

The Shape of Things to Come

and the future support needs of voluntary and community groups in Bromley

Contracts Social Enterprise Community ownership Olympics Neighbourhood Management



Where's it all going? What are the new opportunities and challenges facing the voluntary sector?
What do local voluntary and community groups need to help them to survive?

Summary of consultation work carried out to support preparation of local infrastructure plans – and a consultation meeting held at Community House, South Street Bromley on 29th November 2007.

About this work

During November and December 2007, work has been underway to identify what support and services are needed by local voluntary and community groups. This has included:

- Discussion to establish priorities and prepare an overall Infrastructure Development Strategy and Business Plan for Bromley. This involved contributions and individual discussions with local infrastructure organisations – and a consultation meeting also attended by frontline organisations and statutory sector partners.
- Research on the effectiveness of local partnership working, including individual meetings with representatives from the voluntary sector forums and networks
- Workshops and focus groups to seek feedback from local frontline organisations as the first stage in preparing Community Links Bromley's own Business Plan for the next 3 years.

Much of the work has been funded by Capacitybuilders – and the new Infrastructure Development Strategy should help to secure some future funding from Capacitybuilders to implement some of the activities identified.

Community Links Bromley has acted as the Lead Body in supporting this work – with members of the Voluntary Sector Reference Group also providing input and support to prepare the Strategy. The work has been carried out by Lorna Davies, Melanie Nock and Fiona Baird – independent consultants contracted by Community Links Bromley to complete different aspects of this work.

What are the Outcomes?

- A Bromley Infrastructure Development Strategy (2008-2014) and Business Plan for 2008-11 have been prepared and submitted to Capacitybuilders at the end of December.
- The research and recommendations on Partnership Working will be considered in January by members of the Voluntary Sector Reference Group and an action plan will be agreed to take forward agreed recommendations
- Work on the Community Links Bromley Business Plan is continuing and a Plan should be in place by the end of March.

Updates on all of this work will be shared through Community Links Bromley newsletters, e-bulletins and website.

The following background information about Capacitybuilders and ChangeUp was circulated to local groups and networks and also presented to participants at the consultation meeting.

Capacitybuilders



- A national agency set up to deliver the Government's ChangeUp agenda by 2014
- The aim is to improve support services for voluntary and community organisations so that they can be stronger and sustain their activities
- It funds activities at local, regional and national levels

Capacitybuilders - Dictionary

- "Third Sector" – the voluntary and community sector (including not for profit/social enterprise groups)
- "Frontline organisations" – voluntary and community groups delivering local services and activities.
- "Support providers" – organisations that help third sector frontline organisations become stronger by providing them with advice, facilities and other kinds of support. (CVS, Volunteer Centres etc – also referred to as Infrastructure Organisations)
- "Consortium" – local group of organisations responsible for planning and monitoring ChangeUp/Capacitybuilders activities.

ChangeUp – the story so far...

- ChangeUp (2004) set out the government's strategy for improving the support provided to voluntary and community groups, particularly in the areas of governance, volunteering, finance, performance improvement, use of IT and workforce development.
- It provided the initial funding for some national support hubs linked to these key areas
- It also funded work to develop Local Infrastructure Development Plans (LIDP) to show how ChangeUp money should be invested to improve support services.
- In 2005 funding was provided to deliver priorities identified in Local Plans – and during 2006/7 further funding was provided for local services, and to enable the consortiums to develop their work.

ChangeUp in Bromley

- A Bromley Local Infrastructure Development Plan was agreed in 2005
- Priorities included funding partnership and information support services provided by CLB
- You can view the Plan on the CLB website at www.communitylinksbromley.org.uk/
- The Bromley Voluntary Sector Reference Group took on the role of ChangeUp Consortium (incorporating ChangeUp in its terms of reference)

Funding

- This year Capacitybuilders has provided funding through a Consortia Development Fund (CDF).
- CLB is the accountable body for this funding and submits quarterly monitoring reports on progress against activities set out in a delivery plan agreed with Capacitybuilders
- The current funding is to support Consortia to deliver some very specific requirements set down by Capacitybuilders:
 1. To produce an action plan for future development of the consortium (following a self-assessment day facilitated by Capacitybuilders)
 2. To produce an Infrastructure Development Strategy for 2008-2014 and to produce a Business Plan for 2008-11 to implement the first 3 years of the Strategy

Future Funding (2)

- Capacitybuilders has been reviewing all the ChangeUp work funded to date
- The National Hubs are being replaced by 9 directly commissioned national support services (currently at expressions of interest stage)
- Most of its funding will still be focussed on local delivery (future funding programmes will be announced in December)

Progress In Bromley

- Work is well underway to deliver the Capacitybuilders outcomes by the end of December
- The VSRG completed the self-assessment and action plan on 2nd October. It recognised it has an important role in developing and monitoring Capacitybuilders activities and needs to develop this role. It agreed:-
 - It will rename as the Bromley Voluntary Sector Consortium and review its terms of reference and membership to ensure it engages a range of support organisations
 - Though supported by CLB, the Consortium needs to be independent and should seek funding for a worker to support its activities
 - To set up a sub-group to work to produce the Consortium Strategy and Business Plan

Context & Content

- There are a lot of changes affecting the sector (more emphasis on commissioning, social enterprise, smaller groups working in consortia, transfer of assets, community cohesion etc)
- The Consortium Development Strategy needs to provide a strategic vision that reflects these changes, to demonstrate it is responding to this wider strategic environment and to reflect feedback from frontline organisations and statutory partners.
- The Consortium needs to lead the sector in thinking strategically and in enabling the sector to change, to create its own opportunities and to exert its influence to help to shape its own future.

For further information about Capacitybuilders see:

www.capacitybuilders.org.uk

Setting the Scene (1)

Challenges & Opportunities for the Third Sector in Bromley

Members of the Voluntary Sector Reference Group prepared a detailed analysis of the Political, Economic, Geographical and Social changes affecting the borough and the work of local voluntary and community groups.

Organisations attending the consultation meeting were asked to comment on the analysis and highlight any further significant trends and issues. The key issues are summarised below.

Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Decline in funding- particularly Lottery ▪ Many funders priorities narrower and more prescribed ▪ Learning & Training – loss of European Social Fund, more limited criteria and focus on training for work ▪ Move to Commissioning – move from grants to contracts ▪ Increasing competition within the sector (between larger and smaller groups; between national and local services) ▪ Increasing divergence within the sector – more small groups without capacity to grow –v- small number of larger groups able to use and move forward on new opportunities ▪ More emphasis on income generation through Social Enterprise
Increasing Complexity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ability of groups to manage/respond to changing environment ▪ Need for groups to work more in consortia to access funding ▪ Increasing complexity of legal structures within the sector ▪ Need for specialist support in grappling with legal issues, how to cost services, demonstrate value for money, understand VAT, employment issues etc
Social Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Significant differences and inequalities between communities within the borough (difference in life expectancy, occupancy, diversity of communities – e.g. BME population ranges from 3% in southern wards to nearly 35% in north) ▪ Increasing number of bme people in the borough, more lone parents, more older people ▪ Decline in citizenship and participation – low turnout in elections; ▪ Decline in volunteering – and more requirements for professionalism, checks & management of volunteers.
Local environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Geography – pockets of deprivation; change in sub-regional boundaries ▪ Political environment – limited understanding of sector by some local politicians and officers; sector not an equal partner at the table; slow progress with Compact implementation ▪ But growing culture of multi-agency working; some good examples and improving relationships (but money not flowing with referrals or to properly resource joint work)

Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A number of initiatives still potentially offering opportunities for Third Sector participation e.g. Every Child Matters; Olympics; GP Commissioning; Lifelong Learning; Extended Schools <p>Recent and forthcoming changes that will be important for the sector:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Involvement in Local Area Agreements ▪ Duty to Involve/Community Engagement Strategy ▪ Focus on neighbourhoods and community anchors ▪ Community Endowment Funds ▪ Transfer of Assets/Quirk review ▪ Community Cohesion agenda ▪ New Equalities & Human Rights Commission & review of Discrimination Law ▪ New structure to support Public Involvement in Health
Partnership Working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increasingly important – both to influence change and access resources ▪ Cross sector Partnership working needs structures and resources to enable third sector representation and involvement ▪ Policy partnerships are increasingly cross-cutting in the range of issues they address (requiring broader knowledge and input)

Setting the Scene (2) At the consultation meeting, we asked people from voluntary groups to tell us what support would have made their lives easier this week.



- Help to get more funding (4)
- Funding for more staff
- Finding ongoing funding for group projects
- More funding for staff to cope with waiting list
- Information on funding
- Staff time to put in funding bids
- Applied for lottery funding for new community hall and didn't get it. Where to go next?
- Help to complete funding application (2)
- Understanding funding jargon & how to be successful

- Support for database creation
- Help to set up internet and outlook
- IT support
- Practical support to set up an IT network
- A new computer
- Practical support to deal with problems with a computer or computer network
- Have someone to sort out my 'wireless' connection to broadband.
- No computer for 2 weeks now
- Help to set up 'blog' for AGM speaker
- Help to get equipment and access to email (2)
- Better email account for distributing news to members—my account is low cost but v. slow
- Printer broke – not on maintenance contract therefore no support



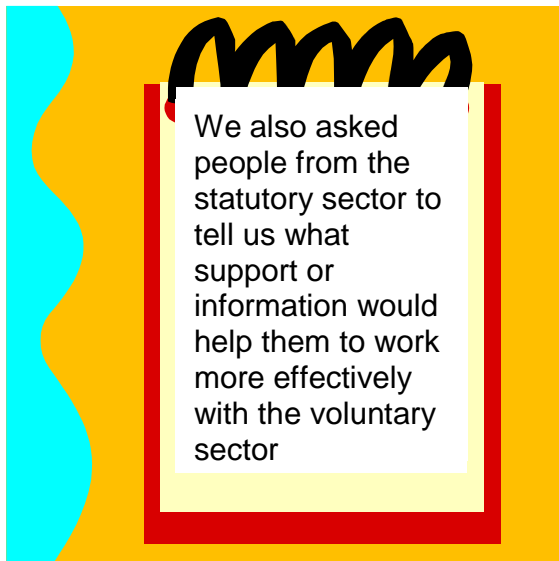
- Advice on Human Resource issues (2)
- Sorting out staff contracts & conditions of service
- HR policy support (updates, guidelines, templates)
- Support to resolve a personnel problem (with contract of employment)
- Access to employment contract support
- Peer support/mentoring for managers
- Mediation services

- Practical help with lease and utilities
- Need for serviced building
- Advice on finding premises
- Office support





- Marketing and publicity/PR Support (2)
 - Knowledge of local statutory sector structure
 - Risk assessment
 - Help with partnership working
 - Report writing
 - Photocopying – 300 2008 calendars required
 - Cheap colour photocopying for producing 1000 colour A4 leaflets
 - Statutory sector to understand need for core support
-
- Database that can show, on a local/neighbourhood level, residents' profiling information on education, employment, ethnicity, household composition and age
 - Monthly calendar for what's going on in the borough
 - Clearer initial direction for planning process necessary for getting access path put across local playing field.
 - A couple on Pension Credit needed a new cooker but couldn't afford it. Knowing where to go
 - Link to community mental health services to diffuse situation with service user
 - Sensible consultation times (in line with Compact requirements)



- A list of voluntary organisations within the borough
 - Information on what's available in the borough. Brief outline of services and how to access them.
 - Contact information, contact names. One contact number
 - More information on role of the CVS
 - Closer working between the network forums and Community Links
 - How can we work more collaboratively with the voluntary sector?
 - What thought (if any) has been given to sharing resources across the third sector
-
- Understanding that the "statutory sector" are not the enemy – we have similar goals and objectives so why be so divisive?
 - Assurance that if asked/paid to provide a service, the governance of the organisation is sound
 - What support the third sector could get from the Council – other than money
 - Advance information on initiatives so we could see tie-ins and potential for joint working
 - Comprehensive and up to date contact and objectives information to help us plan consultation more effectively (but not just CLB members)

Consortium Mission and Vision

The ChangeUp Investment Development Plan prepared in 2005 set out a vision for infrastructure services in Bromley. Members of the Consortium and conference participants were invited to review and comment on the vision and it was amended to emphasise the need to ensure services are inclusive and reflect the growing diversity of the borough's population.

Mission:

To provide high quality, adequately resourced, locally delivered, accessible, inclusive and affordable infrastructure services.

Vision:

This means infrastructure that:

- Acts as a confident and respected voice for the VCS, owned by and for the sector
- Provides high quality, affordable and well-resourced organisational development services with clear signposting to relevant advice, support and information
- Facilitates community development and participation
- Promotes volunteering, active citizenship and high standards in volunteer management
- Reaches out to engage and meet the needs of a diverse community, prioritising support for equalities, smaller and marginalised groups

27 November 2007

Strategic Objectives

The Consortium sub-group prepared some draft objectives for discussion at the consultation meeting. (See Appendix 2) These were based on:

- Reviewing the original objectives in the ChangeUp Local Investment Development Plan
- An analysis of current challenges and opportunities
- Action points from the Consortium self-assessment day

Participants were able to feedback comments on each of the key areas outlined and to indicate whether they agreed with the objectives outlined.

The following sections summarise the key issues addressed and relevant feedback or input from the consultation discussion groups (and also from the focus groups and other work contributing to this work).

Consortium Development

The Consortium has responsibility for planning and monitoring implementation of the Strategy and activities to ensure the provision of an appropriate range of infrastructure support services to meet the needs of different groups in the borough.

As part of the work to prepare the Strategy, the Consortium held a self-assessment day in October and identified actions need to improve its effectiveness. See below.

Bromley Voluntary Sector Consortium

Self-Assessment Summary (October 2007)



1. Stakeholder Engagement	
Current situation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not currently consistently engaging statutory partners as a group. • Mapping of VCS involvement in partnerships in the borough is currently underway
Where we want to be in 12 months time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having established and made widely known clear mechanisms for engagement with the VCS (includes consulting, with appropriate timescales) • A broader membership working towards more inclusive representation of the voluntary and community sector
Priority actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify key statutory representatives and appropriate ways of engaging with them • Complete partnership mapping and implement agreed recommendations • Begin wider recruitment of members • Devise an appropriate support mechanism to facilitate wider involvement

2. Communication	
Current situation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Getting better but not everyone feels comfortable about expressing dissenting views at the meetings • We don't communicate with the outside world
Where we want to be in 12 months time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dynamic interaction with everyone feeling comfortable in expressing their views • Having effective mechanisms in place to communicate with the outside world • To have the outside world know and recognise the consortium
Priority actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repeat ground rules at the start of every meeting and stick to them • Identify who we need to communicate with

3. Consortium Team	
Current situation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong and committed core membership • Need to broaden membership • Need to recruit a worker to provide support
Where we want to be in 12 months time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To broaden membership to include arts, sports etc. • To have a worker in place
Priority actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sell benefits of membership to the sector to win hearts and minds • Identify gaps in membership • Include worker in business plan

4. Skills and Knowledge	
Current situation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to see business plans and good practice from other consortia • Need to understand implications of sub-regional boundary change • Lots of skills and knowledge round the table
Where we want to be in 12 months time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More intelligence-gathering about developments in the outside world • Growing in strength to face statutory bodies (with training for this) • Representatives going in well-informed
Priority actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion with CLB about how the consortium can benefit from work of policy worker (if funded by BASIS) • Peer learning from other consortia • Investigate training needs of consortium members and identify appropriate training and codes of practice

5. Equality & Diversity	
Current situation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Want to be as inclusive as possible – not sure how to do it • Concern re whether all members feel able to participate and influence
Where we want to be in 12 months time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buddying/peer support and induction in place
Priority actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further timetabled discussion leading to an Equality and Diversity Action Plan

6. Performance Management	
Current situation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to revisit terms of reference • Need to clarify relationships with CLB and other delivery partners
Where we want to be in 12 months time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plans/strategy in place and we are performance managing against them • Making sure money trickles down and doesn't get stuck
Priority actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss management of worker • Complete and sign off Business Plan & Strategy and use these for agenda setting.

Agreed Objectives

- To work with infrastructure providers working at a local, sub-regional and regional level to build the capacity and strengthen the ability of voluntary and community groups to deliver high quality services to local communities and help improve the quality of life of Londoners
- To improve joint working and the planning and monitoring of infrastructure support services

Development of Community Links Bromley as a CVS

All the feedback confirmed that this remains a priority from the original ChangeUp Plan. Feedback on issues relating to CVS services was received from discussion groups at the consultation event and also from separate Focus Group and discussions carried out between October and December 2007 as part of work to update CLB's business plan.

1. Consultation meeting discussion groups

- Sustainability/sufficient funding
- Breadth of service
- Ensure information available to all – not just on computer
- Training including volunteers
 - Access to PCT and LA training (free?) for volunteers (first aid, vulnerable adults etc)
 - Sharing of resources for training – statutory and voluntary e.g. computer use
- Access to legal advice re contracts
- Ensuring isolated and elderly are consulted
- HR support and legal advice needed (as IT)

CVS services

What's important?

- Bring small groups of similar interests together to put in joint bids/share resources e.g. access to volunteers – mediation
- IT support – could be social enterprise (modest charge)
 - Set it up
 - Help to run it
 - Advice and practical help readily accessible
 - Recycling computers
 - Training
- Access other items from private sector that could be recycled for small groups e.g. mobile phones, other equipment, office furniture

Volunteering

What's important?

- Local VCS organisations need to accept that there is increasing competition for a small pool of regular volunteers with good social, office and professional skills, and that many potential volunteers have differing expectations of what they want to get out of volunteering than in the past: this is the new reality
- There needs to be a cultural change amongst organisations offering placements to volunteers. They need to be supported to understand the volunteer perspective, for instance:
 - What is in it for the volunteer?
 - What is the nature of the exchange between the volunteer and the organisation
 - Understand the volunteer requirement of a decent environment in which to work
 - Emphasise how important gaining confidence can be for volunteers
- More communication between local volunteer-involving agencies is needed to raise the profile of the need for local volunteers for local organisations
- Pooled volunteering recruitment initiatives/direct recruitment initiatives from the Volunteer Centre are needed
- Improving the matching process is essential to increase efficiency of volunteer recruitment/brokerage, and this will need more intermediary support before the volunteer is sent to the organisation (screening for motivation, offering an induction, offering 'taster sessions' with a range of organisations)
- Time taken for CRB checks [undertaken by another organisation] is a major issue: it can take 3-4 months, by which time the volunteer is no longer interested/has gone
- Funders and end users are unaware of the hidden costs of running volunteer-led services
- VCS organisations may try to manage volunteers without sufficient resources

- Volunteers need cultural awareness of the organisation/service users, and need to be trained for signposting in some instances
- More resources for volunteer recruitment and retention are needed. Targeted information about taking on volunteers could be provided by CLB
- CLB needs to improve the evidence base for more statutory funding
- An employee volunteering initiative in Bromley could link businesses with volunteering in the borough more directly, encouraging the former to undertake more corporate social responsibility function locally, and potentially lead to 'expert volunteers', who may only be able to offer limited time, but who would provide valuable services to recipient charities, or more Trustees [business breakfasts for recruitment?] VCS organisations need to repackage volunteering as providing benefits for employee remotivation
- There is too much national government pressure on some groups of people, such as single parents, to go back to work – their value as active citizens in their community, and in their own families needs to be more actively supported and encouraged
- Local organisations, often those not affiliated to national federations, or with a high local profile, would welcome a range of support services provided by a third party to make the recruitment, induction and management of volunteers easier and more professional, including:

2. Feedback from Focus Group Discussions

In Summary: This work identified a number of generic challenges facing the sector, particularly: getting more publicity for the sector, getting sustainable funding, recruiting and retaining suitable volunteers, coping with an increasing demand for services, increasing pressure on Trustees and staff in managing change, dealing with personnel and human resourcing issues, and taking forward the need to evaluate services.

All focus groups identified some sort of joint initiative/ partnership working as necessary to deal with the challenges ahead and take forward their mission, and most also identified support for 'back office' functions, especially for smaller vcs organisations. Volunteer (including Trustee) recruitment was also a key priority to support the health of the sector.

CLB was identified as the organisation to facilitate or deliver most of the needs identified.

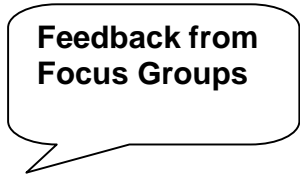
Strategically, CLB's representational, advocacy and facilitative roles were highly valued. An urgent priority was to monitor the effectiveness of the Compact.

Background: Facilitated discussions were held as follows:

- A specially convened workshop on health, social care and disability, on Thursday 15th November
- A facilitated session, at Bromley Trustee Network, 13th November
- A facilitated session, at Bromley Volunteer Managers' Forum, 6th December
- A facilitated session, at Bromley Development Workers' Forum, 12th December

Additional telephone interviews were held with individuals not able to attend a workshop. Over 25 organisations contributed to the discussions.

- **Publicity.** Groups believed that the VCS in Bromley, its achievements and successes, needed a higher profile. Residents were probably unaware of the size and scope of the sector in Bromley, the range of services provided by VCS organisations, or the contribution that volunteers make to service delivery and community life. Many organisations didn't have the resources to adequately publicise their work.
- **Funding.** A number of organisations had no long term or core funding and finding funding diverted staff and Trustee focus away from the core activities. Keeping abreast of the policy environment and identifying potential funding streams was a major diversion of time and resources.
- Real threat of larger organisations coming into Bromley to deliver a more cost effective (but not necessarily better quality) service, due to economies of scale, and some commissioning has already gone to out of Borough providers.
- Many organisations are struggling to deliver services that are not adequately funded. Some found that funders were not willing to support full cost recovery but many groups did not cost projects on full cost recovery principles.
- **Volunteers.** Recruiting more volunteers seen a priority for almost all organisations. Volunteer recruitment and retention is an uneven playing field: some organisations have the profile, funding or management resources to directly recruit successfully, and can provide more reasons for a volunteer to stay (work experience; qualifications; skills; good volunteer environment), whilst others providing a volunteer-led services have substantial difficulties in both recruiting volunteers, and retaining them. Educating funders about the costs of a volunteer-supported service is a priority.
- **Increasing demand for services.** Some organisations not able to meet the demand for services, and have insufficient funding for the services they provide. Concern that statutory funders' increased focus on acute needs will leave those with 'moderate needs' unable to access statutory services and turning to the third sector for support.
- **Management.** Frustration from continual requirement to repackage or reinvent projects to continue core work or service delivery. Many organisations having to deal with major changes which require more time and different skills within staff and trustees, including critical need for change management skills.
- **Human resources (HR) and other issues.** Key issue for many organisations. All organisations, but particularly the smallest ones, found having to keep abreast of changes in HR regulations - for example, employment, H&S – very onerous.
- **Evaluation.** Awareness of growing need to demonstrate the impact (both qualitative and quantitative) of work - both to retain existing funding, and to gain new funding. Difficult for less resourced organisations, those working informally with groups and residents, and those delivering 'soft outcomes' such as improvements in confidence.



■ **Challenges and issues raised by health and social care groups:**

- Understanding the public sector commissioning process and getting a VCS voice for commissioning (very important)
- Keeping abreast of PCT/hospital trust restructuring and being involved in the process
- Responding to changes in day service provision, currently out to consultation
- Understanding the potential impact of Children's Trusts on voluntary and community sector activity
- Managing the relationship with the local authority could be an issue:
- 'We need better understanding of how the local authority works and being able to speak their language'
- Some organisations have a campaigning or advocacy role, and this needs to be valued and recognised by statutory authorities
- The biggest concern was how Compact was being implemented locally, with a number of organisations noting breaches.
- A lack of sufficient suitable volunteers with the qualities required to work with older people
- Recruiting or developing the right specialist staff was a major challenge
- Getting really good staff in the context of a competitive job market and retaining them (very important)
- Larger service provider charities noted the competition from regional and national organisations for services contracts, and also for voluntary income, as national charities had higher 'brand awareness', and also local donors believed – erroneously - that money given to national organisations would be transferred to local organisations in federation/membership.

■ **Challenges & Issues raised by Community Development Workers Forum**

- No overarching co-ordination or knowledge base of community development within localities, and a lack of community mapping at the neighbourhood/ward level in Bromley. In this context, developing locality planning and working that involves all agencies and communities is a major challenge.
- Currently the local authority does not fund community development activity
- Too much bureaucracy involved in setting up even basic activities (such as Sunday football leagues): 'You don't have to be that big or formal to hit a requirement for red tape policies and procedures – it's a real turn off for groups who want to do, not manage'.

■ **Issues raised by Bromley Trustee Network**

- Recruiting more Trustees was a priority. There were not enough quality/competent people to meet Bromley charities' needs, and some parts of Bromley were particularly difficult to recruit for (for example, Penge).
- Some people apprehensive about personal liability, the heavy regulatory burden (H&S and employment issues), and the possibility that they might have to personally 'crisis manage' if the organisation got into difficulties.

■ **Volunteer Managers Forum**

- Attracting and retaining volunteers is a major challenge. There was a growing need to recruit more volunteers: more organisations needed them, more competition for quality volunteers from volunteer-involving organisations, both within Bromley, and outside of it, and volunteers were not necessarily staying with an organisation as long as they had in the past.

- Anecdotally, volunteer 'turnover' rates have increased in Bromley: volunteers now may use volunteering as an opportunity to gain work experience and skills, and then leave to take on a job, whilst older people may have other responsibilities as carers, or looking after the grandchildren.
- Some organisations need to develop a culture of valuing quality volunteer supervision: ensuring sufficient time (and therefore management costs) for good quality volunteer support and supervision in order to ensure a good volunteering experience and to retain skilled volunteers for as long as possible in the organisation.
- Offering local volunteering opportunities that will be of sufficient interest to compete with volunteering initiatives supporting the Olympics would be a challenge.
- Attracting volunteers to work with young people can be difficult, because there is a perception that many young people have 'challenging behaviour'.
- Meeting increasing need regarding advocacy (Mental Capacity Act 2006 requires an independent medical advocate role) will require more volunteer advocates in the future.

What support needs were identified by CLB Focus Groups

Local Support - Whilst a number of organisations were affiliated to national organisations, the point was made that most were generally able to only access an element of practical support, and needed to look within the Borough for this. Local charities of course only had the option of accessing practical support locally.

Working Together - Free sharing of research between organisations to avoid duplication, and to support partnership working. Sharing of knowledge.

Support for Partnership Working - More clarity on what existing partnerships are there to achieve. Partnerships need clear, SMART, objectives, and a willingness therefore to develop time-limited partnerships, and close those that have served their ends

Back office services – particularly for community groups who may not want to do everything themselves

Skills – Community groups may need help with basic skills and also with IT training, public speaking, newsletter skills, basic work skills and communication skills. Support people who are able to advocate for their community.

Practical support – particularly with HR and IT

Volunteering - More evaluation of the social and economic impact of volunteers in the Borough, which will start to develop a case for funding more volunteer support. (For example, the Metropolitan Police spend £1.4 million on supporting community officers, but can demonstrate that they can recoup that in economic terms alone. A Bromley-specific recruitment initiative to generate volunteers who would be well-matched to opportunities.

What activities did Focus Groups want CLB to take forward?

Groups identified activities that would help to address many of the above issues and needs. These included:-

- ★ Marketing Bromley's third sector and good practice
 - ★ A more active role in recruiting volunteers (advertising)
 - ★ Offering a generalist volunteer induction session before the volunteer goes to the organisation
 - ★ 'Helping find tomorrow's Trustees in Bromley'
 - ★ Brokering consultations with the local authority
-
- ★ Local, geographically accessible training (free/low cost) for volunteers, Trustees and staff
 - ★ Funding support beyond grant applications – to include social enterprise/corporate sponsorship and consortia development work (sharing resources/bids).
 - ★ Support/group for a chief officers network
 - ★ Keeping tabs on what is happening in Bromley, and nationally (newsletter is good)
 - ★ An organigram of networks/forums so VCS organisations know what is available
 - ★ Compact compliance officer role to monitor breaches
 - ★ Helping communities to understand structures within the local authority
 - ★ A managed system of shared training courses
 - ★ Ongoing support for the community development workers forum
 - ★ Clarity about focus of support (is it on new or existing organisations?)
 - ★ Information on tendering and finance issues
 - ★ Facilitate engagement with different groups and communities
 - ★ Act as a one stop shop for groups to find out about services (signposting service)
 - ★ More use of website for networking e.g. email discussion groups

Although many additional need and potential activities have been identified, it is recognised that the priority is to consolidate and sustain the existing core support services provided by CLB.

Detailed feedback from both the consultation meeting and the focus groups will be considered by the CLB Trustees and will help to set the priorities for an updated Business Plan, to be signed off by March 2008.

Agreed Objectives

- Development of Community Links Bromley as an effective and sustainable CVS providing organisational development, information and policy support services that meet the needs of different groups and networks
 - To ensure groups have access to specialist technical support and information to help manage the increasing complexity of the funding and legal environment
 - To increase participation in volunteering and promote active citizenship and high standards in volunteer management
-

Partnership Working

Melanie Nock has been commissioned to undertake research on partnership working. The report and recommendations will be finalised in January but she provided an outline of her work for participants at the consultation meeting:

Her remit is to:

- Map partnership working and its structures and processes
- Assess its effectiveness

The emergent findings were:

- The foundation of most partnership working is the forums. They are all different, reflecting in part the different client groups but they form a solid base from a health and social care point of view.
- In terms of health and social care, the voluntary sector reaches into most areas of service planning. There is less effective reach in areas such as sport, art, community cohesion, and aspects of education and employment.
- Participation has a cost. It is complex and time consuming. It puts pressure on staff and trustees from participating organisations. There is inevitably a link between resources and effectiveness.
- There is a clear need for more policy input to give strength and depth to input.
- There may be a need to look at how cross cutting issues are represented especially in respect of groups with a geographical or community development remit and those representing some communities of interest.
- There seems to be a demand for a voluntary sector forum to allow smaller groups in particular to have an input into these processes and to improve coordination across subject areas at a broader level than the VSPG.
- The potential for a providers' forum should also be investigated.

Comments from Discussion Group on Partnership Working.....

- Support for the development of voluntary sector forum – a blanket organisation could be stronger
- Partnership working is very effective in children's services
- We need a better understanding of each other's services
- We need to improve networking on both sides
- We work well with the CAMS service – they listen to us and we avoid duplication
- Partnership work in the field of physical disabilities is not so good. There's no strong lobby for physical disabilities. There's a lack of a strong user voice. Younger people are involved but not adults. Transition is a major issue. Building up this voice is a partnership issue.
- Disability Voice is on the Physical Disabilities partnership board but how representative is it of users?
- The council needs to reach out more. There's no transport forum. We need to build a better infrastructure for disability.

- There's an issue about joined up thinking. How can any group have an impact on the entire agenda – health, education, etc etc and address issues such as wellbeing and social inclusion? The answer has to be a voluntary sector forum which would also be a channel for small groups providing niche services not served by existing forums.
- We also need partnership with the private sector
- There needs to be a partnership between big and small organisations so the big groups share some of their resources with small ones – includes access to national umbrella organisations' advice etc. CLB could broker these relationships.
- Needs to be support for joint working between groups with similar interests/activities but who have found collaboration difficult. CLB needs to take a proactive role in forming consortia.
- We may have to lose a little bit of independence to allow users to gain influence with the statutory sector.
- Need to share information, knowledge, information about needs, observatory type information, directory services etc
- Compact implementation is too slow. It's crucial to partnership working. We need to engage health with it in particular.
- Lack of balance in input to partnership groups between big and small voluntary groups. Needs a voluntary sector forum (and a staff member to service it) and a brokerage coordinator. Need to encourage more general networking and "team building". Brokerage needs to cover the full range of resources and to broker information between the statutory and voluntary sectors.
- Need an outreach worker to bring services to the attention of all groups
- Need for advice and support in developing shared ventures
- More trust and confidence required – groups have to leave their lobbying hat outside the partnership room.
- Need to evidence the effectiveness/impact/value/sustainability of volunteering placements
- Introduce a voluntary sector forum organised around the council portfolio themes.

Agreed Objective

- To increase the effectiveness of partnership working and voluntary sector representation and engagement in multi agency forums

Working with Communities: Community Development, Assets & Equalities

These issues were considered by 3 discussion groups. Feedback from the groups is summarised below:

Supporting small/new (and 'renewing') groups

- Community workers to serve geographical area:
 - working with all diverse groups in deprived areas;
 - need 1 per ward but realistically perhaps 3 per borough;
 - based in voluntary sector, link to all areas [see model of 15 years ago];
 - ideal for support by a Community Fund;
- Providing needs assessment / auditing for community groups;
- Mapping of and publicity about voluntary sector infrastructure to groups like WI, village halls, church groups, residents' associations, libraries, sheltered housing;
- Awareness work with GPs.

Neighbourhood focus

- Stimulating volunteering at neighbourhood level;
- Stimulating 'sign-posters' (with expertise about services) at local level;
- Draw together and centralise the information held across organisations e.g. housing associations, local authority, PCT, voluntary organisations;
 - Provide information on how much we can tap into each other's resources/expertise
- Provide detailed information on needs (number and scale of different vulnerable groups) in different parts of the borough;
- Stimulate telephone support for vulnerable people;
- Negotiating data protection issues with GPs/statutory bodies.

Community Development Workers Group

- Use CDWG to pass on their experience – become local 'consultants'.
- Work to ensure GPs and other statutory sector professionals treat community level support people as equal professionals
- Help/share expertise around legal/constitutional framework to work in partnership
- Support to help organisations charge appropriately and negotiate with funders and spread awareness of fundraising support
- Knowledge-brokerage: Bring together individuals with expertise into special interest groups e.g. people with knowledge about making services accessible to people with disabilities.

Equalities

- Training needed on equalities legislation
- Improve Accessibility
 - one point of focus
 - local information
 - local resident profile
- Support need for more action to target hard to reach

- Consultation – improve communication aimed at isolated/ young/old groups
 - Via GPS
 - Use DVD
- Small/excluded groups are disadvantaged by inability to pay for help and can't afford to participate
- Make better use of the facilities we have to get the message across - Libraries, schools, groups, children's centre

Community Assets & Premises

- Needs consistent lobbying to open up discussion on opportunities
- Should be targeting strategic partnerships
- Also need to make best use of existing community assets
- More support on premises management issues (leases, model documents etc)

Agreed Objectives

- To increase the number and range of community owned assets available to support community activities in the borough
- To increase support for community development and participation across the borough, ensuring the full involvement of diverse communities
- To improve awareness of equalities issues, advance community cohesion and ensure different communities are actively supported and engaged in voluntary and community sector activity at all levels across the borough.

Appendix 1: Organisations

The following organisations contributed to the work covered in this report. This includes organisations attending the consultation meeting, CLB focus groups, or individual discussions with the consultants.

Name	Frontline Third Sector organisation	Network or Infrastructure body	Statutory body
Advocacy First	●		
Age Concern Bromley	●		
Alzheimer's Society Bromley	●		
Bexley & Bromley Advocacy Alliance	●		
Biggin Hill Community Care Association	●		
Blenheim-Arpley Estate Group, Penge	●		
Bromley Advocacy Project	●		
Bromley Autistic Trust	●		
Bromley Children & Families Forum		●	
Bromley Children's Project			●
Bromley Citizens Advice Bureau	●		
Bromley Community Counselling Service	●		
Bromley Council on Ageing		●	
Bromley Family Link	●		
Bromley Forum for the Homeless		●	
Bromley Mencap	●		
Bromley MIND	●		
Bromley Neighbourhood Watch Association		●	
Bromley PCT Health Improvement Service			●
Bromley Peace Council	●		
Bromley Primary Care Trust Board			●
Bromley Racial Equality Council		●	
Bromley Scope	●		
Bromley Scout Council	●		
Bromley Somali Community Association	●		
Bromley United Reformed Church	●		
Bromley Welfare	●		
Bromley Welcare	●		
Bromley Y	●		
Broomleigh Housing Association		●	
Carers Bromley	●		
Community Links Bromley		●	
Crystal Palace Community Development Trust			
Deaf Access	●		

Disability Voice		⊙	
Ethnic Communities Programme		⊙	
Friends of the Earth - Bromley	⊙		
Harris Hospiscare	⊙		
Hilda Lane Community Association	⊙		
HomeStart Bromley	⊙		
Independent Age	⊙		
Kelsey Housing Association	⊙		
JusB	⊙		
LB Bromley, Customer Service			⊙
LB Bromley, Environmental Health			⊙
LB Bromley, Health Development			⊙
LB Bromley, Parks Dept			⊙
Learning Disability Forum		⊙	
Magistrates Court Help Desk			⊙
Magpie Dance	⊙		
Mental Health Forum		⊙	
Metropolitan Police			⊙
Mottingham Community & Learning Shop	⊙		
Relate Bromley	⊙		
St Hughs Residents Association	⊙		
St Mary's Church, Bromley	⊙		
Saxon Centre	⊙		
Victim Support Bromley	⊙		
Volunteer Centre (CLB)		⊙	

Appendix 2: Draft Objectives discussed at consultation meeting

Infrastructure Development Strategy (2008-2014) – Proposed Objectives	
To improve joint working, planning and monitoring of infrastructure support services.	Potential activities: Reviewing remit and membership of the consortium (and updating terms of reference) Increasing engagement with statutory sector Resourcing support from paid worker
Development of the CVS to provide sustainable organisational development, information and policy support services that meet the needs of groups at different levels – (and particularly to ensure groups have access to specialist technical support and information to help manage increasing complexity of funding and legal environment)	Potential activities: Implementation of CLB Business Plan (2008-11) to include: Sustaining core CVS services provided by CLB, particularly in the areas of information and advice, funding and development support. Providing access to or developing further services to meet groups' additional support needs, particularly for workforce development and training, specialist technical and policy support.
To increase the effectiveness of partnership working and voluntary sector representation and engagement in multi agency forums	Potential activities: Consider and implement changes from current review of partnership working – likely to include: Review structure of forums, terms of reference and role of representatives Improve policy support for forums and partnership work Develop new cross cutting Voluntary Sector Forum
Increase the number and range of community owned assets available to support community activities in the borough	Potential activities: Investigate opportunities and support work to secure transfer of more assets into community ownership Collaborate with Community Foundation to establish a Bromley specific endowment fund
To increase support for community development and participation across the borough, ensuring the full involvement of diverse communities	Potential activities: Extending reach to provide capacity building support for small, new and emerging groups – particularly from under-represented communities Support for neighbourhood based activities Community Development Workers Group
To increase participation in volunteering and promote active citizenship and high standards in volunteer management	Potential activities: Increase sustainability of local Volunteer Centre and extend reach and range of activities
To improve awareness of equalities issues, advance community cohesion and ensure different communities are actively supported and engaged in voluntary and community sector activity at all levels across the borough.	Potential activities: Training, particularly to increase awareness of changes in legislative framework Increasing citizenship skills within communities to increase involvement in community groups, activities and forums.

Appendix 3: Feedback forms

Participants at the consultation event were given individual feedback forms and asked to identify up to 3 priorities for support – for their own organisation, and for the sector as a whole. 23 forms were returned with at least one identified priority.

Top priorities for services or activities that support my organisation	
Development of CVS services	☺
Support for IT	☺☺☺
Support on HR	☺☺☺☺
Partnership development	☺☺☺
Support for volunteer recruitment	☺☺☺☺☺☺☺
Help with legal issues	☺
Low cost training	☺☺☺
Fundraising support	☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺
Business Planning	☺
Communication	☺☺
Finance	☺

Top priorities for services or activities to strengthen the sector	
Improved joint planning	☺
Development of the CVS	☺
More effective partnership working	☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺
Networking with statutory sector	☺☺
Monitoring/developing the Compact	☺
Increasing access to services/better information sharing	☺☺☺☺☺☺☺
Increasing reach to under-represented sectors of community	☺
Sustainable funding	☺☺☺☺☺☺
Volunteering	☺☺
IT and HR support	☺☺
Governance	☺