact that the staff need not have applied for funding from the Early Spend Programme, and that by applying for funding they involved themselves in a large of amount of additional work. Those who applied, even unsuccessful applicants, found the staff helpful and approachable.

'The government office was very helpful - it was of mutual benefit to everyone'

Other words that were used to describe staff at GOSW were '*pragmatic*', '*flexible*' '*outstanding*' and "*Deserve a medal for the way in which they have handled this programme*"

This view was also picked up through informal interviews at the events supporting the Early Spend Programme, from both applicants and non-applicants. Those who expressed a view, felt that the two staff members involved as the public face of GOSW, had improved relationships between the sector and GOSW. Any difficulties that applicants had with the Programme were felt to be difficulties with messages coming down from Central Government, which included *'lack of coherence'* in the information and the information coming down *'piecemeal'*. These were views expressed mainly by Steering Group members who had a closer view of the process. The time pressures that had been put on the programme were also an issue, but there was strong recognition that these difficulties were not caused by GOSW who did their best to work within the information and criteria that they had been set.

3.6 Issues of equality and access

The issue of the tight timescale for the delivery of the Early Spend Programme did affect the application process and the delivery of the programme in a number of ways.

Focusing on the application process, it was felt that only those organisations who were *'ready to go'* and who had the *'capacity to cope'* with the short time scales could apply, which meant that inevitably some organisations, particularly those with less capacity, were excluded from the bidding process. This was felt to be an *'unfair'* and *'uneven'* approach. Also, some organisations indicated that had they had more time to prepare their application, they may well have applied for a different aspect of their work or for a different amount of funding. This was however a minority view.

The short timescale for the bidding process also affected the ability of organisations to accurately cost out the work. This meant that at least two of the organisations interviewed had underestimated the amount of funding required and had had to put money in to support the cost of delivering the programme from their own funding, while at least one organisation stated that they were £5,000 under spent on their budget. However, since GOSW had retained 10% of the funding pending the completion of the project, this action has meant that the majority of these funding issues have been resolved.

3.7 Timing of the Projects

Despite the tight time scale, most of the organisations started their projects on time or with minimal delay; most organisations also completed their progress and final reports on time. All of the projects interviewed felt that they had achieved what they had set out to achieve with the funding. Here the tight timescale was viewed by some as a plus point. *"It kept us focused"* was one view. However, when asked to

suggest improvements to the application process the tight timescale was repeatedly referred to as an 'unnecessary difficulty' that had been imposed by Central Government.

3.8 The Role of the Regional Steering Group

The Steering Group was made up initially of 11 key members of the VCS and statutory services who had been identified by GOSW as having an interest in the regional infrastructure. The group at the time of seeking their views for this report had expanded to 18. GOSW sought the advice of existing Steering Group members and others about who should be on this body, but only had a matter of weeks to get the group functioning.

The ten members who eventually responded to the questionnaires were largely clear about why they had been invited to join the steering group, and that this had to do with their organisation's role within community regeneration or regional infrastructure. One member who felt clear about their role at the beginning, subsequently found that their role became less clear as time progressed.

Of the ten members who responded, half felt that the criteria for project selection was clear, but three members felt that the criteria were not clear. They felt there was a sense of inconsistency and tension between national and regional views on the Programme and some confusion over the need for projects to be selected in the Early Spend programme that would inform the Main Spend.

Members did feel that there was an element of 'racing to keep up'.

I think the members of GOSW worked hard to communicate the rapid-fire information coming from the Home Office. The mix of e-mail communication which supported the Steering Group meetings was helpful, as was the piggy backing of information onto other meetings.

Members were fairly evenly split between those who felt that the decision making process was clear and those members who were not clear at all.

I was quite confused and did not understand why certain applications had had a decision made on them prior to the Steering Group meeting. It may be that the Steering Group was just there to advise rather than to make decisions, but I am not sure that was ever made clear

There were many positive comments made about the entire process and where members were critical they were very clear that the fault did not lie with GOSW.

Overall the experience of the Steering group was mixed.

3.9 Learning Points

- ❑ The interpersonal skills of the two Government Office staff were integral to ensuring that the application process went as smoothly as possible, in what were quite difficult circumstances. Having such good staff to front this Programme also improved relationships between GOSW and the VCS. These relationships should be built upon for the Main Spend Programme.
- ❑ The Early Spend Programme, as stated within the literature, was not an open bidding process. This was not obvious to those applying for the funding and those potential applicants. This led to the programme being criticised, perhaps unfairly, as not having an open process. GOSW needs to be much clearer that bidding to the Main Infrastructure Programme is not an open process, and therefore should not be judged as such, if unfair criticism of the process is to be avoided.
- ❑ In recognition of the difficulty that organisations may experience when costing such a programme, GOSW should continue with their method of retaining 10% of the funding, which will give them some flexibility for those organisations that both overspend and under spend. However, utmost care should be taken to ensure that costings within bids are as close as possible to actuals
- ❑ The Main Spend Programme should not necessarily be restricted to those organisations that benefited from the Early Spend Programme. There is some evidence to suggest that organisations that have a role to play in infrastructure development did not apply, for a variety of reasons beyond their control, and may now be excluded unfairly from the Main Spend Programme. This issue could perhaps be tackled by providing information days so that as many people as possible could hear at first hand about the Main Programme. This does however require very careful handling. The process of organisations expressing an interest in the programme prior to being invited to submit a full bid may still be the best process, but any process used must be very clear.
- ❑ The Steering Group members and those people who have taken part in the national development of the ChangeUp Programme should be encouraged to 'share their wisdom'. However, Steering Group members need to ensure that they get the training and information that they need, in order to be clear about the criteria for the programme and about their own role in the process.
- ❑ Steering group members who are closely associated with any organisation applying to the Main Spend Programme, should not take part really take part in the setting of the criteria or in the selection of groups to be funded, as they will have or could be seen to have a vested interest in the process. It is not sufficient that they just absent

themselves from the decision-making meeting. However, it is a requirement of the ChangeUp programme that VCS bodies should be involved in setting the strategy. There needs to be very clearly defined process for this involvement. The process does not just need to be fair- it needs to be viewed as fair by the rest of the sector.



Despite the tight time scale most of the organisations started their projects on time or with minimal delay

4. The Evaluation- findings about collaborative working

4.1 Partnership working

The collaborative working, as described by those who took part in the Early Spend Programme, fell into different categories. The first category was the 'partnerships' that came together specifically to apply to the Early Spend Programme. For most of these projects, the partnerships were ones where organisations had a history of collaborative working. The grant recipients were clear that had these partnerships not been in existence prior to the Early Spend Programme, they could not have had the time to forge new partnerships to work on the projects.

'We were already engaging key regional organisations in the development of the regional network.'

'We got the connections quicker, as we had the working relationships in place. This was very helpful.'

These partnerships consisted of two or more organisations that had previously worked together, identifying an area of work that they both felt needed to be undertaken for the mutual benefit of their members. Some partnerships went wider than two members and included for example all of the development agencies within their geographical area. These partnerships had both positive and negative aspects.

For most the existing partnership were built on through the collaborative working which proved to be a very positive experience, building and enhancing the connection between the groups and widening the networks

'The need for this work was established some time ago. The need is not new but now we have strengthened the partnerships that we can work on to meet that need.'

One organisation that provides infrastructure support to BME organisations worked with their 5 existing partners but built quite significantly on these partnerships. Through the Early Spend funding, the development worker was able to get out and undertake some face-to-face work with these groups, which the organisation had previously not had the capacity to undertake. The experience was invaluable to strengthen the organisation's ability to meet the need of their members

4.2 Steering Groups

The other ways that organisations worked collaboratively was through steering groups. The steering groups gave the organisations a chance to work together in a focused way in order to achieve the aims of the

programme. The steering groups brought people together from different geographical locations. One example of this is a steering group of a regional consortium. This brought organisations together with a common interest in recycling, to work at a regional level together. As a member of the steering group identified, working through a regional body will enhance the effectiveness of communication with statutory funding agencies:

'The Government Office is keen to engage with the community sector, but it is a complex and not joined up ... the community sector will need to find easy routes to meet the Government Office and other regional bodies if it is to communicate effectively.'

The range of partners within the steering groups of a number of the projects was impressive, and included members of the VCS, members of the Regional Development Agency (RDA), GOSW and the Regional Assembly. Partners who seemed to be missing from the majority of steering groups of the projects interviewed, were health providers, non-statutory funding agencies, and local authorities in any significant numbers. Engagement with the Local Strategic Partnerships was generally poor.

4.3 New Relationships made through the Projects funded

As well as new partnerships that were developed through the steering groups and joint working, a significant number of the organisations funded, referred to organisations that they had made contact with in the course of their projects, as their '*new partners*'. This may not traditionally be seen as a partnership relationship, but was viewed as such by a number of those organisations interviewed. For one organisation in particular, working with 'marginalised' groups who by necessity had to be 'very private', the new connections established with these groups through the face-to-face work was invaluable.

There was a very strong sense that for collaborative work to be effective with certain 'marginalised' groups, you need to have members in organisations that have a clear understanding of the needs of the group, and the respect of that group, for the relationship to be effective. BME and LGBT groups for example both felt very strongly that they were the only groups who could have forged the relationships with their members in the way that they did.

'Most of our organisations are very reserved... They do not connect with organisations such as...and would not have been able to complete the questionnaire. They would not have even gained access to them. We were trusted and we knew where to get the information.'

In recognition of this, the regional mapping was effectively undertaken by a number of specialist agencies alongside the generalist work.

4.4 The Benefits of Face to Face Work

Where mapping took place through questionnaires rather than any face to face interaction, the relationship forged was unlikely to be referred to as 'a *partnership*'. These new relationships were more likely to have an element of a closer working, when the organisation had gone out and undertaken face-to-face work as part of the project. For several of the organisations, the Early Spend Programme had given the organisations the capacity to go out and to undertake this face-to-face work in a way that they had never previously had the opportunity to do.

'We did build on existing partnerships but we also contacted an additional 40 organisations that we had never previously had contact with. The face-to-face work was invaluable. It was very important to get out and to see these groups. They do not have contact with other groups and are very isolated.'

The significance of face-to-face working within this programme was very important because of the wider benefits that it brings, including the building of trusting relationships, networking and the closer connections between the groups and their members. This is an important message for the Main Spend Programme.

4.5 The Benefits of Collaborative working

There were a number of benefits that the organisations cited as a result of having worked together in a collaborative way. For some organisations the partnerships raised their profiles and made people more aware of the work that they were undertaking and extended their membership; others felt that the partnerships gave them legitimacy and a credibility with agencies that had previously given them little value.

Through their research project, one network was able to raise its profile with regional bodies and local authorities. At the face-to-face interviews, the consultants updated the agencies on the network's development and what services and policy work it could offer, if adequately resourced.

'It now gives us the opportunity to work together with local authorities to address the issues of perception and different cultures'

'Regional bodies will also benefit, as they asked us to help them make more robust policies'

For one organisation, the partnerships formed were of amazing value not just to the organisation itself, but also to the new partners that they

managed to engage with. They listed 7 organisations that they had worked with to develop the project. This ranged from volunteering organisations, to ethnic minority groups and funding agencies. The partnerships resulted in £50,000 being accessed from a private trust (the only example of this in the study). It is also highly likely that this partnership will access further funding from Objective 2 which will not only benefit the lead partners, but also put funding behind the proposals contained within the report, that are likely to encourage and support cohesion between communities through volunteering. The agencies clearly put this down specifically to a result of the Early Spend programme:

'We wanted to develop an infrastructure relationship about volunteering in the area. We now have an outlying bid agreed by the Objective 2 team. We have now been invited as an outside agency to become a partner and we will be resource sharing. This is a direct result of the Early Spend Programme and it has been a lifeline to us for a short period. The Early Spend Programme has created opportunities to realise plans, and new resources have become available as a result.'

Virtually all organisations that took part in the evaluation have indicated that existing partnerships have been strengthened and new partnerships still continue to be formed. The early indications are that the organisations will work together on future projects.

The majority of the organisations interviewed viewed partnership working as positive, *'providing the opportunity for skills exchange', 'mutual support between agencies',* and *'an opportunity for 'information sharing'*

A number of the organisations involved in the Early Spend Programme made reference to the need for time to develop new relationships. There were very few new relationships however, with funding organisations and it was felt that more time was needed to develop such relationship effectively.

4.6 Less positive 'Partnerships'

It was noted in the course of the evaluation, that within certain relationships, historical gulfs between organisations and conflicts became more visible. This was particularly notable between the Rural Community Councils and the Councils for Voluntary Services. Rural Community Councils and Councils for Voluntary Services who undertook projects within the Early Spend Programme apparently delivered well on their individual projects. These comments are not to detract from the work of those CVS and Rural Community Councils who undertook 'good' work with their Early Spend monies.

However, it is important to note the tension that exists between these agencies in certain areas, both of whom have a role in the provision of infrastructure support to their members. It is a tension that has the potential to be damaging to the detriment of those organisations that require infrastructure support. From the evidence provided, this is not an insignificant problem, and affected at least three counties taking part in the Early Spend Programme. One area felt that through the Early Spend programme they had come to some sort of agreement between the agencies but it was just an *'uneasy truce'*.

The agencies concerned need to take some action to address these differences particularly in areas where the two agencies overlap in provision, where the conflict may be based on rivalry between agencies, and the individual role of the two agencies is unclear. The availability of two funding streams i.e. The DEFRA Early Spend and Infrastructure Early Spend appeared to add to the difficulties between infrastructure organisations in certain areas.

4.7 LEARNING POINTS

- ❑ Where partnerships have been initiated between organisations that already have a history of working together in harmony, the encouragement of these partnerships through joint working can have enormous benefits. Benefits cited include:
 - Raising the profile of the organisations.
 - Giving organisations a status and legitimacy
 - Extending memberships and networks to the mutual benefit of all.
- ❑ Positive partnerships that have been developed through the Early Spend Programme should be supported and developed where appropriate.
- ❑ Rural Community Councils and Councils for Voluntary Services need to come to a mutual understanding about their roles. As infrastructure bodies they need to examine their working relationships, if they are to maximise the benefit from the Main Spend Programme.
- ❑ While promoting community cohesion is to be encouraged, for certain organisations with very specialised memberships, they are sometimes the only organisations who can reach their members and work with them effectively. This is particularly true for some members of BME communities, LGBT communities and organisations operating within areas of high levels of deprivation whether urban or rural.
- ❑ New partnerships with funding agencies can be achieved through collaborative working. It has to be recognised however that new

working relationships and partnerships with funders can take some time to develop.

- ❑ Good working partnerships can lead to clarity of voice from the sector and make it easier for the statutory agencies to engage with the sector.



'For a number of organizations, the Early Spend Programme had given the organisations the capacity to go out and to undertake face-to-face working in a way they had never previously had the opportunity to do.'

5. The Evaluation- findings about benefits and early outcomes

The tangible benefits as outlined by trustees, service users and the organisations themselves of the projects funded under the Early Spend Programme are vast and varied. The following is an attempt to outline these using the following categories

5.1 Benefits to the organisations

There were classic indicators of organisational capacity and development as a result of the programme, despite its short duration.

5.1.1 Strategic Planning

A significant number of the organisations interviewed indicated that the work that had been undertaken through the Early Spend Programme would have a direct effect on the future direction of their organisation.

'We will be more informed and aware on issues and policy with regard to funding, communication and have a more effective dialogue, share best practice...more strategic development within the sector.'

Several organisations referred to the fact that the Early Spend Programme had allowed them the time and space to reflect upon their future direction.

For other organisations the programme meant that at last they had the opportunity to directly engage with the regional agenda.

'We will be able to pursue a regional agenda in line with the national agenda on equality issues, with the support of people on the ground. We will be able to bring in a European dimension.'

5.1.2 Profile raising and effect on the organisation's status

Many of the organisations felt that the work had raised the profile of the organisation and made people more aware of their work. This also had a direct effect on the local statutory agencies that now recognise the worth of the organisations, and were more ready to enter into a dialogue with them during the course of the funded projects, particularly as the funding had come from GOSW. The organisation felt that this had given them credibility particularly with statutory organisations:

'The interview raised the credibility of the network and pushed them into thinking we must do something about our lapsed membership.'

One project conducted face-to-face interviews and focus groups with a range of stakeholders (local authorities, regional bodies, community groups and national networks) who were able to share thinking and begin to understand their respective remits and boundaries.

'The research and resulting report brought the above four sectors together-it has not been done on that scale before. Previously, there have been one- off seminars and other single events'

Other projects noted key benefits in terms of a stronger relationship with the statutory sector:

'Amongst all the different stakeholders, there is a lack of understanding of each others' boundaries and remits. Local authorities were excited to share understanding and be educated about each sectors' needs- we had a very positive response.'

'The project helped us to become a reputable organisation in the eyes of the statutory services that have never previously valued us.'

5.1.3 Future Funding

Again significant numbers of organisations interviewed felt that the project had provided them with a sound information base, and in some cases, evidence of the need of their sector on which to base future funding applications.

A number of organisations produced final reports, which will act as tools to help to inform the future of the sector and influence their sustainability.

'The Early Spend project will enable the members of the regional network to build their sustainability by helping them to know where to go for funding and understand what funders expect to be in place, which will increase their chances of getting funds.'

5.1.4 Improved Information base

A number of organisations had undertaken their own mapping of the sector and felt that they now not only had a good concept of the needs of the sector but also had used the information to increase their own knowledge and improved sectoral databases.

'Our organisation has increased its knowledge base. We now know of 40 more organisations that operate in the area offering services, which will better inform our help line.'

Those building databases understood that in order to be effective they will constant updating and maintenance, but that at least the Early Spend

programme gave them the information base that had previously been lacking or built on their existing knowledge.

5.1.5 Increase in Networking

A number of organisations had offered workshops, which brought people together who had never previously had a chance to meet up. With those meetings came all the associated benefits of networking such as resource sharing, sharing of ideas and good practice and valuable ongoing dialogue.

'We are far more linked than before. We (the community and voluntary sector) can now speak with a mandate at meetings, have a collective voice-even if we have different views we know about them in advance and are prepared-it oils the wheels.'

This was true even where organisations had not had networking as one of their key activities. Workshops and events brought people together and formed new relationships.

'I was quite sceptical of the conferences, but they were much better than I expected-I thought they would be a waste of time. I got something out of the events-more understanding of volunteering and of what people here are doing and why. It really worked and everyone felt really involved. It gave a sense of community on the one day...showed that staff and volunteers come from a range of settings.'

Some organisations referred to feeling isolated in their roles and having the opportunity to meet with others had helped to break this isolation

5.1.6 Practical resources

A minority of organisations had been able to purchase practical resources such as leaflets and brochures to promote the organisation, and office items that would improve the effectiveness of the organisation. The purchasing of equipment was not a major part of this programme.

5.1.7 Skills Building

Very few of the organisations interviewed had skills building as the prime aim of the project funded. However, a number of organisations did identify a definite improvement in the skills within the organisation, as a direct result of the work undertaken.

Where staff from the organisation were involved in the work, several organisations indicated that there had been an improvement in that person's skills, and also an increase in their confidence. One volunteer led

project had a number of beneficiaries, who stated that their self confidence and self esteem had increased through being involved in the events funded by the Early Spend. Comments around confidence building through the work undertaken were very visible:

'Volunteers will now feel more motivated with an increase in their skills and knowledge, and they feel more backed-up with good supervision and advice. There would be a big gap if the conferences had not happened.'

'Events and training have built up the confidence of volunteers and their self esteem-leading to a sort of togetherness between workers and volunteers-nothing is too hard.'

'I now have more confidence in myself to talk to people through public speaking at the conferences.'

'I am welcome here. This place has turned my life around. '

The learning and skills building was not so evident where consultants had been involved. The organisations felt that they had involved consultants by necessity because of the shortness of time to deliver the project. Had they had more time they would have liked to have undertaken the work themselves. The downside of this was that the individual skills gained through the use of consultants had not been retained within the organisation. However, where the consultant played an enabling role with existing staff and volunteers, the learning will be retained.

Other skill development benefits that came via the funded projects included cross learning between organisations, trustee training, funding issues, how to use website and general IT skills improvement.

'Everyone who has had contact with the Early Spend project has benefited-other agencies' staff as well. The community has benefited.'

'We all worked well together, the events really helped to get other projects involved.'

Of the projects that had skills building as part of their objectives, the organisations concerned felt that the studies were also indicating directions for future skills building, by recommending common standards among organisations in areas such as Health and Safety, and recruitment of staff. Some organisations felt it would be now possible and desirable to have 'toolkits' constructed on these topics that could be shared between organisations to make the most of resources available.

There were also areas of learning for the organisations that were unexpected. At least two organisations realised that they had to alter their way of working to include more face to face work if they were to be more effective; and another had found teleconferencing to be an alternative to meeting face to face.

5.2 Benefits

5.2.1 Who were the beneficiaries of the work funded?

Most organisations saw the beneficiaries in terms of the benefits to their members, their own organisation, and agencies that they may wish to work with in some way in the future.

'The beneficiaries will be our members from the.....communities. We have 200 members. Others will be first tier policy-making organisations and quasi-statutory organisations. Trusts and Foundations and programme fundholders will all be better informed.'

5.2.2 Benefits to the clients of funded organisations

As well as raising the profile of organisations funded and giving them more credibility with statutory funders, generally those involved in the Early Spend Programme, one way or another, came away from the projects with a far greater understanding and knowledge of the needs of their client groups which could inform their future service delivery.

5.2.3 Giving People a voice

The majority of organisations interviewed felt that the work that had been funded would have future implications with regard to enabling people to have more of a say in the way in which services are developed and delivered. For some this was through improved communication with their members and a wider base of knowledge of what was out there. For other organisations, the work had led to a better understanding and respect of their organisations from the statutory agencies, which would lead to the agencies now being more prepared to listen and having a better regard for their members views.

'There will be better lines of communication between service providers and funders. There has been a tendency to neglect certain communities as they are not long standing and they are new communities. Whether the sector grows is dependent upon the statutory funders meeting the needs of those communities. They need to engage with the communities and we can now help that to happen.'

'We have a Volunteer Forum ...Through this Forum we can address issues of power and encourage the participation of volunteers in project development and strategy'

5.2.4 Innovative working- doing things differently

Apart from one organisation that did view their work as innovative, organisations interviewed, did not like the terminology of 'innovation'. They could see that the projects that they had undertaken would inform the future of their work, and may lead to them undertaking that work in different ways, but they did not view this as 'innovative'. Some organisations were planning to undertake some of their core activities in a different way having gathered information from the study.

'We will alter our approach to the newsletter. We will use the information for fundraising both for ourselvesand for our members'

Some organisations felt that the recommendations arising from their studies or reports indicated different ways of working for the organisation.

'The feasibility itself is not innovative but some of the recommendations are innovative to this organisation...I would like to see the frontline service delivery organisations develop extraordinary skills to take regional responsibility and then integrate the good practice and share it amongst the members.'

Some of the funding ideas in the study are innovative e.g. getting a group of sponsors together who would agree long term core funding on a rolling programme, with one funder agreeing one period of three year funding at a time. This way the funding could last nine years or more.

At least one of the funded projects used a participatory research methodology, enabled by an experienced consultant, that allowed the learning of the projects to stay in the organisation.

For others, the project had given them ideas and inspired them to take on further activities such as conferences and events that would bring people together. In the course of the project, they had viewed at first hand the benefits of bringing organisations together either through workshops or dissemination events and would now build on this.

6. The Evaluation- findings about future resource implications

6.1 Resource implications for the future

Virtually all of the organisations interviewed had a shopping list of items that needed to be resourced as a result of the work undertaken. For a couple of the organisations, these resources were not for their own organisation, but for others who would take the work up at a regional level.

For most of the projects, the resource implications, if the work identified was to be funded in its entirety, were not quantifiable in terms of exact financial figures, but were very significant. Some organisations had identified the need for new posts such as policy officers, managers of networks and databases. Some were looking to develop specialist or sub regional hubs as part of their future strategy to deliver. Other items on the shopping list include funding to encourage and support volunteering¹, and the development of an electronic directory of organisations.

The programme itself brought new knowledge about the need to deliver additional services, which were currently beyond the organisations capacities to deliver. Despite the warnings that future funding could not be guaranteed to take the work forward, there was inevitably a raising of expectations that now that need had been identified, somebody would have to fund the work to satisfy that need. The current core funding of some organisations that took part in the programme, is currently under threat through lack of resources, let alone any planned expansion of their services.

One organisation that did attempt to quantify the amount of resources needed to take the work forward estimated around £75,000 per annum for salaries, consultancies and setting up costs to establish regional networks. Another when asked how much funding was required just said:

'How long is a piece of string? There are massive resource implications for organisations themselves; the more aware they become, the more opportunities there are out there, the more they'll want to participate in them. It has considerable implications in terms of time skills and money.'

¹ One county apparently has no funding at all to support volunteering though the Volunteering England initiative may fill some of the gap.

Not surprising most organisations identified the Main Spend Programme as the most obvious choice for future financial support for the projects identified. They saw this as a natural progression from the work funded in the Early Spend. Other funding sources identified included Future Builders, Objective 3, and Regional Development Agency, other statutory sources, independent trusts and foundations. Some organisations had not as yet reached the stage where they had identified future funding sources other than the Main Spend Programme. One organisation identified the need for additional resources and had then accessed significant resources from a local Trust with more funding coming from Objective 3 funding underspend.

The majority of the organisations understood that there was no guarantee that they would receive any future funding from the Main Spend Programme; however they felt that if the needs identified or the work started through the Early Spend was not resourced, then the whole exercise would have been wasteful.

'If the resources cannot be found to carry this work on, then the sector won't improve and will just carry on muddling along; and this region will fall behind other regions and that will impact on actual service delivery and people's personal lives'

'If resources cannot be found, the work will relapse to where it was one year ago and it will stay that way'

'If the future work cannot be resourced then what was it all about?'

6.2 Income Generation

Several organisations had ideas around income generation to ensure that they had a diverse funding base. Membership fees for networks and forum, and the selling of the web based tool developed during the Early Spend Programme, were just two of the ideas for income generation. With some of the more fragile organisations, significant income generation from fees was identified as unlikely. However, the main concern of a number of organisations was still how their core costs or the core costs of the new proposed activities could be covered.

6.3 Relationships with Local Strategic Partnerships

Given that each area has a Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), and these could be viewed as the gateway to future funding, organisations were asked for their views on engagement with their LSP. Some organisations, although not currently engaging with the LSPs, did try to look to the future and to see a possible role. However, the majority of organisations interviewed appeared to be aware of their LSP but were not actively

engaging with them. They have 'no teeth', 'no power' and 'no funding' seemed to be the majority view.

'They are a complete waste of time and are failing across the board with regard to social inclusion.'

In a completely different part of the region, the view of LSPs was roughly the same:

'There should be a role for LSPs but they are way behind in their development. Most LSPs are not effective'.

Only three organisations seemed at all positive in their views about engaging with LSPs. These tended, in the main, to be organisations that had not as yet tried to engage, but were hopeful that any such engagement might be worth their while.



'The majority of organisations interviewed felt that the work that had been funded would have future implications with regard to enabling people to have a say in the way services are delivered.'

7. The Evaluation- findings about identified gaps

A number of the organisations funded had undertaken a mapping exercise as part of their funded work. It is not possible in this report to deal with the results of all the mapping exercises. However, the mapping that was undertaken outside of the regional generalist mapping, did seem to be useful exercise with some specific indicators for the future ChangeUp Programme. It is important to look at the mapping reports in detail to obtain specific information about the gaps that have been identified through the work. However, there are a number of areas where gaps were identified by those organisations interviewed as part of this evaluation that are useful indications for the ChangeUp Programme.

7.1 The needs of particular communities

There are two specific areas where under resourced organisations are currently trying to provide developmental and infrastructure support to their members, but are severely restricted by lack of resources. The work undertaken through the Early Spend has identified the additional need and identified a way forward for both these areas of work. One is infrastructure support for BME communities, and the other is infrastructure and developmental support for organisations working with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender groups (LGBT). In both cases there is one regional organisation offering support, with little more than one worker funded to carry out the developmental work throughout the region. Development within these sectors particularly in the non-urban areas is severely limited which has led to these communities accessing far less funding support for activity support than other communities.

Other specific gaps in infrastructure provision identified included gaps in provision for grassroots community development and support workers.

'There is very little infrastructure for people working at the grassroots. There is a real disparity of provision. There is little help for those people who want to make things better in their communities.'

Support for volunteering was another specific area referred to, although this also seemed to vary from area to area,² and the lack of infrastructure to deal with equality issues.

7.2 The need for training

Having the capacity to offer future training was identified through the work undertaken as one of the major needs for the sector, by virtually all

² This may be in part responded to through the ACU funded Volunteering England programme

of the organisations interviewed. The training needs vary according to the differing needs of volunteers, service users, members and staff. This seems to be a gap generally throughout the region, apart from one area that has a well-respected and dedicated service providing learning opportunities to the sector set. This training provider was set up initially up by the development agencies operating within that county and may provide a model for future training developments. One of the 'next step' proposals identified from one of the projects was a countywide voluntary sector training initiative, to replace the earlier project that had closed.

'There is a need for grassroots training to help community activists to get training'

The lack of appropriate training provision is a gap that has been identified where there is a clear need for this provision. The benefits of providing training were obvious to the organisations, but the lack of appropriate training was a big issue.

Training in ICT skills was one of the main areas mentioned and goes alongside the development of a strategy to update and increase the future ICT capacity of the sector as a whole.

'If the ICT Centre happens it will be great as there's a crying need for ICT support in VCS and the need for the VCS to further develop their capacity by using ICT more effectively'

One organisation identified a critical lack of a lack of IT skills among the BME community which meant that the very tools and information services that the organisation developed as part of the Early Spend Programme, might not benefit the people it was aimed at. Lack of ICT skills for this community meant that they were excluded from taking part in consultation, that they did not receive information on funding and opportunities in the same way that many other groups did which increased their 'exclusion' and 'disadvantage'.

Other organisations also recognised the need for ICT support and it was the focus of one of the Early Spend projects:

'People do not have the IT skills to use this tool that we have developed. They need IT training but the lack of appropriate training provision is much wider than just IT'.

7.3 Quality issues

A number of organisations referred to the lack of standards within the sector or a way of measuring quality. It was referred to as a particular issue with regard to Councils for Voluntary Services (CVS) but was equally true of the sector as a whole:

*'There are around 300 Councils for Voluntary Services (CVS) nationally all of varying quality. There are no standards.'*³

As part of the measuring quality debate, was the desire for effective evaluation skills.

7.4 The Need for Evaluation Skills

Four organisations mentioned the need for appropriate evaluation and training in how to undertake this as part of their capacity building. Funders expected organisations to evaluate projects funded, and yet very few organisations felt they had the skills or the knowledge of how to undertake this.

7.5 Other gaps

Other gaps identified by individual groups included the need for **Human Resource (HR) provision**. Although not one of the subjects of the evaluation, one organisation has undertaken an in depth study looking at the HR needs of a certain part of the sector.

'The issue of Human Resources, information and support around human resources for VCS-that's something I would have given higher priority to.'

Several organisations indicated the **need for core funding** if they were to survive, and connected with that was the need for **information on funding**. *'People just don't know where to go for help'*

Another need identified was a need to increase the opportunity and capacity for groups to come together as this is where they learn most, through **networking**.

'Organisations need more opportunity of coming together and learning from each other.'

The network is just reliant on good will and brilliant people, but it is not funded and knowledge and information is not disseminated properly.

³ Funded by ACU, NACVS has a consultant working at present on developing a set of standards for CVS, to be available as a pilot from Autumn 2004

8. The evaluation- findings about aspects of the Early Spend programme

8.1 'Value for Money'

It is difficult to assess at this stage the full value of the Early Spend Programme to the infrastructure of the VCS in the South West. Organisations obviously valued the opportunity that the funding brought and felt that a great deal had been achieved with the funding.

No organisation managed to access match funding as a direct result of receiving funding from the Early Spend Programme and it seems unlikely that this could ever have been achieved within the timescale of this programme. One organisation, as mentioned previously, did access £50,000 from an independent trust to carry forward the work.

However, if the value of work undertaken by the Early Spend Programme is to be maximised the common view from most organisations was that the work must be continued or at least the recommendations followed up in part by the Main Spend Programme.

'This piece of work was very good value for money. Now the Government needs to do something about it.'

8.2 The use of consultants

The Early Spend Programme funded a combination of staff time and consultants' time. The need to buy in consultants often came from the pressure of time and the short time scale of the programme.

'We have used more consultants' time than we originally planned due to time constraints and pressures on existing staff'

'If it was not such a short timescale we could have done some of the work ourselves'

This is the one main issue that appeared regularly in the interviews with many organisations, when looking at value for money. However, for some organisations and for some pieces of the work, the need to use consultants was unavoidable because of the specialist nature of the work.

The daily rates for consultants varied from £200 per day to £400 as charged by the universities who provided consultants. Most organisations seemed to feel that the charges imposed by consultants were roughly at a rate to be expected. However, the main issue in employing consultants was the issue of the skills and experience and contacts that those

consultants built up, not then being available to the organisation, and being lost once the consultant moved on to the next piece of work

'There's the issue of employing consultants at a high cost and the need to embed those skills and knowledge into your organisation in the long term'

Most organisations, had they had the choice, would not have chosen to use consultants, but would have undertaken the work themselves and spread it over a longer period of time. However, the speed with which the work had to be undertaken, meant that by necessity consultants became an essential part of a number of these projects.

Generally, organisations brought in consultants they knew of or had used before, because of the specialist nature of the work. The vast majority of the organisations that used consultants were very pleased with the work that they had undertaken.

8.3 Help 'In Kind'

Help in kind was not a major feature of the programme. However, one organisation looks likely to receive some assistance from two IT companies, should the project continue. Another had office space given during the duration of the project.

The increase in volunteers from the private sector is another factor of 'help in kind' identified by one of the organisations. One private company has offered the use of its cinema club which is worth about £1,000 per annum to an organisation.

Another organisation identified the input from the steering group running the project as 'help in kind', and valued this at around £3,500 for the lifetime of the project. Many of the projects had steering groups and if this sum is multiplied across the programme then the contribution of help in kind from steering group members is not insignificant.

8.4 Challenges in delivery of the Projects

Despite the tight timescales and pressure of having to deliver the project on time, the sector generally enjoyed the experience. They found it 'exciting', 'stimulating', and 'very positive'. It was a challenge that most enjoyed- *'Having to work under such a timescale you just get on with it'*.

People had to build on existing contacts to get the projects up and delivering on time. Existing connections were vital to getting the project delivered.

'The process was challenging. Without our connections we could not have done it'

The difficulties encountered were mainly around poor relationships between organisations, as mentioned previously, particularly between certain development agencies.

'This whole process has raised the level of conflict between the CVS and the Rural Community Council. It is inevitable where funding is concerned'

One organisation mentioned difficulties with identifying appropriate contacts to interview within the NHS.

'There were difficulties contacting NHS people e.g. in PCTs, getting time in the diaries of the Directors of Public Health'

Two organisations referred to the difficulties of delivering a service across such a vast and diverse region, but the difficulties identified in the delivery of this programme of funded projects were few.

While not the subject of this report it is acknowledged that some of the mapping exercises that took part in this programme did suffer from a poor return rate on questionnaires.

8.5 Ownership of the Data Collected

A significant number of organisations have collected data in the course of the work funded by the Early Spend Programme. Some have established databases with the information, and others have put the information into a website provision. The question is now who owns the data?

The organisations are clear that, with regard to the data that has been collected to input into databases, the data is owned by them, but they will make it accessible through their usual information routes to those who use their services. In fact for a number of organisations certain data will be covered by the Data Protection Act and they will not be able to release it. However, it is likely that the majority of data is data that could be in the public domain, but a lack of clarity over who has ownership of this data, had inevitably left most organisation viewing the data as their own property, although their intention is to make this available through their own vehicles of dissemination. It seems likely that the majority of the written reports will be accessible via the web or other routes and will be in the public domain. However, this is a subject that does need to be clarified for the Main Spend Programme.

9. Conclusions and Recommendations

9.1 Conclusions

The Early Spend Programme was delivered over a five-month period from February 2004 - end of June 2004, while the Framework for the Main Spend Programme, now known as ChangeUp⁴, was being developed and finalised centrally by the Active Communities Directorate (ACD). Views from organisations that did not receive funding from the programme, echo some of the concerns of the sector around enforced changes being imposed that will alter its face forever, in a desire to make the sector 'fit for purpose'- that purpose being to deliver the Government agenda.

However, despite some of the open criticism of the Government's intentions, the experience of the delivery of this programme in the South West Region has been overwhelmingly positive. From the sector's appreciation of the GOSW's approach to the delivery and management of the programme, to the sector's own determination, energy and stoicism at delivering of such an extensive programme in such a short timescale.

The Main Spend Programme, ChangeUp, as stated in the documentation is likely to '*build on what is already working well*', '*clarifying gaps and what needs to change*'. The Early Spend Programme in the South West had the aim of undertaking early assessment profiles of the sectors' needs and weaknesses, and there is much evidence within the evaluation that this was carried out. As a result of the Early Spend programme, the sector is now far better informed about itself, about its membership and the needs of that membership. Gaps in infrastructure provision for specialised communities are well documented and evidence points the way to areas that must be given priority for future support, if there is to be a more equal playing field and distribution of resources. Geographical gaps were the subject of the main mapping exercise.

ChangeUp is looking specifically for **performance improvement** among frontline organisations and is seeking ways of doing this. The Early Spend Programme in the South West also sought initial improvements in infrastructure support and capacity. Organisations funded through the Early Spend Programme in the South West Region, formed new partnerships and collaborative ways of working. They built on existing partnerships to the benefit of their membership and raised the profile of the sector and its credibility with statutory agencies.

New strategies have been developed for the delivery of infrastructure support in certain areas, using local and specialised hubs as delivery tools.

⁴ <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/comrace/active/developing/>

Potential new and more effective ways of working have been identified, from the development of web based tools providing information and skills exchange, to increasing the use of workshops and face to face work.

To enable the workforce to develop, ChangeUp has identified that there should be a greater range of '**accessible professional development**'. This was one of the key themes from the Early Spend Programme in the South West, which was seeking the development of new training, and support programmes. Some skills building did take place within the programme, but the greater issue was the identification of the need for training and the indication of the types of training that are required. The need for training for workers particularly those working at the grassroots level was a recurring theme. The need for ICT training was evident not just for staff and paid workers, but also for those wishing to make use of the services. This is of particular importance because of the nature of the area and the difficulties of communication.

Within the funded projects, is a proposed strategy for equipping and skilling the frontline organisations within the VCS in part of the region in ICT skills. and to ensure that there are facilities in place to improve access and usage of ICT. There are also strategies that have been developed around delivering infrastructure support through hubs of expertise. While accepting that 'one size fits all' is not always an appropriate way forward, there are some strategies within the work funded that are specific to certain geographical areas that could be used as models and adapted to fit a different or wider geographical spread. This will also be influenced by the current national research.⁵

ChangeUp acknowledges that the VCS plays an important **role in delivering public services and in building strong, cohesive and self-determining communities**. Frontline services often work with those most at risk from exclusion, and ChangeUp identifies that what people need most when it comes to support is '*affordable face to face support*'. This was a strong theme within the Early Spend Programme in the South West. A number of organisations through the work funded were given the opportunity to undertake face-to-face work and many commented on the value of this and their desire to continue with this way of working in the future if the need for support is to be met. The recognition of the importance of face-to-face interaction, whether it is

⁵ **The ICT Consortium** (<http://www.ictconsortium.org.uk/>) are a group of voluntary sector organisations who have come together to plan and deliver a co-ordinated framework of ICT guidance, good practice, advice and support for voluntary and community organisations, accessible at a local level. Their aim is to improve voluntary and community sector ICT infrastructure so that voluntary and community organisations are enabled to achieve their missions more efficiently and effectively through the better use of ICT. The Active Community Directorate at the Home Office has provided developmental funding for a six month period to produce a detailed plan for delivering an ICT infrastructure for the voluntary and community sector.

through workshops events or delivering the service through one to one meetings, means that organisations need the capacity to work in this way.

The Early Spend Programme wished to see an **increase in opportunities for citizen participation**. This was achieved in two ways through the Early Spend Programme in the South West. One way was by the organisations improving routes of communication not just between themselves and their members, but also by improving their own communications with the statutory agencies, through which they will be able to feed the views of the members. Organisations also raised their profiles and gained credibility through the programme.

The other way that the sector increased opportunities for citizen participation was through increasing the opportunities for volunteering. Three of the projects funded were seeking to increase participation of marginalised communities in volunteering. All showed innovation in this field and have provided good and different models of engagement.

Discussions and collaboration between the sector and funding agencies were more difficult to deliver within the timescale and very few new funding relationships were developed. However, raising the profile of the sector and quantifying needs, are both benefits which move funding relationships forward over a longer period of time, and give potential funders a better insight into priorities.

The Early Spend programme in the South West was seen as an opportunity for the sector and a challenge for all involved. It was a challenge that the sector rose to and delivered well on. It is now important to build on the information gathered in this programme, to look at the needs identified and the strategies developed, and see how this can be best used in informing the future programme and development of the sector.

9.2 Recommendations

A. Process for delivering the programme

- ❑ The interpersonal skills of the two Government Office staff were integral to ensuring that the application process went as smoothly as possible, in what were quite difficult circumstances. Having such good staff to front this Programme also improved relationships between GOSW and the VCS. These relationships should be built upon for the Main Spend Programme.
- ❑ GOSW needs to be much clearer that bidding to the Main Infrastructure Programme is not an open process, and therefore should not be judged as such, if unfair criticism of the process is to be avoided. Any process used must be very clear.

- ❑ GOSW should continue with their method of retaining 10% of the funding, which will give them some flexibility for those organisations that both overspend and under spend, whilst ensuring that costings within bids are as close as possible to actuals.
- ❑ The Main Spend Programme should not necessarily be restricted to those organisations that benefited from the Early Spend Programme. There is some evidence to suggest that organisations that have a role to play in infrastructure development did not apply to the Early Spend programme, for a variety of reasons beyond their control. It is not the intention of GOSW exclude these organisations unfairly from the Main Spend Programme. This should be made clear.
- ❑ The Regional Steering Group members and those people who have taken part in the national development of the ChangeUp Programme should be encouraged to 'share their wisdom'. However, Steering Group members need to ensure that they get the training and information that they need, in order to be clear about the criteria for the programme and about their own role in the process.
- ❑ Regional Steering Group members who are closely associated with any organisation applying to the Main Spend Programme, should not take part in the setting of the criteria or in the selection of groups to be funded, as they will have or could be seen to have a vested interest in the process. It is not sufficient that they just absent themselves from the decision-making meeting.

B. Collaborative Working

- ❑ Positive partnerships that have been developed through the Early Spend Programme should be supported and developed where appropriate.
- ❑ Rural Community Councils and Councils for Voluntary Services need to come to a mutual understanding about their roles. As infrastructure bodies they need to examine their working relationships, if they are to maximise the benefit from the Main Spend Programme.
- ❑ While promoting community cohesion is to be encouraged, for certain organisations with very specialised memberships, they are sometimes the only organisations who can reach their members and work with them effectively. This is particularly true for some members of BME communities, LGB(T) communities and organisations operating within areas of high levels of deprivation whether urban or rural.

C. Gaps in provision

- ❑ **Needs of Particular Communities:** One of the most pressing needs for infrastructure support within the VCS is support for marginalised communities, in particular LGB(T) communities, BME communities and those working with people in 'marginalised' communities including those on low incomes. These must be given priority for future support, if there is to be a more equal distribution of resources.
- ❑ **The need for training:** The lack of appropriate training provision was highlighted by the majority of organisations interviewed, particularly for those working at the grassroots level. This is of particular importance because of the nature of the region and the difficulties of communication. The future funding of training if performance improvement is to be achieved is of vital importance to the sector.
- ❑ **Other gaps Identified:** Other gaps identified included the need for Human Resource (HR) provision: the need for information on funding, and the need for increased networking. All of these need closer examination with regard to what opportunities are already on offer through other initiatives such as Creating Excellence, South West Forum Regeneration Network and others.
- ❑ **Equality Issues:** The sector has the opportunity within the Main Spend Programme to build on the work undertaken in the Early Spend Programme and to become a leading player in the field of equality.

D. New Ways of working

- ❑ **Face to face working:** Some consideration should be given to funding the capacity of organisations to undertake face-to-face work if this is the most effective and appropriate way to work with their client groups. This may be of particular importance to 'marginalised' communities who need to build trust and confidence.
- ❑ **Future Strategies:** Within the reports by the funded projects are a number of forward looking strategies, including the use of hubs both as specialist centres of service delivery on a county basis and as a way of delivery services at a subregional level. These strategies are worth further examination if new ways of working are to be tested.
- ❑ **Use of consultants:** Generally the use of consultants was seen more as a necessity than desirable, unless the consultants worked in a specialised field or in a collaborative way with the groups. For the Main Spend Programme, which will be delivered over a longer period, less use of consultants would appear desirable and better value for money.

E. Increasing Opportunities for Citizen Participation

- ❑ **Volunteering.** Within the projects funded are good examples of increasing opportunities for citizen participation particularly among marginalised communities and the benefits that this can bring. Provision of opportunity is patchy throughout the region and more consideration may need to be given to supporting volunteering alongside the support that this may get from other funding sources .
- ❑ **Giving people a voice:** A number of projects have members whose views need to be heard in the developing and delivering of services. Increased knowledge and communication capacity will enhance the ability of those organisations to increase citizens' participation in developing service delivery.



'There will be better lines of communication between service providers and funders. There has been a tendency to neglect certain communities'

APPENDIX 1 List of Steering Group members for the Early Spend Programme

- Government Office for the South West
- South West Regional Development Agency
- South West Forum
- Local Government Association
- South West rural Community Councils
- Development Trusts Association
- RISE
- Black South West Network
- National Association for Community and Volunteers Service (NACVS)
- SW Racial Equality Councils

Additional members who have joined the Steering/Advisory Group

South West CVS

ACEVO

CEMVO

NAYCP

Sport England

Countryside Agency

Bassac

Big Lottery Fund

APPENDIX 2 Organisations funded

SW INFRASTRUCTURE EARLY SPEND

APPROVED PROJECTS

NAME OF ORG	GEOGRAPHIC AREA	SPECIALISM	SUMMARY OF PROJECT
Fair Shares*	South West	Volunteering/ Citizenship	Design and delivery of training and network development utilising links with agencies to support regional infrastructure for the development of timebanking.
Community Council of Devon	Devon (excluding Torbay & Plymouth)		Scoping exercise into the needs of the VCS. Working with the LSP and other bodies to enable effective engagement with the sector.
South West Forum	South West		Rebuild & Redesign of website. To include discussion forum & practice/case study info. Hot-desking and co-locating with other VCS orgs in order to reduce costs and pool resources. 2 regional networking events to disseminate the experience and outputs gained during the early spend.
Learning South West*	South West	Youth	Research to identify services available and those not currently accessing infrastructure help and advice. Build stronger links with LA's and LSP's,
The Care Forum*	South West	Health	Mapping infrastructure in order to identify gaps and ascertain ways to work collaboratively.
The Intercom Trust*	South West (excluding Bristol, Gloucester, Sth Glos)	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual	Mapping of service providers and their current & future infrastructure needs. Mapping of available resources and where partnership working can be supported and encouraged.
North Somerset Local Volunteer Development Agency*	BANES, Bristol, Nth Somerset, Sth Glos		Mapping to delivery level, identifying generalist and specialist infrastructure
SWAN	South West		Investigate existing infrastructure ability whilst identifying strengths and weaknesses and the feasibility of a collaborative approach. Develop an accreditation process in order to drive quality assurance through each RCC.
Gloucester Centre for Voluntary Service	Gloucestershire		Needs analysis, facilitate discussions to secure income, develop a county-wide strategy and action plan
Exeter CVS*	Devon (excluding Plymouth & Torbay)	Compact	Redevelop the Compact through a hub model, liaising with the 8 LSPs & co-ordinating consultation with a specific focus on the BME sector, disseminating good practice for engagement of this equality strand.
The Scarman Trust*	South West		Further development of a website that acts as a skills register and provides an online forum.
BDA/Black South West Network*	South West	BME	Identification of needs within the network and feasibility study of the capacity of the sector. Development of a web based resource library of policy, training and funding advice. Develop relationships with LA's and LSP's in order to address the funding needs of the sector.

Barton Hill Settlement*	East Bristol	Volunteering	Collaboration of volunteering orgs across Bristol, building partnership & developing networks. Infrastructure service to volunteering organisations, including advice and assistance, training on volunteer management, roles & responsibilities of committees and providing a central policy area.
Cornwall Voluntary Sector Forum	Cornwall		Map the infrastructure provision, identifying duplication and gaps in services. Develop a long-term strategy & action plan for the development of the sector.
Dorset Community Action **	Dorset (Bridport)		Feasibility study researching the linking of partnership infrastructure orgs in order to obtain joint rentable space.
Family Education Development Trust*	South West	Parents and children	Website development in order to give members a voice, give access to discussions and support and enable a wider audience to be reached. A membership capacity and sustainability needs analysis.
VOSCUR*	South West sub-region	ICT	Addressing the ICT needs of the sector by assessing needs and identifying the potential of rolling out support centres
South West TUC*	South West	Equalities	Establishing and development of a regional network for each equality strand.
Somerset Voluntary Sector Network	Somerset		Mapping of interest groups and develop a long-term funding strategy for the network.
The Recycling Consortium*	South West	Recycling & Waste	Mapping of infrastructure, identifying members needs, skills and opportunities for collaboration.
Salisbury & District CVS**	Wiltshire including Swindon	Compact	Refine the development of the countywide Compact, extend participation and produce codes of practice.

*Organisations that took full part in the evaluation

**Organisations that were interviewed

APPENDIX 3 Projects' own comparisons of initial aims against actual outcomes

Aims and Objectives	What was achieved
<p>Recycling Consortium</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the existing strengths of the community waste sector in the SW. • Identify ways in which the sector's activities can meet government waste strategies and targets. • Develop greater clarity of the sector's relationships with local authorities and regional bodies. • Identify the support and infrastructure requirements needed by the sector if it is to reach its full potential in becoming a significant service provider. 	<p>Scoping study of all community waste groups in the SW (50% return rate achieved on questionnaires sent out) – study identified work activity, relationships with public bodies and views regarding the development of a SW network of community waste groups.</p> <p>Identification of support needs of the sector.</p> <p>Consultation with local authorities and regional bodies regarding their relationships with the community sector waste groups and the value they would place on the development of a SW Network.</p> <p>Consultation with other community waste networks and the principal national networks re their expectations regarding a regional network in the SW.</p> <p>Case studies of other regional community waste networks: London CRN and Cylch (Wales) regarding their structure, the support they offer to local groups and relationships they have with regional bodies.</p> <p>Recommendations for the development of a SW network of community waste groups, the establishment of Steering Group to take the work forward and identification of the next steps.</p>

Aims and Objectives

Fair Shares

- To generate interest in increasing the number of time banking schemes in the south west and develop capacity and expertise in existing schemes, thereby improving the quality of life of those most disadvantaged.
- To map the current time banking schemes, identify areas with significant gaps and potential and publicise the work of the 'neighbour to neighbour' and the specialised time banks
- To build the framework for a regional network of existing and developing time banking schemes in the south west.

What was achieved

Generating interest and building capacity

Joined South West Forum

Attended South West and Civil Renewal Seminar, University of Plymouth.

Presentation in Bristol during volunteer's week

Two promotional and training days- 18th and 30th June.

Fair Shares website updated and updatable by time brokers themselves.

The handbook called 'On Becoming a Time Broker' has been completely rewritten.

A paper on quality standards for time banks has been prepared and

A comprehensive contact list of voluntary and community groups in the south west has been researched and archived for future use.

Complete mapping of time banking schemes

Working in partnership with Time Banks UK, we carried out a complete assessment of the current state of Time Banks in the South West; there are 9 projects who are in the early or late stages of development and 11 that are fully active. All the active Time Banks are happy to come under the umbrella of the Fair Shares South West Time Banking Network.

A 'South West Time Banks Network' brochure has been written.

To build a framework

The aim of the new network is to offer mutual support for time brokers, to share best practice, to explore potential for new applications of time broking and avoid any possible duplication of work.

In partnership with existing time banks and with Time Banks UK, Fair Shares is ideally placed to take on a co-ordinating role as it has been working in the South West for a long period of time and is well-respected and widely known.

We identified that for the network to become strong and achieve its potential there needs to be a paid coordinator in the south west. This post would become the voice of time banking and offer practical help and support.

The core group of representatives from all the active time banks in the south west have met twice and have covered a lot of ground. We have all agreed to keep the interest alive and support the south west network in the future.

Aims and Objectives

Regional Youth Network & S West Voluntary Youth Network (Learning South West)

The primary purpose of this study is to inform the building of the infrastructure and capacity of the voluntary youth work organisations in the region.

Task 1 - Identify local specialist, BME and small voluntary youth organisations not currently interfacing with the SW Network

Task 2 - Assess how to build the voluntary youth work networks at Local Authority level and form stronger links into RYWU and SW Network

Task 3 - Explore how National Voluntary Youth Organisations (NVYOs) with regional networks can assist in sector development at regional level

Task 4 - Identify how partnerships between the voluntary and statutory youth work services can be encouraged and facilitated to help meet Government, regional and national youth work objectives and targets

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What was achieved

- The research process sought to involve a broad range of relevant organisations and groups within a short timescale, with an emphasis upon participation. A strong trend in all data sources is the need for funding, in order to move forward now with partnerships and networks in strategy, service planning and service delivery. Findings from all sources confirm strong support for realistic development, which should take due consideration of reservations and limitations, expressed in the SWOT analysis as weaknesses and threats.
- The report provides validated information and practical tools, to assist the SW Network and the RYWU in their effort to secure funding from a range of sources in order to strengthen and build the sector, with a view towards sustainability.
- Multiple data sources also confirm the desire for a listening leadership – an Infrastructure Steering Group may be the appropriate way forward during an interim period of sourcing funds. The research has identified good practice at strategic (e.g. partnership building) and operational (e.g. support activities) levels upon which to draw. The 3 recommendations focus upon strategy, capacity and delivery of infrastructure support.
- With appropriate levels of funding, the SW Network will be in a strong position to become an effective regional influence and respond to the needs of a broad membership.

Aims and Objectives

Somerset Voluntary Sector Network

- The project had two parts with three objectives in total. These were:
- 1. Reassess existing mapping and research around the VCS in Equalities in Somerset
- 2. To refocus this around three Strands of Interest: BME, Young People and Adults
- 3. To develop a Funding Strategy for the Somerset Voluntary Sector Network.

What was achieved

- The aim of the reassessing of the existing mapping into three particular 'Strands of Interest' was to support a substantial, and new, LSC co-financed project, focused entirely on Capacity Building within in the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS).
- It provided us with a perfectly timed resource to underpin the focus of Somerset Future Foundations (SFF), which is the LSC co-financed project.
- SFF is a consortium project, which focused its application, to the LSC, on the ethos of the new 'Working Together' strategy between the LSC and the VCS.
- This project also produced the Forward Strategy for Somerset Voluntary Sector Network (SVSN).
- It has given us the framework around which to develop our business and action plans for the next three years and the structure for SVSN to build on.
- In addition, the SVSN is a new, young organisation with the Management Committee being drawn from the main infrastructure organisations in Somerset.
- This project, together with the supportive funding, allowed the Management Team to spend real and powerful time together.
- It allowed us to build a real team for the Network, and has helped us to develop an identity for the organization and start to develop organisation and its identity.
- This project also gave us the space and time to start this earlier rather than later.

<u>Aims and objectives</u>	<u>What was achieved</u>
<p>Gloucestershire Infrastructure Group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To develop a draft sustainable Infrastructure Strategy, a draft Delivery Plan and a draft Funding Strategy for improving the quality, quantity, content and availability of infrastructure services in Gloucestershire. <p>Project Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An audit of each consortium member – infrastructure functions provided, quantity, geographic spread, quality, delivery method, operation of organisation including funding base, future plans, governance and staffing. • VCOs infrastructure functions needs analysis – questionnaires and focus groups. • Work with existing and potential funders – stock take of existing funding, explore new funding • Develop governance models and partnership agreements • From the information gathered, develop a sustainable infrastructure strategy and action plan for the county. 	<p>ACU Early Spend focused on three priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Researching the current provision of infrastructure support to frontline organisations and seeking further views on further needs; ➤ Testing the current delivery strength of each of the GIG organisations; ➤ Starting work on identifying how infrastructure organisations could best work with strategic partners for their mutual long term relationship. <p>The DEFRA strand was utilised by GIG to drill down further into :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The availability and use of ICT and mobile telephone technology by frontline groups in order to determine their needs in relation to provision of advice and information by infrastructure organisations; ➤ The particular needs of BME groups servicing frontline organisations; ➤ Further research to identify the barriers to frontline organisations in the most rural parts of Gloucestershire. <p>The considerable research that has been undertaken has provided important objective evidence to guide the work of GIG partner organisations, in particular how to best help frontline VCOs build their capacity to deliver quality services. The key outputs include: a strategic framework for long term planning of enhanced infrastructure services, workplans for the two main strands of forward planning; and the research base.</p>

Aims and Objectives

Scarman Trust

- Map existing services and resources available to grassroots
- Identify current gaps in provision/infrastructure
- Create forums to encourage exchange of good practice
- Build geographical and issue based networks
- Encourage and stimulate channelling and combining of existing resources

What was achieved

- Established (via consultation and Can Do Exchange) that services and resources are limited and inaccessible
- Patchy – little access to intelligent information at the grassroots, resources limited and underused because no mechanism to access/share, desire for training, mentoring, information (funding, community finance etc)
- Established forums via the Exchange and via networking
- Geographical and issue based networks being established via Exchange
- Happening and by more face to face networking

Aims and objectives

Community ICT Support Centre/ Voscur

- Market test the BrisCIT ICT support centre business plan on a range of voluntary and community sector and ICT support provider organisations
- Undertake a baseline assessment of ICT support provision across the West of England sub-region
- Identify the potential to roll out the business plan and funding strategy so that it extends the BrisCIT model to the sub-region (if this is identified as an appropriate strategy for development).

What was achieved

- The business plan was market tested through interviews with 54 community, voluntary and social enterprise organisations in the West of England sub-region. 18 suppliers and providers of ICT products and services were also interviewed.
- A base line assessment of ICT support provision was undertaken – with specific regard to barriers to the use of ICT within the voluntary and community sectors; ICT support needs of the voluntary and community sector; existing ICT support within the sector and the appropriateness of existing support to needs.
- Recommendations for the development of the business plan and funding strategy were made.
- Additionally a bench marking exercise was carried out against 3 other community ICT support projects in other parts of the country. The links made during the benchmarking exercise will be developed and extended in order to contribute to the continued collation and dissemination of good practice.

Two separate reports have been produced:

- “ A report into the findings of a market-testing exercise” – Philip Parry Associates
- and “TWEACIT Project Benchmarking Report” – Nick Plant, Community Information Systems Centre, University of the West of England, Bristol.
- Both reports will contribute to the national survey of ICT Support in sub-regional voluntary and community organisations.
- A summary report combining key elements of both reports has been produced.

Findings and recommendations from this work will inform the development of ICT support for VCS organisations in the West of England sub-regions.

<u>Aims and Objectives</u>	<u>What was achieved</u>
<p data-bbox="178 240 552 267">Dorset Community Action</p> <p data-bbox="178 310 940 475">Developing the concepts, model documents and partnerships, and planning for sustainability of, local VCS infrastructure support services in a market town (Bridport), provided via outreach from CVS and VB 'hubs' in the county town (Dorchester).</p> <p data-bbox="178 516 940 651">The outreach services to be co-located with local Bridport VCS and other organisations in a 'high street' Community Resource Centre (CRC), linked to 'back street' facilities, jointly managed by a local not-for-profit company.</p>	<p data-bbox="970 310 1969 407">'Model Documents' were developed, governing issues such as different types of tenancies, working together and sharing of information between all the organisations which would share the multi-use premises.</p> <p data-bbox="970 448 1969 613">A 'core' group of local and countywide organisations was surveyed and have committed to wanting to be based at/regularly use the CRC premises for service delivery, and a very much larger group have also expressed interest in a variety of other uses. Discussions with a few statutory bodies are ongoing.</p> <p data-bbox="970 654 1969 751">A search was carried out for appropriate premises in Bridport, which has resulted in a very suitable and available building being identified, which also has developmental potential for affordable housing at the rear.</p> <p data-bbox="970 792 1969 927">A detailed premises-related report was produced, looking at both the generic and specific premises related issues for Community Resource Centres, and the Bridport buildings respectively. This was supplemented by an ICT report.</p> <p data-bbox="970 967 1969 1133">All this work fed into a Sustainable Business Plan for the CRC, which demonstrates the importance of community ownership for the CRC to be sustainable, and that if linked to affordable housing development, there is the potential for funding aspects of the basic infrastructure support in the future (asset-based development).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="1020 1174 1969 1377">➤ The concept of the CRC, and the embedded outreach provision of basic VCS infrastructure where appropriate was tested (DEFRA – funded work) in a meeting with community activists from 10 Dorset towns, and received an enthusiastic response as being relevant to the aspirations of most town regeneration partnerships, and bringing new specialist support into the towns which would be relevant to their

	<p>VCS needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ All the relevant information gathered in the course of the Bridport CRC pilot project has been passed to the Wessex Reinvestment Trust, which is making a Futurebuilders bid to support the development of several market town-based CRCs across the county.➤ Wider outcomes include excellent working relationships deepened between all the project partners, and a gathering impetus in the recognition by other VCS organisations, that outreach services are the appropriate way forward to meet the needs of Dorset's communities, based in a CRC wherever possible.
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<p><u>Aims and objectives</u></p> <p>Salisbury and District Council for Voluntary Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To strengthen the capacity of Wiltshire & Swindon Local Infrastructure Organisations to work efficiently and effectively together and by doing so to enable them to strengthen their ability to secure sustainable funding for core activities and investment in development work • To develop the LIO's across the sub region through the development of the Wiltshire Compact and the development of Codes of Practice. 	<p><u>What was achieved</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ A detailed report has been produced which provides Wiltshire & Swindon LIO's with a model for investing public funding into the delivery of representation, support and development needs within the voluntary sector. ➤ An emerging Consortium of Wiltshire Infrastructure Organisations has been established to take the recommendations contained in the report forward.
<p><u>Aims and objectives</u></p> <p>Cornwall Voluntary Sector Forum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To build county partnership group • To inform county partnership group – Mapping Cornish VCS infrastructure • To enable the VSF to apply for continuation funding for post September 2004 period when present funding finishes 	<p><u>What was achieved</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The generalist Voluntary and Community sector (VCS) infrastructure organisations (Cornwall Infrastructure Development Group) met on a number of occasions, some of which had a facilitator present, to discuss the mapping of the VCS infrastructure ➤ The mapping exercise took place and some useful information was gathered as well as generating many more questions. The draft report from this exercise highlighted the fragility of the sector in Cornwall and the funding crisis being experienced by some infrastructure organisations. ➤ It also highlighted the disparity between infrastructure provision in different parts of the County - generally between west and mid/east Cornwall. ➤ An initial meeting has taken place between the CIDG and statutory

	<p>agencies about the findings of the report and how together we can support the development of the VCS in Cornwall but unfortunately it was not well attended. A follow up meeting is planned for September.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ An 'Action Plan' is now being drafted by the Voluntary Sector Forum in which specific goals and funding needs will be listed. This will be discussed at the next CIDG meeting on the 9th August and will be the basis for any Cornwall request from the ACU 'main spend'.➤ The last part of our 'Early Spend' grant was for specialist worker support to enable the VSF to put together applications for continuation funding. Our funding from the Community Fund ends in September and unfortunately after discussions it didn't appear that another application was worth pursuing. We have had some discussions with the County Council but no positive outcome as yet.➤ Another need we had identified in Cornwall was for a specialist VCS service about Objective One. As this is a specialist area we need specific workers to inform and advocate for the sector in this area. In other Objective One areas grants have been given for 'Technical Assistance' support which is what we hope to get. The 'Early Spend' grant enabled a business plan to be drawn up outlining the project and setting out why we wanted it. This was used to start discussions with the Objective Partnership office and we are awaiting their initial comments.
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Aims and objectives

Devon Association Of CVS / Exeter CVS

- Develop Devon's voluntary and community infrastructure through development of the Devon Association of Councils for Voluntary Service (DACVS)
- Set up and pilot DACVS hub as a model for effective communication
- Develop Compact with statutory and voluntary/community group partners and Local Strategic Partnerships

What was achieved

- DACVS now meeting regularly.
- Drafted a DACVS Learning and Skills Strategy and Development Plan (April 2004 – March 2007)
- Agreed to and supported a review of CVS/Volunteer Bureau functions to be carried out by Devon County Council
- Hub champions, statutory and voluntary and community sector, have collaborated on developing a mechanism for drafting the Compact. Through the ongoing Hub process and the development and consultation of the Compact, awareness is being raised throughout all levels of statutory agencies.
- The consultation planned to start in September detailed above will involve the statutory champions consulting widely on the Compact throughout their own agencies and peer groups, as well as through the LSPs.
- The Hub model has proved successful in bringing people from across Devon to work together. This can be replicated, enabling the better use of resources in other areas of partnership working, avoiding duplication and providing a clear mechanism for communication.

Further information at new website: www.dacvs.org.uk

Aims and objectives

Black Southwest Network/ BDA

- To develop a coherent, shared strategy to support BME capacity in the region.
- To strengthen and improve existing infrastructure support to the BME sector within a regional and sub regional frame work.
- To identify and address gaps in infrastructure.
- To improve the support for the membership of the black southwest network.
- Increase and focus BSWN's capacity building service.

What was achieved

- Policy library developed
- Research Forums developed
- Training manual completed intra-net
- Mapping and training / barriers completed
- Partnership agreement piloted
- VPN established
- Communications frame work ICT completed
- Database completed
- Training partially completed, identified further development needed in this area.
- Resource and funding access to this has been improved with web based fund finder and up dates on
- Government funding,
- Project management template completed though not yet published on site. ICT capacity identified