



The Big Society and Sure Start Children's Centre commissioning, 28th Sept 2010, Northampton

Origins:

The event, the culmination of ongoing discussions between Children England and Together for Children, sort to provide a sub national and organisational collaboration that helped Children's Trusts and their VCS partners think about the design and delivery of Childrens Centres from **April 2011**. The event was designed for Children's Centre strategic leads, commissioners, and chief executives and managers from voluntary and community sector organisations that lead, or provide services for Children's Centres.

Outcomes

The event had the following formal outcomes;

- To help delegates develop an understanding of the concept of the Big Society.
- To help delegates respond to major change constructively.
- To help delegates to learn about the range of potential solutions, and to discuss how these might be developed and implemented.
- To share experiences and to help develop a two way dialogue that sustains the effective design and delivery of Childrens Centres in the future.

The day constituted a series of keynote addresses, principally via VCS speakers and a contribution from the Centre for Social Justice, and information exchange workshops led by Local Authority representatives. The delegates were reflective of the targeted mix of 60/40 VCS to Local Authority Childrens Centres leads and associated staff.

Highlights

80 delegates (10 % no shows, current average closer to 20-25%) reported an almost 60% improvement in their knowledge of the Big Society and a 62% overall agreement that the day achieved its aims. The greatest value attached to the day was the opportunity to learn about and think about major change which secured a 71% approval rating, and overall there was strong indication that the day helped to focus minds and generate thought in relation to the scale and scope of imminent change.

Strategic outcomes

The event helped to convince the sector and its partners that DfE and local government are in listening mode and ready to explore a full range of scenarios in relation to the design and delivery of Childrens Centres. The event also helped to capture DfE ambitions for greater inclusion of organisations with a track record of working with families that can deliver greater impact and might be able to a payment by results schematic.

Next Steps

Children England and Together for Children are keen to maintain the momentum with more joint work, which could include; dedicated events and /or stand alone or bolt on seminars. There will need to be an evolution commensurate with an evolving policy perspective that may well reflect a boarder role for Childrens Centres in the future, and the activity will need to offer clearer harder outcomes.