

Better together – The Council with the Voluntary and Community Sector in North Tyneside

This strategy sets out how North Tyneside Council with the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) will work together to build strong, long lasting and sustainable partnerships that make North Tyneside a better place to live, work and visit.

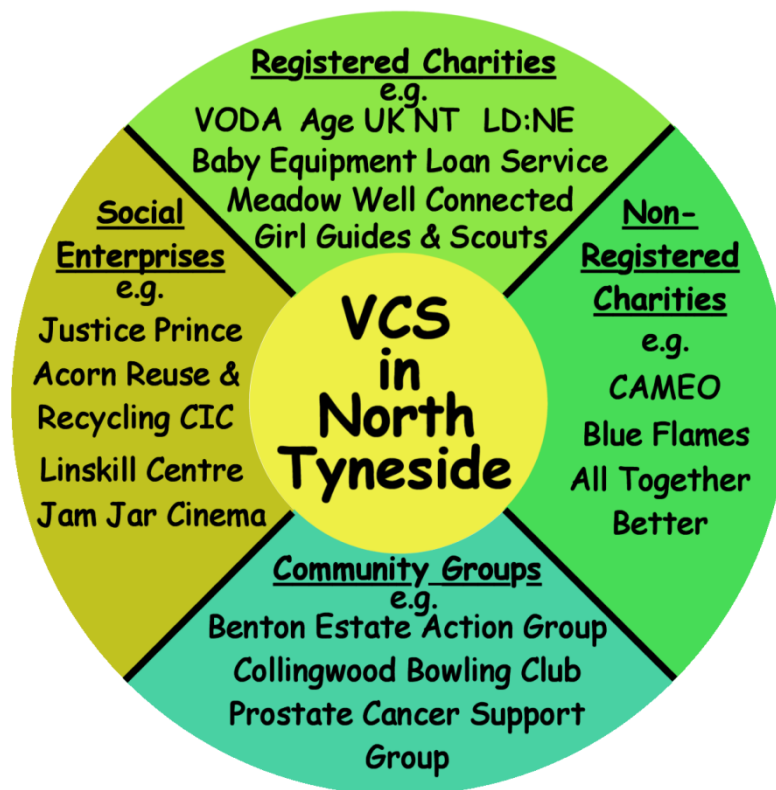
Background:

The Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) in North Tyneside is dynamic and very diverse. It covers everything from neighbourhood watch groups to social enterprises and national / international charities and everything in between. It includes 485 organisations and groups, with a further 70 operating within North Tyneside but with bases outside. In 2013/14 the Voluntary and Community Sector had an income of over £77 million, ranging from one organisation with a turnover of £18.7 million to 96 smaller organisations with a combined turnover of £332,281.

Many of the organisations and groups are run by volunteers and it is estimated that almost 50,000 of the adult population in North Tyneside are involved in some form of formal volunteering (27% of the total population). The sector is also a major employer with at least 2,315 people working for a VCS organisation in 2013/14¹.

There are also many faith groups active across the Borough, offering a range of key services at a local community level.

¹ VODA research 2015.



Examples of the different types of Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations in North Tyneside.

The structure of the Voluntary and Community Sector is complex with about 20 different categories of organisation. These include “general charities”, faith groups, credit unions, co-operatives, housing associations, sports clubs, etc. Traditionally faith groups make up a significant proportion of the sector, including many organisations running with the support of churches, such as youth clubs, mother and toddler groups, and luncheon clubs. There are often no clear definitions and blurred boundaries are not uncommon. However, for simplicity we can merge some of these different groups into just four categories that help to define the sector within North Tyneside:

Registered charities are organisations that have been set up to benefit the public or a substantial section of it, have been accepted as charitable by the Charity Commission and have been formally registered with it. They are bound by charity law and are required to send information to the Commission annually or as requested. In return the charity has a charity number and receives tax and other benefits from the state. A registered charity must have purposes that are recognised as charitable by the Charities Act 2011 and must satisfy the “public benefit test”. Registration with the Charity Commission is compulsory when an organisation’s turnover exceeds £5000. Registered charities have a clearly defined governance document which describes the charity’s remit.

Non-registered charities are those that have a turnover of less than £5,000 but have charitable purposes, for the purpose of this strategy they, may include sports clubs or other organisations that have a different kind of legal structure.

The difference between non-registered charities and **community groups** is somewhat more blurred but, generally, community groups have a self-serving interest. Such groups include residents' associations and estate action groups, local societies such as history groups and camera clubs, and groups that look after people that fall into a very specific category, such as people suffering from a particular medical condition and who live within a certain area. However, it is not uncommon to find community groups undertaking charitable acts that benefit the wider community, such as fundraising to help an individual or charity.

Community groups often have a set of rules by which they operate, which members are obliged to obey, but this is not always the case.

Social enterprises are organisations that trade to tackle social problems, improve communities, people's life chances, or the environment. These may include charities that operate along commercial lines, but with all the profit being put back into the enterprise rather than distributed among owners and shareholders. Some social enterprises become Community Interest Companies (CICs) and must give certain undertakings as to the use and distribution of their resources and assets.

The VCS landscape in Tyne and Wear

In the past few years changes to the economy and welfare reforms have meant that organisations within the voluntary and community sector have experienced increased demand for their services, and many have identified decreasing funding sources. Recent research carried out by VONNE showed the following statistics for VCS organisations in the North East:

- 53% have seen a decrease in funding
- 23% have lost staff
- 71% have experienced an increase in demand for their service
- 62% are using reserves
- 35% have developed a new area of service to support people in the wake of Welfare Reform changes

North Tyneside

In North Tyneside our overarching plan (Our North Tyneside) sets out a long term vision for the borough that includes how the voluntary and community sector, businesses and the statutory sector will all work together.

The Council's Creating a Brighter Future programme explains the key areas where the Council will focus resources to deliver the Our North Tyneside plan.

This strategy sets out how the Council and Voluntary and Community Sector, working together, can make a real and positive difference for North Tyneside residents.

The Creating a Brighter Future programme focuses on four themes:

Ready for School; we want all our children in North Tyneside to grow up to be happy, healthy individuals and this starts with them being ready to start school.

Ready for Work and Life; ensuring that every adult has employability skills and understands what is expected by employers, and by the communities in which they live.

Cared for, safeguarded and healthy; This project is looking at services that enable people to have healthy, happy, safe and independent lives.

A great place to live, work and visit; by ensuring that North Tyneside has all the raw materials and infrastructure to make it a truly great place to live, work and visit.

What does this mean for how the Council works with the Voluntary and Community Sector?

Collectively the Council and VCS have a wide range of skills, knowledge, common values and resources. By working together we can reduce duplication and make sure that we make the best possible use of the resources available.

This work will focus on a set of agreed principles:

Accessibility: Services will be accessible to people who want to use them. All partners will endeavour to ensure that their services meet the needs of their current and future customers.

Best use of resources: Avoiding duplication and identifying ways that maximise the impact, provide value for money and result in positive outcomes, including exploring innovative and novel approaches to established and emerging issues that proactively address the causes of problems.

Community cohesion: All partners will promote collaboration and bridge building between different groups and communities.

Equality: All partners will ensure that their customers, employees and volunteers are treated with dignity and respect, and (in line with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010) have an equal opportunity to access services and information; are not subject to discrimination, harassment or victimisation; and can benefit from actions to enhance community cohesion.

Independence: The formal independence of both the statutory sector and the VCS is recognised and encouraged as a strength.

Openness, honesty and respect: All partners will treat one another with generosity of spirit, respect, openness, honesty and transparency and will work to build trust between organisations, whilst respecting the need for confidentiality.

Partnership: All partners have distinct but complementary roles in the development and delivery of public support. We will recognise differences and identify ways that by working together we can have a greater impact.

Social Value: All partners commit to the importance of social value as a way of maximising the impact of resources and money spent in the borough.

Volunteering: All partners recognise the value of volunteering as an important expression of citizenship and essential to civil renewal. Volunteering builds skills and experience, enhances employability and creates employment, promotes social inclusion and contributes to the building of community networks and participation; high levels of volunteering are therefore an indication of healthy and active communities.

How will the Council support the Voluntary and Community Sector in North Tyneside?

The Council will:	We will do this by:	How will success be measured?
Build additional capacity	identifying ways that make the best use and provide value for money of our property and land portfolio. Where it makes sense to do so, we will look to the co-location of organisations as well as the best outcome for all in leasing arrangements.	building resources are well used by residents and provide a wide range of community benefit.
	looking at ways to maximise the positive outcomes for residents, particularly in our most deprived communities, which may result in using council resources, including funding, to support services provided by the VCS.	the Council will monitor this through its performance framework to ensure that there is always added value as a result of any support.
	identifying a named officer as a key contact within the Council and work with different members of the sector in ways that best meet shared outcomes.	VSC organisations know who to contact within the Council to aid closer working and maximise community benefit.
	evaluate the funding provided to develop infrastructure support to help with the establishing and running of a community and voluntary sector organisation and ensure clear governance.	funding to VODA to support the development team evaluated. Monitoring of the number of organisations they have supported.
	develop cost neutral ways to support the VCS that focus on improved outcomes for residents e.g. work on helping to support residents with the Welfare Reform changes.	identify across all council services new and innovative ways of supporting the VCS.
	identify and develop additional ways of working “up stream” with the VCS so that the need for more intensive crisis support is reduced.	developing and publishing plans that sets out the role of the VCS as part of a focus on prevention and earlier intervention.
	introducing a social values policy and providing training and support so that	Social Value will be included in all Council

	the VCS and Council Officers understand how they can evidence this as part of any procurement opportunity.	procurements. Monitoring of Social Value as part of contract management.
	actively identify external funding opportunities and work with interested members of the VCS to ensure that we maximise funding for North Tyneside based initiatives.	this will be measured on the amount of external funding brought into North Tyneside by the Council and VCS.
	developing and evaluating a local capacity grant fund for all ward councillors	the fund will be actively used and the evaluation will demonstrate any impact re CVS organisations.
	having a clear, agreed policy on the use of Council owned asset (buildings and land).	the numbers of VCS organisations using Council owned buildings / land that contribute to improving outcomes for local residents.
Improve liaison, involvement and engagement with the VCS	holding quarterly workshops with the community and voluntary sector sessions.	well attended events that take place at least four times a year.
	ensure clear communication channels are established, with a named member of the Senior Leadership Team and Cabinet with responsibility to over see the work and on going communication with the VCS.	increasing the profile of VCS within the Council including ways to identify maximising their impact.
	look to using council communications to promote case studies and promote activities that are carried out by the VCS.	by regularly sharing information using Council communication channels.
Decision making	ensure that the VCS has a voice on key decision making bodies, including the NTSP and Cabinet. Acknowledge that this representational role is in addition to the day job so make sure it is proportionate / not asking too much of volunteers.	the monitoring of attendance and the impact of this.
	promote an improved understanding with Council Officers and Elected Members of governance structures across the VCS.	

The VCS will:	We will do this by:	How will success be
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		measured?
Build additional capacity	developing a strategy for the VCS that sets out how the sector will work with the Council and others to improve outcomes for North Tyneside Residents.	by arranging a wide range of ways that the sector can contribute to the development of and actions set out in this strategy.
improve liaison and engagement with the Council		
Improve decision making		

In the next six months the Council will:

- Develop a strategy for use of our buildings and other physical assets, updating the current community lettings policy.
- Continue work on what Social Values means in North Tyneside and present proposals on this to Cabinet.
- Produce a marketing strategy to support an increase in Credit Union membership.
- Continue to work with the VCS as part of preparing for further welfare reform changes.
- Review funding to ensure that money is directed in a way that is clear, transparent and links to the outcomes set out in the Creating a Brighter Future programme.
- Work with the VCS to identify how, by working together, we can improve outcomes for residents across the four entitlements set out as part of Creating a Brighter Future programme.

The VCS will:

- Develop a strategy setting out how they will support the Council and others to improve outcomes for North Tyneside Residents.

In the next year the Council will:

- Work with the VCS to ensure that EU and other funding opportunities are maximised for the benefit of North Tyneside residents.
- Continue to hold quarterly networking sessions.
- Develop an action plan as part of our “red tape” challenge aimed at making it easier for the VCS to do business with the Council.
- Identify and publish ways of providing mutual support that improved outcomes for residents.
- Work with the VCS to review the Compact, taking account of the principles set out in this strategy.
- Work with the Volunteer Centre and Volunteer Network to increase volunteering, including by Council employees.
- Review the Local Capacity Grant.

What will happen next:

The Council will:

- take this strategy through the Council decision making processes (July 2015).
- make the strategy available to the Community and Voluntary Sector and other stakeholders using the Council’s website.
- publish an update on actions identified as part of the State of the Area event in October 2015.

- review this strategy

If you have any queries, comments or observations please contact:

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