

Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee

Review of Day Opportunities for Adults: VCSE Sector review

1. Catalyst's role in the VCSE in Stockton on Tees

Catalyst is the leading voice of the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector in Stockton -on-Tees.

We work with organisations across the Borough to find innovative solutions to help them continually improve and thrive. We offer a range of specialist support, strategic operations and a commitment to push forward the conditions in which the several hundred organisations in the sector in Stockton operate.

Part of our role is to raise questions about the state of the sector and the issues affecting different communities. This allows us to identify need and focus energies on obtaining funding for these areas. From those discussions emerge opportunities to develop projects to make a difference, and to bring money into our communities. Working together we can identify joint funding opportunities and collaborative projects.

The weekly Catalyst e-bulletin reaches around 2000 people in Stockton and includes details of our forums and training events. It also contains advice about funding, governance and other aspects of running a successful organisation.

Catalyst aims to represent the sector and act as a conduit between the VCSE sector and other organisations, including the Local Authority, to identify ways we can work together to meet the needs of our community.

2. Catalyst membership

Catalyst currently has 148 members, with over 1000 people registered to receive the weekly e-bulletin. The bulletin acts as a virtual meeting place for the VCSE sector providing the latest news including funding opportunities, good news and paid and voluntary roles.

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The Catalyst website also holds a directory of over 300 VCSE organisations in Stockton-on-Tees. This illustrates how diverse the sector is and how much it has to offer. Included in this are over 50 organisations which support members of the community who may come under the remit of Adult Day Services.

Having direct access to and contact with so many organisations across the sector gives us an ideal position from which to co-ordinate delivery of services to the community in the best way possible.

3. Consultation with partners on Adult Day Service opportunities

In order to effectively represent the interests of the VCSE sector across Stockton-on-Tees and provide a representative voice, consultation was carried out to capture the views of several VCSE organisations on day opportunities for adults and the role they can play. Views of two, VCSE sector infrastructure organisations were also sought and their input has been added under the section of best practice in other areas.

A local Higher Education institution was also consulted for information on any relevant research in this area, but no relevant research has yet been completed. The HEI is happy to keep Catalyst informed as and when any research is carried out. The comments provided by the HEI are included in the best practice in other areas section.

Key themes and points coming out of this consultation are captured below. Full details of organisations' responses can be found in appendix 1.

The role of the VCSE sector in supporting people to access opportunities in their communities:

Common themes:

- VCSE sector has many strengths when it comes to supporting adults in the community but also some limitations, mainly due to capacity and funding. For this reason, most organisations felt a combination of local authority and VCSE services is needed to provide or facilitate opportunities and support.
- VCSE sector is particularly forward thinking and less risk averse than other sectors. This allows for new approaches and more radical approaches to be tried.
- Many VCSE organisations have an autonomy which allows them to respond quickly to change and provide a flexible service as they are not restricted by the, sometimes lengthy decision-making processes which often exist within larger organisations. This also allows for changes to services to be made quickly and for changes in direction to be applied as needed.

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Impact of COVID-19 in terms of this role:

Common themes:

- VCSE sector organisations demonstrated a flexible response and managed to stay in touch with service-users well. Organisations felt the local authority closed down many services without offering alternatives and the VCSE sector's role in supporting these people was vital. It was acknowledged that this wasn't so much through choice but as a result of the fact that the local authority was required to respond in line with Government direction and doesn't always have the autonomy to respond flexibly to local needs.
- Several organisations felt many LA staff and front-line services would have liked to be more proactive but they were restricted by 'red tape'.
- Much of the local VCSE sector managed to continue some face to face support, while following COVID guidelines.
- The strength of partnership working was evident in the VCSE sector in Stockton during the pandemic. Organisations worked well together to support the community by delivering their usual services and being creative to be flexible in their offers of support at such a challenging time. Catalyst and SBC played a key role in bringing these partners together.

Views on existing/ future services- what should be retained/ adapted/ changed?

Common themes:

- More diversity in service provision would be useful. Various support options for people needing support for the same reason.
- More diversity in the organisations commissioned by the local authority is needed to ensure a range of organisations provide support, each bringing their different skills and strengths to the provision of services.
- A more transparent commissioning process is needed so that as many VCSE organisations as possible are aware of tenders which are available and how they can apply.
- A move to commissioning more smaller VCSE organisations is needed, rather than repeatedly relying on larger, national charities/ organisations for delivery.
- There was a strong feeling of the need to carry out direct consultation with service-users and their families or support network in order to identify what services should be retained or changed. One organisation offered to facilitate this through focus groups.

Any awareness of good practice elsewhere around day opportunities for adults?

Catalyst is aware of the following approaches to service delivery in other regions:

- VCSE regional body, Yorkshire- Stronger Communities Manager in each area looking at future volunteer sector involvement in delivering adult social care. They are considering moving towards VCSE sector organisations replacing services previously delivered by the local authority.
- VCSE regional body, Yorkshire- A focus on hyperlocality- eg: smaller organisations based and rooted in specific communities are considered to be better placed to respond to the needs of local communities than the LA.
- VCSE regional body, Yorkshire- Addiction support is now commissioned out to VCSE sector.
- VCSE infrastructure organisation- North Tyneside- set up buddying project in collaboration with social prescribing service.
- VCSE infrastructure organisation- North Tyneside- VCSE sector is needed to facilitate partnership approaches with support from local authority.
- VCSE infrastructure organisation North Tyneside- Increase collaboration- services such as social prescribing and recovery colleges to provide wrap around support to help build confidence.
- VCSE infrastructure organisation- North Tyneside- Hybrid approach to sessions/ community activities allowing remote attendance alongside in person. This would be more inclusive for those unable to or unwilling to attend in person.
- HEI- Biggest risk in social care generally is the vulnerability of the adults engaging. With this in mind, virtual delivery can be a lifesaver.
- HEI- Digital poverty can be a barrier to vulnerable people accessing virtual support. VCSE could have a role in helping support vulnerable adults to utilise the available technology to access support.
- HEI- Felt running in person support, while allowing people to join virtually while interacting is much better practice than just listening or reading along to virtual material.

4. Potential role of Catalyst

Social Lights: This Project aims to match volunteers with adults with Autism or other learning disabilities to provide support to access activities and groups within the community. Planning and design of the service has been a collaborative process with positive discussions and sharing of expertise. Support from the local authority to Catalyst has been vital and a realistic approach to the time needed to set up a good quality, sustainable delivery model has been a real positive. The first referral came through from the local authority in Oct 2021 and should be

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matched within a couple of weeks. Autism awareness training for volunteers was provided by Daisy Chain, who has been a valuable partner and great source of support. Daisy Chain is also a potential source of volunteers for the Project.

Gig Buddies: Gig Buddies is a national project, which matches adults with autism and/or learning disabilities with a volunteer to attend live entertainment with. Catalyst has had conversations with Gig Buddies centrally and several potential funders on the potential of delivering the Project in Stockton on Tees. Meetings have taken place with local live entertainment venues in Stockton on Tees have been very positive to the idea of the Project and feel it would be a positive project not only for the potential adults supported to attend 'gigs' with a volunteer but also to aid the recovery of the evening economy post COVID. One of the music venues expressed the opinion that they felt the paid role for this Project should be within Catalyst to ensure impartiality and an inclusive approach. The main barrier to setting up the project is access to sufficient funding to carry out a meaningful pilot. With the license to run Gig Buddies being initially payable over three years, this period of time would need to be funded in order to carry out a meaningful pilot.

Goodgym: An initial meeting took place with Catalyst and the regional Goodgym representative in Jan 2021. This model of a running club which does 'good deeds' for members of the community could work well from Catalyst House or an alternative town centre venue. Funding is required to pay for a staff member to recruit and manage volunteers and provide capacity for setting up the Project. Again, a meaningful pilot would need to be carried out to explore the potential benefits of the Project.

The above projects show the potential of Catalyst as an infrastructure charity, with strong links across the VCSE sector in Stockton-on-Tees, to support the delivery of services to add value to adult day services. Catalyst has a commitment to supporting the most appropriate organisations across the Borough, to deliver services in order to make use of their skills and experience and provide the best quality services possible.

When appropriate organisations are not identified or are unable to provide delivery, Catalyst is well placed to deliver projects drawing on volunteers and the experience and skills of Catalyst staff.

There is a potential role for Catalyst in helping to upskill VCSE organisations to bid for and deliver services which historically are awarded to national bodies.

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Feedback from the sector suggests that an element of co-production in planning services before they are commissioned would be welcomed. This would give the VCSE a sense of ownership and involvement and would be something Catalyst could help facilitate.

Appendix 1: Detailed overview of consultation with VCSE organisations

Service details	VCSE role in supporting people to access opportunities in community.	Impact of COVID -19 in terms of this role.	Existing services, what should be retained/ adapted or changed?	Good practice elsewhere around day opportunities for adults.
VCSE organisations				
<p>Organisation 1</p> <p>Provides support to dementia sufferers and their carers, through support groups, activities and social events.</p>	<p>VCSE orgs role strong in some ways, not in others.</p> <p>Autonomy to be flexible and respond to changing needs.</p> <p>Innovative and able to respond more quickly.</p> <p>Forward thinking and less risk averse.</p> <p>Ability to offer flexible volunteer roles.</p>	<p>Face to face support paused.</p> <p>The team provided weekly welfare calls, sent out craft packs and weekly fish and chip deliveries.</p> <p>Organisation commented that they managed to be flexible with support delivered in order to respond to COVID-19 restrictions but also provide flexible volunteering roles in order to protect vulnerable volunteers. eg: volunteers who couldn't deliver face to face support came in and made up craft packs etc for delivery.</p>	<p>Needs to be more diversity in service provision to deal with demand.</p> <p>Would like LA to consider who they commission services through more closely eg: a mixture of services to help diversity of support.</p> <p>Feel the LA tendering process needs to be more transparent to ensure all organisations aware of opportunities. Often only find out about tenders after they have been awarded.</p> <p>Should be a commitment to considering very local and smaller organisations</p>	<p>No knowledge of this.</p>

			for delivery rather than reliance on larger, national charities.	
<p>Organisation 2</p> <p>Peer support organisation for those experiencing mental ill health. Support includes health walks, coffee mornings and other activities.</p>	<p>Ability to be innovative and flexible in approach and delivery.</p> <p>Autonomy means VCSE organisations can operate more independently and don't have to jump through as many hoops at LA in order to deliver.</p>	<p>Managed to keep more face to face support going than LA due to being able to make own decisions on how to follow guidance.</p> <p>Funding from COVID resilience fund provided an opportunity for funding and more services.</p>	<p>Shared delivery of part VCSE/ part LA may work well rather than allocating out services to one or the other.</p> <p>More complex support should probably remain with LA as they have the</p>	<p>No knowledge of this.</p>

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	Ability to be responsive and to tailor provision to meet individuals' needs.		<p>infrastructure to support effectively.</p> <p>Feel that if the LA decide to commission more services and support out to VCSE organisations that would be very positive.</p>	
<p>Organisation 3</p> <p>Charity supporting older people across the Tees Valley.</p> <p>Provide information and advice as well as activities.</p>	<p>VCSE sector in Stockton works well in partnership to provide the most appropriate support.</p> <p>Ability to map gaps in provision and make sure services are provided by the right organisation.</p>	<p>Felt the Covid Community Hub ran beautifully alongside their support as any gaps in their provision were picked up by the Hub.</p> <p>Moved befriending from face to face to telephone, this worked well.</p> <p>Ability to adapt to needs was a strength, felt able to triage people into appropriate services.</p> <p>Worked in partnership with other VCSE organisations in order to adapt quickly to needs and the changing COVID situation. They felt this is a strength of the VCSE sector.</p>	<p>Vital for VCSE organisations to have support of local authority.</p> <p>Feels very supported by LA to deliver services and think the LA does a great job with commissioning appropriate organisations to deliver support and services.</p> <p>VCSE organisations need to be more closely skills matched to provision of service rather than all competing for the same pots of funding.</p>	No knowledge of this.

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<p>Organisation 4</p> <p>Local mental health charity focused entirely on supporting the local community.</p> <p>Various projects and support delivered, including volunteering support, support groups and community activities.</p>	<p>VCSE volunteers are a strength as often have lived experience of issues those who they are supporting have.</p> <p>Ability to be flexible and change direction as needed.</p> <p>Feel that the VCSE strength is agility and flexibility but the weakness is lack of resource, both financial and staff. The LA's strength is financial and staff capacity but with a lack of agility and flexibility. Brining these two sectors together in delivery of service seems a perfect solution.</p>	<p>Reduced face to face contact in line with COVID guidelines.</p> <p>Moved much of their support to digital delivery and continue to operate a hybrid model of support and working.</p> <p>Referrals reduced as LA departments were not operating as normal.</p> <p>Some services, often delivered by smaller organisations closed completely during COVID and this affected the trust they had built up with service-users.</p> <p>Some volunteers reported feeling isolated and forgotten about during COVID. Their volunteering opportunities reduced but no one checked-in on them to see they were ok.</p>	<p>There isn't any support available out of hours meaning people in full time work are often left unable to access support.</p> <p>Part of future services needs to be to identify gaps in provision and needs to be responsive rather than pigeon holing people into support which is available.</p> <p>Felt some LA services and provision are not promoted widely enough and service-users are left to find them for themselves via a website. This website information is then often out of date.</p> <p>Social prescribing model is a great example of how the LA commissioning VCSE sector can work well.</p> <p>Volunteers being involved in delivery of support is a great approach as they often have lived experience</p>	<p>LAs being responsive and listening is good practice. Being open minded and listening to those on the ground is vital to make sure support and services meet the needs of those who need them.</p>
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			of the challenges people are facing.	
<p>Organisation 5</p> <p>Provides a range of support services to children and adults affected by autism.</p>	<p>VCSE need to provide specialist day opportunities rather than a one fits all approach.</p> <p>Important to tap into experience and expertise of a range of VCSE organisations and the VCSE can provide a nurturing, supportive way to access what's available.</p> <p>Can provide support with a focus on empowerment and independence to help people develop skills, not just providing opportunities to keep people occupied.</p>	<p>All face to face services suspended but support continued virtually.</p> <p>Some positives from virtual approach and while it can't and shouldn't replace face to face it offers opportunities. Many people with autism liked it as they were comfortable accessing help from home. Also reduced travel costs for staff.</p>	<p>Would like to become more involved in delivery of day services from own premises. Would need funding and support from LA or other sources as funding and capacity are a challenge for VCSE organisations.</p> <p>More detail of tender opportunities needs to be provided as well as more notice to allow VCSE organisations to respond.</p> <p>There is a need for individuals to be 'triaged' in order to effectively identify their needs and the right organisation to provide support. VCSE sector needs to be comfortable referring people into LA support when needed. There can</p>	<p>No knowledge of this.</p>

			<p>be a tendency to ‘force’ individuals into a VCSE sector organisation’s support even when it may not meet the person’s needs.</p> <p>Feel that support services for anyone accessing day services will need to also have mental health support and a focus on wellbeing running alongside as they expect much higher levels of mental ill health following the pandemic.</p> <p>Individuals with very complex care needs, requiring intensive staff time and supervision often need to stay under the care of the local authority unless a VCSE organisation with the correctly trained and qualified staff and the access to specialist equipment etc is possible.</p>	
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