

Overarching Strategic Partnership

In March 2011 the Department for Education Improving Outcomes programme appointed Children England to lead an overarching strategic partnership of voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations. The Overarching Partnership is funded for two years to support the economy and infrastructure of the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector that works with children, young people and families. The role of Strategic Partner is also to share the best practice, expertise, learning and concerns of the sector with the DfE in developing policy.

The programme is led by Children England, in partnership with Community Matters, NCVYS, NAVCA, The Race Equality Foundation and the Social Enterprise Coalition. The partnership will use its extensive combined member networks and stakeholder groups to shape and deliver its programme, and to gather the perspectives of thousands of organisations and community groups. This will include providing information, learning resources, events and peer networks, to support organisations to learn from each other, improve sustainability and explore the potential for growth from diverse funding mechanisms, public sector commissioning, building consortia and entrepreneurial ways of doing business.

What will the Programme deliver?

There will be series of training and capacity building sessions, networking and consultation opportunities, and development projects, producing learning for the wider sector, and delivered throughout the two-year programme. The programme is nationally coordinated with a variety of activities delivered across the regions and localities of England. The aim will be to ensure that sessions and activities are distributed across the country, making them accessible both in terms of geographical coverage, and in aiming for participation from the widest possible diversity of types, sizes and practice specialisms of VCSE organisations. Limited funds mean it will not be possible deliver all activities in all areas.

The Programme is grouped across three key strands, aiming to:

1. Develop organisational capacity and workforce skills
2. Extend representation, voice and influence
3. Strengthen networks and cost effective communication

We have listed the elements of the programme in simple titles, with the acronym of the

partner organisation who is leading their delivery in brackets where appropriate. If you are interested in knowing more about any of them, please contact either your usual contact at Children England, or the relevant organisation indicated for the activity, using the contacts list at the end of this document.

AIM 1: Developing organisational capacity and workforce skills:

The majority of this strand is focused directly on delivering support to frontline organisations, and includes;

- Training on commissioning, including new forms of finance (CE)
- Targeted support for consortia development (CE)
- Training materials and sessions for trustees of organisations working with children, young people and families (CE)
- Workforce development information and regional workshops (CE).
- Training on community asset management and business planning that helps organisations take advantage of new opportunities e.g. the community right to challenge and right to buy. (CM)
- A library of tools to support good business practice in the VCSE sector, and an advice line for small community organisations (CM).
- Peer learning sets on engaging children & young people (NCVYS), tackling child poverty (NAVCA), and promoting diversity (REF).
- Pilot sector-owned peer review and improvement mechanisms, based on learning from similar local authority model (CE lead contact)
- Training, workshops, online support and consultancy to enable organisations to make choices about social enterprise. (SEC)

If you would like to sign up to receive the strategic partnership's quarterly workforce bulletin or have any information or resources that you would like featured in the bulletin please contact either Julie Campbell at Julie@childrenengland.org.uk or Vicky Odams at vicky@childrenengland.org.uk.

AIM 2: Extend representation, voice and influence:

The partnership will be acting as a key conduit between Government and the VCSE sector, delivering information and policy products from all partners, and bringing the sector together with key DfE officials through a range of regular meetings and specific events. All partners will be continuing to support and engage their respective contacts and support networks as their routes for gathering sector views, and making representations on their behalf, within Government and wider decision making bodies and structures.

The Partnership programme will offer a range of regular information and policy resources to anyone in the sector interested in receiving them. During what is recognised to be a highly challenging period for the sector, these resources will be aimed at translating national policy and funding developments for local organisations, reporting sector views back to Government, sharing learning within the sector, and supporting VCSE organisations in their business development and advocacy on behalf of children young people and families. There will be:

- A weekly Strategic Partnership email service summarising key news affecting the sector and updating on all the Strategic Partnership events, opportunities, and developments
- Policy briefings and consultation responses
- ‘How To?’ sheets offering practical tips and guidance

The first of the Strategic Partnership’s sector briefings has been produced on the Munro Review of Child Protection, and can be accessed here:

<http://www.childrenengland.org.uk/index.php?pageID=1585>.

If you are already a member and receive Children England mailings, you will receive these products as they come out, but if you aren’t, and want to make sure you are included in the mailing lists for these policy and information services, or if you have any particular requests and ideas as to what topics would be most helpful to you as we develop these resources over the course of the Programme, please contact Nick Davies on 020 7833 3319 or nick@childrenengland.org.uk.

In addition under this strand, all partners will contribute to extending VCS representation through;

- Exploring greater use of social media, to engage young people and frontline workers in local decision making and wider sector networking and practice sharing
- Facilitating volunteer led groups on government proposals that affect children and young people
- Developing cross sector links at local & national levels with statutory and private sectors and external bodies such as Ofsted, LGA, NHS, Confed and C4EO

AIM 3: Strengthen networks and cost effective communication: The third strand will aim to help the sector to develop the mechanisms for leading and sustaining itself, support the ability to learn from each other, and capture the learning that will help it to navigate some of the challenges to sustainability and growth. This includes;

- Developing and testing an online resource to link local commissioners with local VCSE organisations (CE)
- Consultancy support with a selection of local authorities on stimulating capacity of their local community sector in line with anticipated commissioning priorities (CE) and for a further 5 areas to enable to involvement of neighbourhood groups in strategic planning (CM).
- Expert advice will be brokered for the sector to improve take-up and confidence in e-communications, and using the web and mobile communication channels to improve cost effective service delivery across the sector. (CE)
- Stakeholder groups for practice developments on cross-cutting themes for the sector, including payment by results, youth justice, national citizens service, volunteering (NCVYS)
- Action learning sets on simple evidence based approaches for community groups tackling child poverty (NAVCA), learning from localism and gain views from pilot sites of the health and wellbeing boards and impact of the sector (CM).
- A standing panel of 200 organisations to carry out termly surveys on the impact of the programme and ongoing needs (REF).

Linking yourself into the Programme

Anyone interested in finding out more about the DfE Strategic Partnership work, and signing up to our communications, can find out more on our web pages at <http://www.childrenengland.org.uk/dfestrategicpartnerships/1583> or can contact Children England:

Children England national office: 020 7833 3319:

Kathy Evans – Deputy CEO, kathy@childrenengland.org.uk

Kevin Garrod – National Partnerships and Programmes Manager
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Nick Davies – Policy and Information Officer nick@childrenengland.org.uk

Children England Regional Staff

CE Regional Managers:

Sharon Long (South of England) sharon@childrenengland.org.uk

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Julie Campbell (South West) Julie@childrenengland.org.uk

CE Member Services Coordinator – all England:

Vicky Odams vicky@childrenengland.org.uk

Alternatively please contact the following partner contacts directly about plans for their aspects of the Strategic Partner Programme

NCVYS: 020 7278 1041

Faiza Choudhury - faiza@ncvys.org.uk

NAVCA: 0114 289 3978

Angela Barnes – Angel.Barnes@navca.org.uk

Community Matters: 020 7837 7887

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Race Equality Foundation: 020 7619 6225

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