

## Overview and Scrutiny briefing note – 6 November 2013

<b>Topic:</b>	To receive feedback from NCVS relating to the State of the Sector Survey and how the voluntary sector is adapting and coping with the changing economic climate and how partnership working has been affected
<b>Requested by:</b>	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
<b>Submitted by:</b>	Fergus Slade, NCVS
<b>Date submitted:</b>	3 October 2013

### **Why we do the survey**

As the support organisation for the voluntary sector, NCVS picks up information about the troubles facing sector groups and organisations across the city. We do our best to help these struggling groups and communities through our services, but previously we had not coherently analysed the issues organisations faced: we would provide support, but weren't campaigning for them.

Sector intelligence became especially important as the coalition government squeezed budgets nationwide, and especially council budgets. So, in 2012 we created our first State of the Sector survey to evidence the difficulties groups were experiencing or anticipating, and conducted our second survey in 2013 to monitor these issues and see if any new ones were present.

### **Who answered it**

59 voluntary sector organisations from across the local voluntary sector answered the survey, covering all services provided, client groups and geography. This number gives us a significant amount of data, and stories which we know are echoed across the city because of our case work intelligence.

### **What its results were**

Past 12 months:

- Increase in demand for services (and worst yet to come)
- Decrease in staff
- Decrease in funding (and smaller pool)
- Increase in volunteers

Potential closures:

- 54% may have to close a service (decrease from 74% last year)
- 11% may have to close altogether (consistent with last year)

The Money:

- Reliance on local money to provide services city wide – 76% of respondents provide services across the city, not at a ward level
- Funding not covering costs
- Reserves being used, or will be used in the future
- Funders don't understand full cost of delivery
- Sector is scared to challenge funders

Welfare Reform

- 52% say welfare reform will have high impact on service users

- 24% say welfare reform will affect their organisation
- Welfare reform will inevitably increase demand on stretched services
- 54% pessimistic about clients future prospects due to government agendas

### **Our recommendations**

With such a range of material, the report gives us plenty of policy direction for the future. We are trying to promote our services more widely to try and prevent the closure of services and groups, but sadly we know that Disabled People's Advocacy closed in September.

We are engaging with the City Council at pre-budget meetings as we have for the last two years to bring together sector concerns and promote those raised in this report.

We are keen to stress that groups are working city wide, and not just in areas. While the Council's approach of streamlining funding into "areas" of work, such as through Area Based Grants and that currently being processed through Communities of Identity, is suitable for some types of service provision, NCVS would be extremely concerned about this method becoming a 'catch all' for voluntary sector funding.

We want to step up our work with the City Council on their campaigning against the negative impact of welfare reform as it is clearly concerning the city's voluntary sector. We think this can be a great additional campaigning tool for the city and have been working with Liz Jones to reinforce our support for the City Council's campaigning.

A more open and consistent relationship with funders, including the City Council, is essential. NCVS has had support from Councillors to challenge on funding and commissioning, but intelligence from the sector indicates that this is not always reflected in the practice at officer level.

Finally – the voluntary sector is a significant social and economic contributor to Nottingham – but only if it's open for business. Funding needs to be maintained and access to external funding such as European Funds need to be optimized.

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