Working better together

Cornwall Transformation Challenge Award

Annual report
April 2015 – March 2016

◆ Foreword

When you consider the breadth and ambition of Cornwall TCA's aims, the well-known saying, 'A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step,' springs to mind.

Setting out to challenge Council systems, processes, culture and skills for commissioning, procurement and contract management, minimising bureaucracy and creating a new model of sector support … this is clearly no short walk!

On such a journey, we look towards the end and at times wonder whether we will ever reach our destination. However, just occasionally we need to look back to remind ourselves that, although we have much more to do, we have already achieved a great deal. For TCA, the end of the first year is an appropriate time to do this.

This report details the progress that has been made. It forms part of our accountability to the wider sector and will be reported on at the annual VCSE Summit. Some targets have been met, while others have had to be revised or delayed. For me, the measure of progress is how people and organisations adapt and change. For it is people who really make things work, not processes or procedures.

I believe that there has been real progress. I have seen the Council understand the need to improve commissioning and procurement processes and the VCSE understand that it needs to forge new relationships.

There are a few of us who are in for the full thousand miles! However, there are many more of you who join for short parts of the journey, by participating in workshops and task groups. Please continue to do this. Its value is in the encouragement it gives the rest of us and how it helps TCA reach its goals, with benefits to the people and communities of Cornwall through more effective and joined-up services.

Andrew Green
Chief Executive, Cornwall Learning Partnership

Andrew is the independent VCSE representative on the TCA Programme Board,
elected by members of Cornwall Voluntary Sector Forum.

'A well-managed project that has successfully engaged stakeholders to date and is on the cusp of moving from discovery into delivery.'

Local Government Partnerships

◆ Background

In October 2014, Cornwall Council, supported by six partners in the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector successfully bid last year for a £936k Transformation Challenge Award from the Government, to look at ways we can work better together.
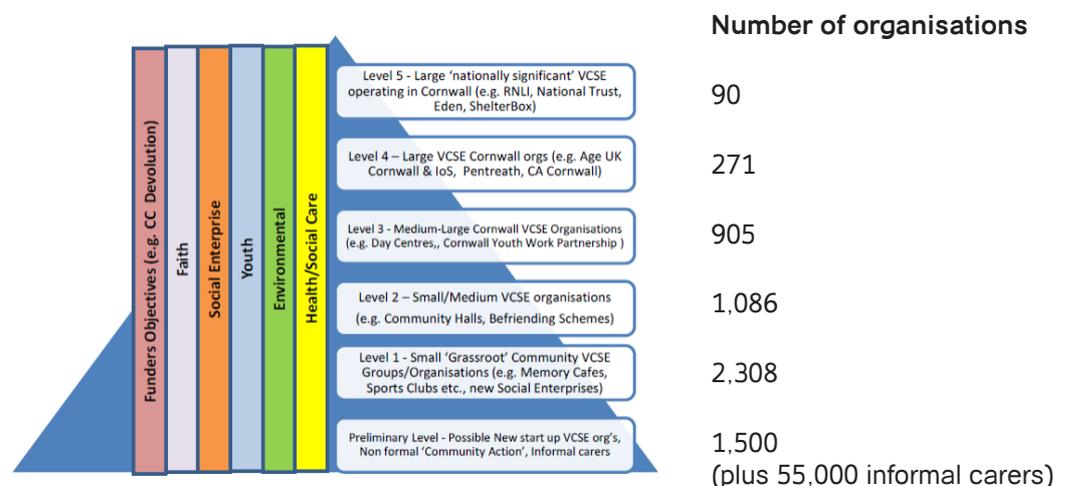
The bid described how public services are operating at a time of reducing resources, while demand for high-cost intensive services continues to rise. This is placing a huge pressure on organisations and undermining the quality of customer experience. How public services are provided in the future and by whom, requires a fundamental examination and possibly a radically different approach.

The bid outlined three objectives:

1. Improving outcomes for people
2. Improving commissioning and value for money
3. Strengthening the VCSE sector

VCSE organisations range from small community groups and charities to large-scale community interest companies and not-for-profit organisations. Commissioning is the process of understanding what services are required to meet people's needs, putting them in place and monitoring how they are delivered.

As well as the six VCSE partners, many other individuals and organisations have either been directly involved or given their feedback since the programme began in April 2015. They have provided invaluable insight and direction, and challenged the TCA priorities and timeline. As a result, we held a workshop in December 2015 to review our progress and agree recommendations for 'phase two' of the programme. Local Government Partnerships carried out an independent review in January 2016.

Number of organisations

Level 5 - Large 'nationally significant' VCSE operating in Cornwall (e.g. RNLI, National Trust, Eden, ShelterBox)	90
Level 4 – Large VCSE Cornwall orgs (e.g. Age UK Cornwall & IoS, Pentreath, CA Cornwall)	271
Level 3 - Medium-Large Cornwall VCSE Organisations (e.g. Day Centres,, Cornwall Youth Work Partnership)	905
Level 2 – Small/Medium VCSE organisations (e.g. Community Halls, Befriending Schemes)	1,086
Level 1 - Small 'Grassroot' Community VCSE Groups/Organisations (e.g. Memory Cafes, Sports Clubs etc., new Social Enterprises)	2,308
Preliminary Level - Possible New start up VCSE org's, Non formal 'Community Action', Informal carers	1,500 (plus 55,000 informal carers)

Columns of the pyramid (left to right): Funders Objectives (e.g. CC Devolution), Faith, Social Enterprise, Youth, Environmental, Health/Social Care

The make-up of Cornwall's VCSE sector by organisation size

◆ 1. Improving outcomes for people

What's involved

We wanted to look at ways to improve outcomes for people by co-designing services around their needs, and by simplifying the customer journey. We chose information, advice and guidance as an area to focus on.

What the sector said

- It is difficult to reach a common understanding of what is meant by information, advice and guidance, and how it is delivered either directly or as part of other services.
- Everyone would benefit from more consistent, high-quality information, advice and guidance provision.
- Debt and welfare would be a good area to focus on.
- A strategy should look further at what failure demand may exist in the system and how it can be avoided.
- A good understanding of the resources available in communities is needed, and also the key people and organisations who are closest to them.

What we did

- Gained an understanding of what information, advice and guidance means and the many different ways it is delivered as a service or as part of other services.
- Spoke to people about their experiences of accessing information, advice and guidance.
- Created a draft high-level strategy to guide our next steps on the delivery of information, advice and guidance.

4,500 VCSE ORGANISATIONS
ESTIMATED IN CORNWALL

45% OPERATE IN SOCIAL CARE, WELFARE, HEALTH AND WELLBEING

◆ 2. Improving commissioning and value for money

What's involved

We wanted to improve the quality, impact, and value for money of commissioned services and contract management, initially within the Council, but also by other public sector organisations.

What the sector said

These are some of the key points people have told us:

- People would benefit from a common approach to commissioning across the public sector.
- Commissioners, service providers and the public would benefit from better mapping of services.
- Commissioning should help create the conditions for change and build community resilience.
- Collaboration and knowledge-sharing between commissioners, providers, front-line staff and people using services is vital.
- The VCSE sector has a greater role to play than simply providing services, for example by accessing additional community resources.
- The focus should be on co-producing shared outcomes with people and measuring those, rather than contract performance.
- Procurement and contract management should be proportionate to the size of the contract.

What we did

- Analysed payments and contracts between Cornwall Council and VCSE organisations to better understand what is spent and why.
- Looked into the strengths and weaknesses of how the Council commissions with the sector.
- Gathered learning from interviews and surveys with commissioners and providers.
- Created an evidence base for the current state of the VCSE sector in Cornwall.
- Secured funding from the Cabinet Office to run a local 'commissioning academy' and a health and social care marketplace day in the coming year.

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CORNWALL
COUNCIL

CORNWALL COUNCIL SPENT £77m IN 2014/15 WITH 1,092 VCSE ORGANISATIONS

◆ 3. Strengthening the VCSE Sector

What's involved

We set out to create a new sector support model, which will help VCSE organisations to adapt, thrive and grow.

What the sector said

- 'Civil society' in general should be supported, not just VCSE organisations, also individuals and community groups.
- Informal and alternative support services should be encouraged, and integrated with and supported by commissioned services.
- Support services that are essential should be commissioned more widely: e.g. with the NHS, town and parish councils, and the non-statutory sector.
- There should be a mix of support services appropriate to different sizes and levels of organisation. 'Grass roots' organisations need more general support, while larger organisations would still benefit from more targeted, paid-for support.
- There is still an important role for an organisation to act as broker between communities, the public sector and VCSE organisations at all levels.

What we did

- Looked in detail at what current support exists for VCSE organisations.
- Researched other areas around the country to see what they do.
- Started looking at options for a new model of sector support.
- Carried out an impact assessment for when the current sector support arrangements funded by the Council come to an end in 2016.

20% OF ORGANISATIONS HAVE RECEIVED SECTOR SUPPORT IN THE LAST FIVE YEARS

20% REDUCTION IN IN TURNOVER FROM 2013 TO 2015

◆ What next?

Sector challenges

Independent research has been carried out to investigate the challenges VCSE organisations face. The full report will be published later this year; however, early feedback is that their main issues are related to change and maintaining their ability to deliver their services, such as:

- Difficulty in recruiting and retaining volunteers/supporters
- Difficulty in recruiting and retaining quality staff members
- Issues with maintenance and size of building/facilities
- Keeping up-to-date with legislation/government changes

The most important skills areas required in the next five years were:

- Financial management skills
- Safeguarding
- Leadership skills
- Communication skills
- Collaboration, negotiation and partnership working skills

Local Government Partnerships review

An independent review was carried out in January 2016 by Local Government Partnerships. It assessed the project using a 'traffic light' scale, as amber. This reflected that although good progress had been made, significant issues needed to be addressed to ensure successful delivery, including:

- **Governance:** for example, the role of the steering group and how workstreams will be governed.

- **Stakeholder engagement and communications:** for example, the opportunity to broaden engaged stakeholders to other relevant public sector bodies and VCSE organisations.

- **Commissioning:** for example, the loss of corporate knowledge following a restructure and the need to ensure collaboration across Council initiatives.

In response, the governance has been changed to reflect the TCA programme now consists of separate projects. The steering group has become a programme board and each project will be led by a working group.

The review made a number of recommendations, which will be included in the plans for phase 2. For example, the stakeholder engagement and communications strategy will be updated, and the commissioning recommendations will be addressed through the commissioning project.

◆ What next?

Following the review workshop in December 2015, the new programme board has agreed five projects to take forward in phase two:

1. A business improvement programme for information, advice and guidance, focusing initially on services for people with debt and welfare problems.
2. A place-based pilot to demonstrate collective impact.
3. Commissioning improvements, through a development programme for commissioners across Cornwall's public sector (the Cornwall Commissioning Academy) and the development of a commissioning toolkit.
4. A new model of support for VCSE organisations, intended to be in place by October 2016.
5. Short-term savings from an analysis of existing Council contracts.

TCA is involved in developing elements of the EU Growth Programme targeted at supporting the capacity and skills of the voluntary sector, with a total value on £1.8m.

£212,000
TCA SPEND
IN YEAR ONE

OVER 200 PEOPLE
IN THE VCSE SECTOR
ENGAGED SO FAR

Get involved

If you would like to know more about the programme, or want to receive the TCA newsletter, the TCA team would be pleased to hear from you: email tca@cornwall.gov.uk.

You will find all the background on the Cornwall TCA programme at www.cornwall.gov.uk/cornwalltca or why not join the Cornwall TCA group on Knowledge Hub?