

Specification - Support Services for the Voluntary and Community Sector in Nottingham City

1) Introduction

Nottingham City Council (NCC) is looking to procure the provision of a range of support services for Nottingham City's Voluntary and Community Sector through a Block Contract Agreement with suitably experienced and knowledgeable Provider of support services for the VCS.

A thriving Third Sector is crucial for Nottingham City. To support this, the City Council recognises the importance of investing in support services for the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) so it can play an active and sustainable role in:

- Community engagement and social capacity
- Influencing, shaping and giving a voice for civic society, and within Governance structures, sharing knowledge about local needs
- Providing local strategic input into decision-making

A comparatively small investment in support services for the VCS enables significant investment to be 'levered' into the city and builds the Sector's capacity to undertake several functions including delivering statutory services, at a favourable price, or filling in gaps created by reshaping of statutory provision.

In brief, the provider will raise the profile of the VCS with partners and be a strategic voice for the sector, as well as providing a forum for other organisations providing infrastructure support to the VCS to connect and form strategic partnerships. Importantly, the Provider will also ensure the delivery of specialist services such as accountancy and HR, as well as carrying out generic support functions to facilitate capacity building and good governance.

This specification will form an integral part of the contractual arrangements and provides the criteria by which service quality, efficiency and effectiveness will be monitored and evaluated by the Council.

2) Strategic Relevance

Future challenges for this service include the changing financial landscape in which the VCS finds itself, supporting key priorities for the city as outlined in the Nottingham Plan to 2020 and local agendas such as Looking After Each Other (LAEO), Area Based (ABG) and Communities of Identity (COI) grants. It also needs to respond to the national picture as detailed below.

2.1 Local

The Nottingham Plan to 2020

The Nottingham Plan to 2020 sets the overall strategic direction and long term vision for the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the City of Nottingham. The Plan contains a number of strategic priorities and cross cutting aims that are supported by partners, including the VCS across the city. One of the strategic priorities within the plan is to work with the VCS to strengthen communities and improve services.

Nottingham City Vulnerable Adults Plan (2012-15), A Preventative Strategy: Building a Capable Community and Supporting Choice

The *Vulnerable Adults Plan* (or *VAP*) is the first over-arching plan aimed at responding to the needs, as a whole, of the growing number of vulnerable adults living in Nottingham. The intended outcomes for vulnerable adults in Nottingham include enabling them to achieve their full potential as active partners in their own support and as part of a community wide support system.

Area Based Grant

Area Based Grant was developed by the Council and launched in 2013. It brought together numerous sources of Council grants spent within neighbourhoods and enabled local organisations to come together to develop plans as to how this funding could be better used to meet local needs. It is also identified as a route to delivering external funding into local areas through these local partnerships and has grown significantly since its inception. Currently the main focuses of spending are on activities for young people (both diversionary and targeted), work training and programmes to deliver skills and employment, the delivery of successful community centres by supporting community associations and locally focused community projects.

Communities of Identity Grant

Having identified particular areas of focus amongst minority communities, the Council launched its Communities of Identity Grants in 2014. Funding is provided to build skills and confidence, deliver information, advice and guidance and consider the best methods to use physical and virtual space. Priority communities were brought into three groupings;

- Established communities (for example Indian, Pakistani, Chinese, Caribbean communities)
- New and emerging communities, Refugees and Asylum Seekers (African, eastern European communities, Roma, as well as the increasing number of refugees settling in Nottingham due to current conflicts around the world)
- Gender and Sexual Orientation (women, gay, transgender, lesbian and transsexual communities)

Looking After Each Other

Nottingham City Council and the NHS Nottingham City Clinical Commissioning Group are collaborating on a major piece of engagement work called 'Looking After Each Other'. The aim is better enable citizens and communities to have a key role in meeting their own needs and aspirations by bringing community assets, including the local VCS, together to create an enabling environment to create capability within communities. The focus is on creating this through supporting area-specific (both geographical and specialist) voluntary organisations to build capability within local communities.

2.2 National

Care Act 2014

The Care Act places care and support law into a single, clear modern statute and enshrines the principle of individual wellbeing as the driving force behind it. Under the Care Act, local authorities are expected to understand, co-ordinate and make effective use of other statutory, voluntary and/ or private sector information and advice and prevention resources available to people within their areas. Applicants should demonstrate how they will support the VCS to provide information and support and prevention services to citizens in line with this.

3) Service Specific Requirements

Support Services can loosely be categorised under the four headlines below:

1. Specialised Support Functions

These can be loosely defined as the internal operations and processes of an organisation that are mainly not accessible or visible to the public, but are necessary to enable it to exist at all and to continue functioning such as HR or accountancy/book keeping. They are critical as they provide operational support and underpinning to facilitate the actual delivery of services. Some of these services are likely to be chargeable to the users. Ideally, these services will be located in one place to enable a more rounded service providing a greater overall knowledge. This will also make it easily identifiable and accessible to all users.

2. Generic Service Support Functions

These Support Functions are crucial as they will provide, for example, capacity building on an on-going basis to newer groups and to developing groups, supporting good governance, providing specialist support, training and funding advice and delivering a coordinated lead for volunteering in the city. A resource and training brokerage, co-ordinating the sharing of resources between VCS providers (training for example) should also be included. This will be delivered by the Provider and its partners with communication and co-ordination with Area Based Grant and Communities of Identity lead organisations.

3. Strategic Support Functions

Strategic functions are crucial in ensuring that the views of the local Voluntary and Community Sector are an integral part of planning and decision-making. They will provide, for instance: networking, influencing, advocacy, intelligence and representation. To raise the profile of Nottingham's VCS to strategic partners and provide a strategic voice for the sector.

4. Other Infrastructure Support

Providing specialist VCS infrastructure organisations with support and opportunities to connect with the sector by enabling them to be part of the network that supports this contract, for example by hosting networking meetings allowing information sharing. They should be able to utilise its communications (including social and digital media) and partnerships to ensure they are visible to the wider VCS and strategic partners and can form part of strategic support functions outlined above.

The service must be delivered across the area of Nottingham City. It is likely that the delivery of this contract can only be successfully achieved through collaborative working, therefore please note that Nottingham City Council encourages partnerships, consortiums and networks.

We would like to see innovative ideas that offer positive support solutions to the needs of the VCS in Nottingham City. The Council is looking for a Provider to deliver the outlined service and develop effective networks with a range of organisations that are suitably qualified and experienced in their respective areas, to enable them to deliver specific elements of the contract.

To whom the service will be delivered:

- Any voluntary and community sector organisation, both established and new, operating or based within Nottingham City;
- Individuals living/volunteering within Nottingham City who need information about local voluntary and community organisations; and
- Nottingham City Council and its strategic partners from the public, private and Third sectors e.g. One Nottingham

Nottingham City is composed of a hugely varied group of VCS organisations working to meet the diverse needs of its citizens. It is imperative that any organisation/s that wishes to deliver these services is equipped to do so with relevant, recent and extensive experience which must be evidenced at the point of tender.

In order to meet the needs of Nottingham City's diverse VCS it is crucial that any interested parties have the knowledge and experience in accordance with the service elements they aim to deliver. This includes relevant and extensive knowledge/experience of working with partners across all sectors – business, public and voluntary, as well as strategic partnerships such as One Nottingham and have knowledge/understanding of working with the VCS in Nottingham City at Locality, Ward and Area level.

It is also crucial that Providers have:

- Structure/s (electronic, physical and floating) in place to provide a 'one stop shop' function to meet local need;
- Excellent, existing networks with the full range (size and ethos) of VCS organisations, local groups, partnerships and statutory organisations operating in Nottingham City; and be continuously looking to develop these; and
- Expertise and experience in delivering specialist service-specific elements

The VCS needs access to information and support quickly and easily in order to support a wide range of internal and external activity. Information must be accurate, up-to-date, comprehensive, accessible locally and be available through a variety of mediums including social media.

The quality and delivery of services under the contract must be:

- Flexible, open and transparent
- Visible and accessible to the diverse range of VCS organisations in Nottingham City
- Excellent quality
- Able to effectively get Nottingham City's VCS heard and listened to by key decision makers.

4) Services to be delivered

This specification does not put forward a defined delivery model for service delivery and Providers are encouraged to submit models which they believe will best support the VCS to meet future challenges and priorities. The following section details the services to be delivered:

1. VCS having effective legal and professional specialist admin functions

- An accountancy or book keeping service for the VCS
- Support with negotiating leases with the City Council
- Generic HR services

Example indicators:

1. *Robust financial accounting undertaken by suitably experienced staff*
2. *VCS organisations being more aware of their responsibilities as an employer e.g.; Health & Safety, TUPE, employment law undertaken by suitably experienced staff*

2. Robust and sustainable VCS with appropriate policies and procedures in place

- Funding advice for VCS organisations
- Resource and training brokerage to enable organisations to share training and resources to ensure maximum value.
- Governance toolkit and support
- Development support for VCS organisations to help build their capacity
- Information sharing service and specialist networking opportunities
- Volunteering brokerage and placement amongst VCS organisations and other partners across the City

Example indicators:

1. *Groups and organisations having good governance and infrastructure to underpin them*
2. *Strong links with Area Based and Communities of Identity lead organisations*
3. *Successful funding bids*
4. *Volunteers and staff accessing training that is recognised by VCS organisations across the City*
5. *Successful volunteering placements for both individual and organisation*

3. **A co-ordinated and influential strategic voice for the VCS**

- Regular communications with VCS and stakeholders about key issues/ priorities
- Contributions to policies/priorities affecting Nottingham citizens on behalf of the VCS.

Example indicators:

1. *VCS responds to emerging priorities in the city*
2. *Enhanced relationship between all sectors (private, public and third sector)*

4. **A better connected VCS with more joint activity and co-ordination amongst specialist infrastructure organisations (those organisations supporting a number of groups who have a specific focus eg health, homelessness, play etc)**

- A space for specialist infrastructure organisations to connect
- The ability for specialist infrastructure organisations to access wider VCS opportunities
- A link between specialist infrastructure organisations and key partners in the city.

Example indicators:

1. *A forum for specialist VCS infrastructure organisations to connect*
2. *Specialist infrastructure organisations able to coordinate and share resources between themselves*
3. *Specialist infrastructure organisations able to be part of the strategic voice for the VCS*

So that VCS organisations can achieve their desired outcomes and that current and emerging needs can be met, service level must be balanced and capacity must be flexible and always need driven.

As part of this tendering exercise we will expect Applicants to demonstrate what service models they intend to use to meet customers' specific needs.

5) **Social Value**

The VCS has huge social value for the city in increasing community engagement, social inclusion and providing services for those most vulnerable in our society. The Provider will demonstrate improvement in social value by delivering volunteering opportunities and enabling local citizens to deliver activity in and amongst their communities. It will also offer support to organisations to manage local facilities for the benefit of Nottingham citizens and their communities.

Attached is information relating to the Nottingham City Council Employer Hub. We would require the successful provider to engage with the Employer Hub in relation to apprenticeships opportunities which may be required as appropriate.

6) **Citizen Focus**

A broad aim of the VCS support service is to support the VCS sector to improve the lives of citizens, as both users and volunteers. It is expected that the Provider will:

- Develop and comply with access and referral arrangements appropriate to users of the service/s
- Ensure that the service is as accessible as possible for the customer group, by providing information in a range of required formats and languages, and through different mediums of delivery. Information will include that around the range of provision available and opening times.

- Encourage feedback from the sector and citizens, have mechanisms in place to respond and make adjustments to its provision if appropriate.

7) **Resilience**

The service will support citizens to both benefit from and participate in Nottingham City's VCS. The VCS will continue to experience a changing funding environment; the provision of support services will better equip the sector to deal with these challenges. VCS organisations who work with vulnerable citizens will be better able to support these individuals to build personal resilience to difficult economic and social circumstances.

8) **Partnership Working**

The Provider will work collaboratively and with key strategic partners across the city to deliver the contract. The Provider will also work with Area Based Grant and Communities of Identity lead organisations to deliver the services outlined above. A key component of the support services include facilitation and support to VCS organisations by providing opportunities to network with each other and work in partnership to meet demands and achieve shared goals.

9) **Safeguarding & Child Protection**

Nottingham City Council requires that all providers follow the Nottingham & Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Adults Policy, Procedure & Guidance, available on the Nottingham City Council website and where appropriate the Nottingham City Safeguarding Children Board procedures and practice guidance, available on the Nottingham City Council website.

10) **Equality & Diversity**

This section sets out the core values and principles underpinning service delivery.

- Be delivered in accordance with Nottingham City Council's Equality and Diversity Policy
- Be provided in an anti-discriminatory manner, including (but not limited to) taking into account gender, race, age, culture, religion, belief, language spoken, sexual orientation or disability
- Be delivered in accordance with relevant legislation and best practice applicable to the client group, by suitably qualified and/or experienced staff
- Maintain the service user's right to privacy and confidentiality
- Ensure the health and safety of service users, staff and others, and the protection of vulnerable people from abuse
- Ensure service users have the right to participate in decisions about the service provided to them and be regularly consulted about whether it meets their need
- Be provided reliably and consistently. In the event of a disruptive event affecting the provider's ability to deliver the service, the provider shall take steps to ensure continuity of service delivery is achieved.

11) **Health & Safety**

The service provider shall be responsible for risk assessment, hazard control and other health and safety matters affecting its staff in the delivery of services. The service provider shall do all that is reasonably practicable to prevent personal injury and damage to property and to protect staff, Service Users and others from hazards.

The service provider will need to demonstrate compliance with all relevant Health and Safety legislation and guidance relating to every element of the service. The Partner's Health and Safety Officers will take an active part in reviewing health and safety procedures and documentation prior to the award of the contract.

The service provider will use reasonable endeavours to ensure that in its performance of the services it uses working methods, equipment, materials and consumables which minimise environmental damage.

12) Duration & Review

The agreement will be in place for three years from the 1st April 2015, with a review period after 12 months of delivery. Contract continuation is subject to funding being available and satisfactory performance.

The Local Authority has a duty to monitor the provider's performance against, and in compliance to, this specification. The purpose of monitoring and evaluation is to ensure that the service is being provided to an acceptable standard and meets the needs of service users. In addition to this it should be recognised that the service provider shall continually seek to promote and develop examples of good practice. The provider shall complete quarterly monitoring documentation as provided and instructed by the Local Authority.

The provider will demonstrate to the Local Authority that it has a commitment to providing quality services and ensuring customer satisfaction. In order to do this the provider will have developed a quality assurance system, which continuously reviews and improves the standards of service delivery. Such a system will include but not be limited to the following:

- Seeking the views of customers.
- Checking that the specified services are consistently being delivered efficiently, effectively and sensitively, taking account of customer needs and preferences.
- Ensuring that appropriate changes are made promptly where services are not consistently being delivered efficiently, effectively and sensitively, taking account of customer needs and preferences.
- Checking that all records are properly maintained and updated.
- Regular monitoring and evaluation of complaints/concerns, in addition to the requirements of the provider's complaints procedure.

The provider shall at all reasonable times during the contract period allow authorised officers of the Local Authority to visit and have access to all documents relating to the performance of the service under the contract in order to review the service. On request, providing details of groups supported to the Local Authority, to enable the Local Authority to speak to a sample of groups to ask their views on the support services received.

14) Pricing

Provision contained within this specification is intended to be as flexible as possible in order to meet VCS organisations needs. As part of this tendering exercise we expect the Provider to demonstrate the pricing and staffing structure of the service delivery model they intend to deliver. Bids will be invited for under £371,085 per annum. Any bids exceeding this amount can not be considered.

