

These comments were received through the Online Comment Form which was available during the three month Consultation on the Draft Commissioning Strategy

Online Responses and Comments						City Council responses					
Q1	Are you broadly in agreement with the following outcomes for the VCS Infrastructure Support Service?	Outcome1	Outcome2	Outcome3	Outcome4	Outcome5					
		4 Yes	4 Yes	3 Yes	3 Yes	3 Yes	The small sample means this needs to be treated with caution but indicates a balance of agreement for the Draft Outcomes. The Outcomes have been re-drafted and amended by the Specification Development Group and reflect some of the points set out below				
		1 No	1 No	2 No	2 No	2 No					
Q2	Outcome 1, 3,4,5 on a "broad" basis is this not what we already have in VOSCUR with some more specialist organisations providing a voice for specialist groups such as The Care Forum. Raising standards outcome 2 is always a Yes surely. All outcomes are dependant on the knowledge and skills of people in place and continuity of resources which in financially restricted times is not often achieved. My concern is therefore not the above outcomes but how can we ensure consistency, continuity and accessibility when resources are tight.						The City Council notes this point. The Commissioning Strategy is aiming to produce consistency through co-ordinated systems and quality; continuity by introducing a funded service period of at least three years and improved accessibility through the co-ordinated service offer.				
	These outcomes seem a bit too broad and not measurable. In themselves they are all worthy, but what difference will they make? E.g. enabling communication - with/between whom, for what? There is nothing here about providing support to adapt to a changing economic and political climate.						The City Council notes this point. The Outcomes are being developed with Key Performance Indicators by the Specification Development Group to be able to describe real impacts. The amended Outcome 5 in Final Strategy addresses the last point.				
	Beginning to feel like control rather than help						The City Council notes the comment. This is not the intention of the Council.				

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<p>My main concern is that creating a single VCS Support Service you are limiting choice and potentially losing much of the current expertise that exists within Bristol's VCS organisations. Also, I am concerned that via the EU tendering process for such a large contract, you could end up with bids coming in from the private sector with little understanding of local issues. Aside from this, if bids come in from companies who are funded from unethical sources, it may mean some groups will no longer be able to utilise VCS support due to their ethical fundraising policies. For example, think about Business Link being funded by Serco limits those who want to access support if for example they have a policy to not except funding from the trading of arms. This is especially important for groups who work with refugee communities.</p>						<p>The Final Commissioning Strategy focuses on a co-ordinated service. It does not require a single supplier. The City Council does not now prefer a Single Provider. The funding method recommended in the Strategy is a competitive Funding Agreement/grants process.</p>			
<p>Need no fluffy 'service' that constantly asks for our views, but need a real service that make a real difference to how we work, actual help with our organisational problems and with putting together a good quality application to funders and lottery. less talk, more real assistance please.</p>						<p>The City Council notes this point.</p>			
Q3	<p>Do you agree with the following statement: The proposed 'Bristol VCS Support Service' model (which outlines a co-ordinated set of VCS Infrastructure services) will meet our needs as a VCS group?</p>	2 said Agree	2 said Neither agree nor disagree	1 said Disagree	2 said Strongly disagree	<p>The small sample means this needs to be treated with caution but indicates a balance of disagreement for the proposed Service Model. This will be referred to the Specification Development Group to be considered alongside other evidence from consultations.</p>			
Q4	<p>In principle it makes sense but centralising a service has weaknesses especially if it becomes dependant on local government. What will be in place to ensure autonomy, or will it slip into becoming a political tool?</p>					<p>The Final Commissioning Strategy focuses on a co-ordinated service. The choice of Funding Agreement/grants as the funding method recognises that organisations already exist with independent agendas to support the VCS. Other consultation responses have stressed that the VCS needs to be included in monitoring arrangements on how the new services are meeting their needs</p>			

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	I can never get the specific support I need - it tends to be "packages", ready made, not tailored to specific needs. e.g. a few years ago, a really good community project I was involved with folded, because we could not access specific funding advice - Funderfinder was all that was offered, and it really is not very good.	The City Council notes this point. The Strategy proposes more tailored support as well as generic support.
	Most of this is orientated toward "people" groups rather than issue groups	The City Council notes this point.
	Too much about talking and representing our views, not enough real help	The City Council notes this point and will refer it to the Specification Development Group
	Have major concerns over whether those commissioned as a lead agency or sub-contracted agencies will have the necessary local knowledge and contacts to build on the success of existing VCS infrastructure and grass roots services. Also feel that the timescales and apparent lack of any management/administration element within the budget mean that there grass roots services will suffer. It seems unreasonable to expect a lead (possibly VCS) agency to manage such a complex package of tendering and sub contracts without reflecting this in a management budget in addition to any service budget, particularly given that these (similar) contracts were previously managed by BCC with the benefit of it's HR, Legal, Finance etc depts.	The City Council notes the concern. The Specification Group will consider issues of local knowledge and effectiveness in developing selection criteria. The current funding for these services includes the management costs for the current providers. The City Council is exploring sources of additional funding to support the new VCS Infrastructure support services. The City Council will continue to monitor and actively contract manage the new services.
	I have read only the Executive summary and whilst finding it a demanding read i.e. needing to pause to unpick the words and endeavour to recognise all they encompass, I can't see any holes. However I recognise as stated that this is ideal, that it may be beyond what is possible. I appreciate the intention to provide availability of service(s) according to need, at various levels, including certain specific areas of expertise.	The City Council notes the comment.
	The proposal looks good as it currently stands.	The City Council notes the comment.
	Proof will be in the actual delivery as a volunteer association and the largest youth provider in Bristol it is important that we can access support etc at times that work for us as volunteers ie during weekends and evenings	The City Council notes the concern and will refer it to the Specification Development Group.
	Whilst the model itself looks ambitious and exciting, I have considerable concerns about the model being proposed to manage it. I suspect that the truncated timescale for delivery, limited funding, lack of support will mean a significant drop in service to the VCS.	The City Council notes the concern. The City Council is exploring sources of additional funding to support the new VCS Infrastructure support services.

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Q5	Do you agree with the following statement: Having centralised access to all VCS support services (eg. a single website and one phone number to access all services) will be a useful development:	4 said Strongly agree	2 said Neither agree nor disagree	1 said Disagree	The small sample means this needs to be treated with caution but indicates a balance of support for co-ordinated access. This will be referred to the Specification Development Group to be considered alongside other evidence from consultations.
Q6	I have not had a problem as a user in seeking out the support I require currently.				The City Council notes the comment.
	Only if that single portal actually offered what was needed. However, less duplication would result in less expenditure for infrastructure services, and potentially more for front line or better services to support them.				The City Council notes the concern
	I don't mind it being centralised as long as it doesn't become something like a Big Lottery Fund call centre where you struggle to speak to anyone who knows your organisation or understands your needs. As long as it still remains localised I think this would be ok.				The City Council notes the concern and will refer it to the Specification Development Group.
	Yes, in theory this makes complete sense, however if one looks at 1 Big Database very few service users and grass roots groups would go there as a first port of call, preferring instead to go to (or search for) individual agencies websites or phone numbers.				The City Council notes the concern and will refer it to the Specification Development Group.
	Agreed - as long as the forward connections e.g. to different web pages or on to different departments via telephone connections can be achieved with little problem and without LONG delays.				The City Council notes the concern and will refer it to the Specification Development Group.
	A single website might make find all the relevant information difficult - depending on how it is structure, built and run.				The City Council notes the concern and will refer it to the Specification Development Group.
	See comments at 4 needs to be accessible at times to suit voluntary organisations				The City Council notes the concern and will refer it to the Specification Development Group.

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<p>This would indeed be a useful development, but the detail is crucial. Having a single telephone number for all services has considerable implications (who is answering the phone? How many staff do you need? How are they trained? How do you record the calls? Where are they based? How is performance monitored?). Equally, maintaining and updating information from numerous partners on a single website is a challenging responsibility that requires a great deal of back office support and expertise. The strategy suggests a timeline and budget for delivery that I do not believe will allow for the successful delivery of centralised access to all VCS support services.</p>						<p>The City Council notes the concern and will refer it to the Specification Development Group. The City Council is exploring sources of additional funding to support the new VCS Infrastructure support services.</p>
<p>Worry that service could become too generic and less able to focus on specific needs. Also hope we don't create a 'call centre' approach to responses - thinking about Awards for All or Business Link for example - where the local support is removed.</p>						<p>The City Council is exploring sources of additional funding to support the new VCS Infrastructure support services.</p>
Q7	<p>The Bristol VCS Support Service model proposes that VCS support services be arranged into levels to match the different needs of VCS groups as they develop."- Are you broadly in agreement with this proposal?</p>	3 said Yes	4 said not sure			<p>The small sample means this needs to be treated with caution but indicates a slight balance of approval for levels of service balance of support for co-ordinated access. This will be referred to the Specification Development Group to be considered alongside other evidence from consultations.</p>
Q8	<p>Who decides?</p>					<p>This is a matter for potential providers to develop in their proposals. But the City Council will expect that the new service will adapt over time to feedback from service users</p>
	<p>A good idea in principle.</p>					<p>The City Council notes the comment.</p>
	<p>I haven't read the full report and don't know how the levels will be arrived at. It is probably a good idea.</p>					<p>The City Council notes the comment.</p>
	<p>Yes clearly it is important that voluntary groups can access services that meet their needs at specific times in their development</p>					<p>The City Council notes the comment.</p>

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<p>This suggests that groups grow and develop along a linear model rather than the peaks and troughs experienced by the majority of groups throughout their lifetime. Changes in funding, turnover of staff etc may mean that groups that have been in existence for some time actually need basic services that would be marketed to 'new organisations' just as new organisations may actually be start ups with a considerable degree of expertise within them. To create what could be a false tiering may be to allow groups to slip between the gaps and miss opportunities. This type of approach would need a highly complex diagnostic system to ensure that organisations are appropriately directed.</p>						<p>The City Council accepts and understands this point.</p>
<p>Possibly having tiered advice for beginners, intermediates and advanced ie: been to a few training days that go over basic fundraising advice and it would be nice to be offered something more advanced for those who are already used to applying for funding.</p>						<p>The City Council notes the concern and will refer it to the Specification Development Group.</p>
Q9	<p>Do you agree with the following statement: A single main provider organisation is an effective way to create a co-ordinated VCS support service?</p>	<p>2 said Strongly agree</p>	<p>2 said Agree</p>	<p>1 said Neither agree nor disagree</p>	<p>2 said Strongly disagree</p>	<p>The small sample means this needs to be treated with caution but indicates a balance of approval for the Single Main Provider delivery method. This will be referred to the Specification Development Group to be considered alongside other evidence from consultations. Please note that the City Council does not now prefer a Single Provider model.</p>
Q10	<p>I have already explained that I believe there is sometimes strength in numbers and as a customer I had no problem in knowing which organisation to go to. I am not convinced by having less will mean more.</p>					<p>The Final Commissioning Strategy focuses on a co-ordinated service. It does not require a single supplier. The City Council does not now prefer a Single Provider.</p>
	<p>Again, less duplication is definitely better (although the proposal seems to be for 3 main providers...), as long as it provides what is actually needed.</p>					<p>The Final Commissioning Strategy focuses on a co-ordinated service. It does not specify any number of providers.</p>
	<p>Groups that aren't flavour of the month could be marginalised</p>					<p>The City Council notes the concern. The new services will have to demonstrate that Equalities and anti-discrimination are embedded throughout their proposal.</p>

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	See previous comments. I would say that at the very least, if it was a centralised body it would have to be a local centralised body, as opposed to a private sector group then subcontracting work out to other local groups. This is a bad model, especially if you compare it to models like Business Link.	The choice of Funding Agreement/grants as the funding method - this is only available to not-for-profit organisations. The Specification Group will consider issues of local knowledge and effectiveness in developing selection criteria. The City Council is not now preferring a Single Main Provider delivery model.
	It could be, however timescales, service budgets, management budgets and local knowledge will be key to the success of the model. If any of these are not appropriate then local services and people will undoubtedly suffer.	The City Council notes the comments and will refer them to the Specification Development Group.
	With the right appointments and sufficient training of personnel I think integration is better than separation. I would still expect there to be, within the Single Main Provider Organisation, members of staff with particular areas of experience and expertise.	The City Council notes the comments. The City Council is not now preferring a Single Main Provider delivery model.
	It makes sense from an economy of scale perspective, but if the resulting main provider organisation becomes a bureaucratic organisation then it will not benefit the voluntary and community sector.	The City Council notes the comment
	The most sensible way forward	The City Council notes the comment
	I agree that a single main provider as proposed in the strategy COULD be an effective way for Bristol City Council to devolve power to VCS organisations and create a more self-reliant and responsive third sector for the city, if sufficient time, support, expertise and funding were forthcoming. Unfortunately, the timescale and budget attached to this proposal is such that I believe it has considerable potential to actually undermine the effectiveness of the VCS in Bristol	The City Council notes the concern. The City Council is exploring sources of additional funding to support the new VCS Infrastructure support services.
	Not all services; BCC should try to explore new organisations to deliver some of its services.	The City Council notes the comment. The competitive Funding Agreement process opens up the possibility for different provider proposals to be submitted.
	The decision on the service delivery method seems to have been made before the consultation has been completed.	The Consultation has resulted in the City Council changing its preference for a Single Main Provider delivery model.

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	My only concern is that the tendering process could mean we lose a lot of quality and specialist local service and knowledge.					The Specification Group will consider issues of local knowledge and effectiveness in developing selection criteria				
Q 11	Please rank the following priority options 1 to 5, where 1 is your preferred way of prioritising how funding should be used, and 5 your least preferred:									
	Ranking	1	2	3	4	5	Average Score	Preferred ranking		
	Score	5	4	3	2	1				
	Direct available resources at the Community Development and Established VCS Groups Development levels of the service. Limit the free support that is available to well established VCS groups	1			1		3.5	2	This preference will be referred to the Specification Development Group. The small sample means on its own this must be treated with caution.	
	Prioritise support to new, unfunded groups to help them establish themselves and to those VCS groups which receive public funding to make sure public funding is used to the best effect			2			3	5	This preference will be referred to the Specification Development Group. The small sample means on its own this must be treated with caution.	
	Prioritise the practical, 'hands-on' services which provide direct help to VCS groups over the 'influencing' services	3		1			4.5	1	This preference will be referred to the Specification Development Group. The small sample means on its own this must be treated with caution.	

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	Prioritise 'influencing' services over the practical, 'hands-on' direct support services to VCS groups	1	1		1	3.33	3	This preference will be referred to the Specification Development Group. The small sample means on its own this must be treated with caution.		
	Charge for training and other support services for all groups over a certain income level		2		1	3.33	3	This preference will be referred to the Specification Development Group. The small sample means on its own this must be treated with caution.		
Q12	Please outline any other ideas you have for prioritising ...									
	If the service works to a clear and realistic outcomes framework, the priorities will become apparent.							The City Council notes the comment		
	Resources for supporting technical issues connected with managing community buildings. There are numerous key issues surrounding the management of a community venue, but no direct support for this. Issues include lease advice, H&S, insurance, tax, maintenance and improvements, working in listed buildings or buildings not originally designed to be a multi-use community space etc...							The City Council notes the comment and will refer it to the Specification Development Group.		
	Far too much emphasis on the 'influencing' services, not enough is being done to provide real help							The City Council notes the comment and will refer it to the Specification Development Group		
	Tried to rank but would not accept							The City Council apologises for any technical problems encountered with the Snap online system.		

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	Do these VCS groups have specific additional needs in how any of the above services are delivered?	Similar comments to before.				
		They may be less mobile and less likely to travel so support may need to go to them?				
d	Impact on Older People's VCS groups:					
	In getting practical support?					
	In how their voice and influence is increased?	Positive				
	In how their equality issues are taken forward?					
	Do these VCS groups have specific additional needs in how any of the above services are delivered?	They may be less mobile and less likely to travel so support may need to go to them?				
e	Impact on Young People's VCS groups:					
	In getting practical support?					
	In how their voice and influence is increased?	Only if they are provide with a youth forum				
	In how their equality issues are taken forward?	No impact				
	Do these VCS groups have specific additional needs in how any of the above services are delivered?	Will require a forum for YP to come together to discuss shared issues				

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	a greater proportion of the available resources for VCS Infrastructure Support going into practical support services and a smaller proportion into influencing, networking and representation	4				The City Council notes this preference and will refer it to the Specification Development Group.				
	a greater proportion of the available resources for VCS Infrastructure Support going into influencing, networking and representation and a smaller proportion into practical support services									
	an equal allocation of resources to both elements	1				The City Council notes this preference and will refer it to the Specification Development Group.				
Q15	Please use the space below for any other general comments, concerns and ideas for improving the proposal for the Bristol VCS Support Service:									
	Please no more influencing and representation					The City Council notes the comment				
	This is a really difficult one to respond to. I can only guess at the outcome of the different allocation proportions. If greater I probably mean not much greater!					The City Council notes the comment				
	From our perspective, the two aspects of the Bristol VCS Support Service would be the availability of web based resources to advertise our karate club to everyone in Bristol, and secondly if the service can provide reasonably priced access to suitable training venues so that we could continue to offer club sessions if our normal venue is unavailable for any reason, or for the use of one off events.					The City Council notes the comment				

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I would prefer a far longer timetable of handover to any single main provider, continued support from BCC (key liaison officers within the council should mirror the work being led by the voluntary sector) and a realistic budget that takes account of the huge requirement in back office support and expertise that this proposal will bring to any single main provider.						The City Council notes the comment. The City Council is exploring sources of additional funding to support the new VCS Infrastructure support services. The City Council is not now preferring a Single Main Provider delivery model.				
Groups from all of the above Communities of Interest are represented as members and access our services.						The City Council notes the comment				
Q16	Is your organisation led by one of the following Equalities Communities/Communities of Interest?					No groups completed this section				
	Black & Minority Ethnic Communities									
	Women									
	Disabled People									
	Older People									
	Children & Young People									
	Lesbian, Gay & Bisexual People									
	Transgendered People									
	Faith Communities									
	Gypsy and Travellers									
	Refugees/Asylum seeker									
	Men									
	Other									
Q17	What was your organisation's income in 2008/09?	Up to £5,000	£5,000 - £20,000	£20,000 - £50,000	£50,000 - £100,000	£100,000 - £250,000	£250,000 - £500,000	£500,000 - £1,000,000	More than £1,000,000	only 4 from the 14 responses

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		1	1	1				1 completed this section
Q18	How long has your organisation/group been in existence	Less than 2 years	2 - 5 years	6 - 10 years	More than 10 years	only 5 from the 14 responses completed this section		
				1	4			