



**The structure,  
dynamics and impact  
of the voluntary,  
community and  
social enterprise  
sector in Cornwall  
and Isles of Scilly**  
(Summary Report)

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**February 2022**

### About the author

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The contents of the report express the views of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the commissioning partners.

### Third Sector Trends Study

Data in this report are drawn from the Third Sector Trends study which was conceived and originally commissioned by Northern Rock Foundation with research conducted by the universities of Southampton, Teesside and Durham. The Community Foundation Tyne & Wear and Northumberland was a co-founder of the research and is now responsible for its legacy. The Community Foundation is now collaborating with partners including St Chad's College at the University of Durham, Power to Change and Garfield Weston Foundation to expand and continue the research. All publications from the Third Sector Trends study are available free to download at this address:

<https://www.communityfoundation.org.uk/knowledge-and-leadership/third-sector-trends-research/>

### Commissioning partners



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# 1 Context

In recent months, debates have begun in Cornwall and Isles of Scilly on the current and potential contribution of the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector to local economy, environment and society.

This report, which was commissioned by *Voluntary Sector Forum Cornwall* and *NHS Kernow Clinical Commissioning Group*, has been written to strengthen the evidence base on the structure, dynamics and impact of the VCSE sector to help inform debate. This briefing paper captures the main findings and conclusions drawn in the full report.

The research coincides with the recent publication of the government's White Paper: *Levelling Up in the United Kingdom*.<sup>1</sup> The policy document recognises that in the UK, there are substantial geographical disparities in social and economic wellbeing and evidences these variations by using comparative data on factors such as productivity, employment, skills, social mobility and public health. As the White Paper states:

*...not everyone shares equally in the UK's success. While talent is spread equally across our country, opportunity is not. Levelling up is a mission to challenge, and change, that unfairness. Levelling up means giving everyone the opportunity to flourish. It means people everywhere living longer and more fulfilling lives, and benefitting from sustained rises in living standards and well-being.*<sup>2</sup>

The White Paper sets out four key objectives for government:

- *boost productivity, pay, jobs and living standards by growing the private sector, especially in those places where they are lagging;*
- *spread opportunities and improve public services, especially in those places where they are weakest;*
- *restore a sense of community, local pride and belonging, especially in those places where they have been lost; and*
- *empower local leaders and communities, especially in those places lacking local agency.*

It is recognised in the White Paper that achieving these objectives is complex because all localities are different in one way or another. But the above objectives provide a good starting point, in the context of this research report, for the recognition of the contribution the VCSE sector makes in Cornwall and Isles of Scilly now, and its potential to contribute to the future successes of the area.

Discrete evidence on the structure and dynamics of the VCSE sector in Cornwall is currently quite limited. So this study has drawn on national data from a variety of sources including: Office for National Statistics (ONS), Public Health England, Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, Companies House, the Charity Commission, 360Giving, NCVO Civil Society Almanac, the Third Sector Trends study and the VSF Charity Browser - a compilation of data commissioned by VSF Cornwall.

## 2 The size of the VCSE sector

This report shows that Cornwall and Isles of Scilly has a large and productive VCSE sector. The sector is comprised of around 2,500 registered organisations and there may be as many as 3,250 additional small, local informal unregistered groups working under the radar of official statistics.

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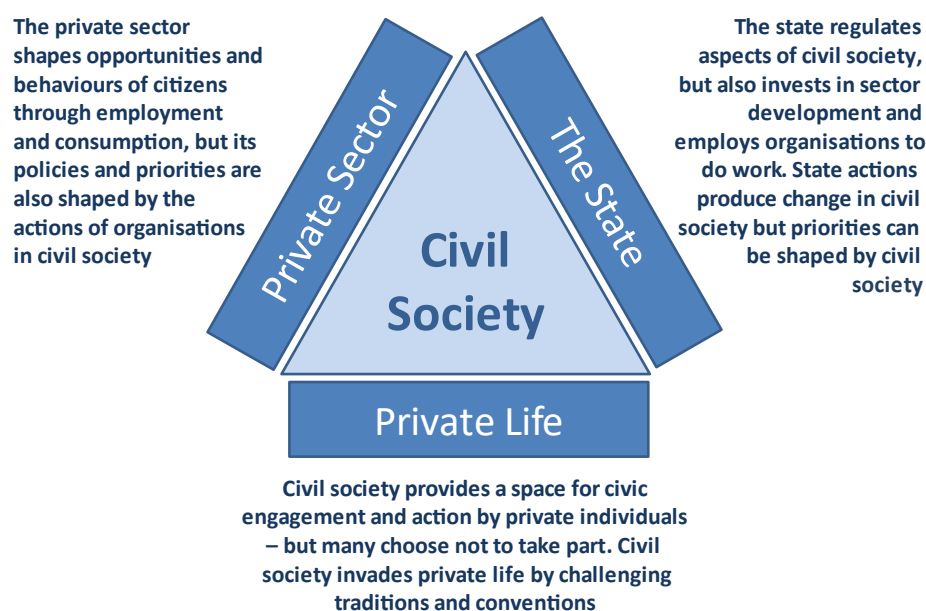
<sup>1</sup> The White Paper and associated documents and annexes are available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/levelling-up-the-united-kingdom>

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. xii.

Table 1 Number of VCSE organisations and groups in Cornwall and Isles of Scilly		
	<i>Estimated number of VCSE organisations and groups</i>	<i>Percentage of all registered VCSE organisations</i>
Total registered charities	1,725	68.5
Charitable companies	140	5.6
Trusts	184	7.3
Other registered charities	1,143	45.4
Charitable Incorporated Organisations	258	10.2
Community Amateur Sport Clubs	93	3.7
Community Interest Companies	536	21.3
Registered societies	85	3.4
Companies Limited by Guarantee (but not registered charities)	51	2.0
Cooperatives and Community Benefit Societies	28	1.1
<b>Total VCSE organisations</b>	<b>2,518</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Estimated number of unregistered organisations or groups	3,251	
<b>Total registered and informal sector</b>	<b>5,697</b>	

VCSE organisations work within the realm of civil society. This is a pluralistic domain where organisations tackle a wide range of social, economic, cultural and environmental issues. VCSE organisations are autonomous entities which operate independently from other sectors – but there is much interaction between civil society and the state, private sector and private life (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 VCSEs operate within the domain of Civil society



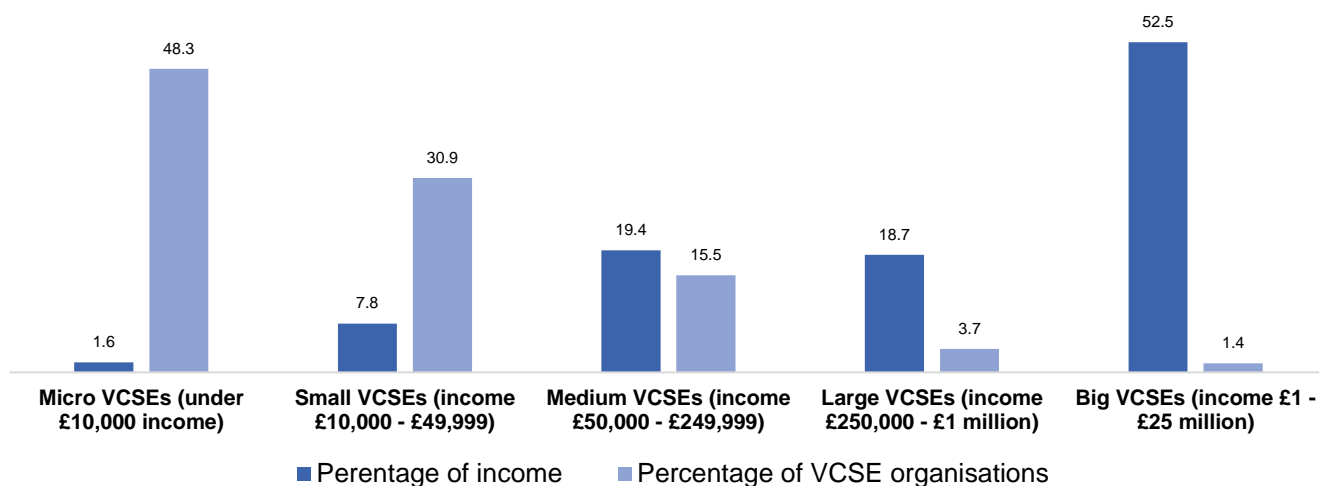
### 3 Sector resources

#### Financial resources

The VCSE sector in Cornwall and Isles of Scilly has an income of about £219 million. This is drawn from a wide range of sources such as contracts to deliver public services, grants, self-generated earned income, gifts and donations, investments and subscriptions.

Larger VCSE organisations absorb the lion’s share of sector income. As shown in Figure 1, the biggest organisations (with income between £1m - £25m) command 53 per cent of sector income, but constitute less than 2 per cent of organisations within the sector. Micro and small VCSE organisations (those with income below £50,000) constitute 80 per cent of the sector, but command less than 10 per cent of sector income.

Figure 2 Proportion of sector income held by organisations of different sizes.



#### People resources

Organisations within the VCSE sector employ large numbers of staff. There are estimated to be over 4,500 full-time and 5,000 part-time employees – this amounts to 6,000 full-time equivalent staff. The VCSE sector comprises about 4 per cent of all employment in Cornwall and Isles of Scilly.<sup>3</sup>

The work of the registered VCSE sector is supported further by around 52,000 regular volunteers who deliver 3.7 million hours of work. The replacement cost of this workforce, if employed, would be between £32m - £47m. This equates to 15-22 per cent of ‘added value’ to the VCSE sector’s financial income.

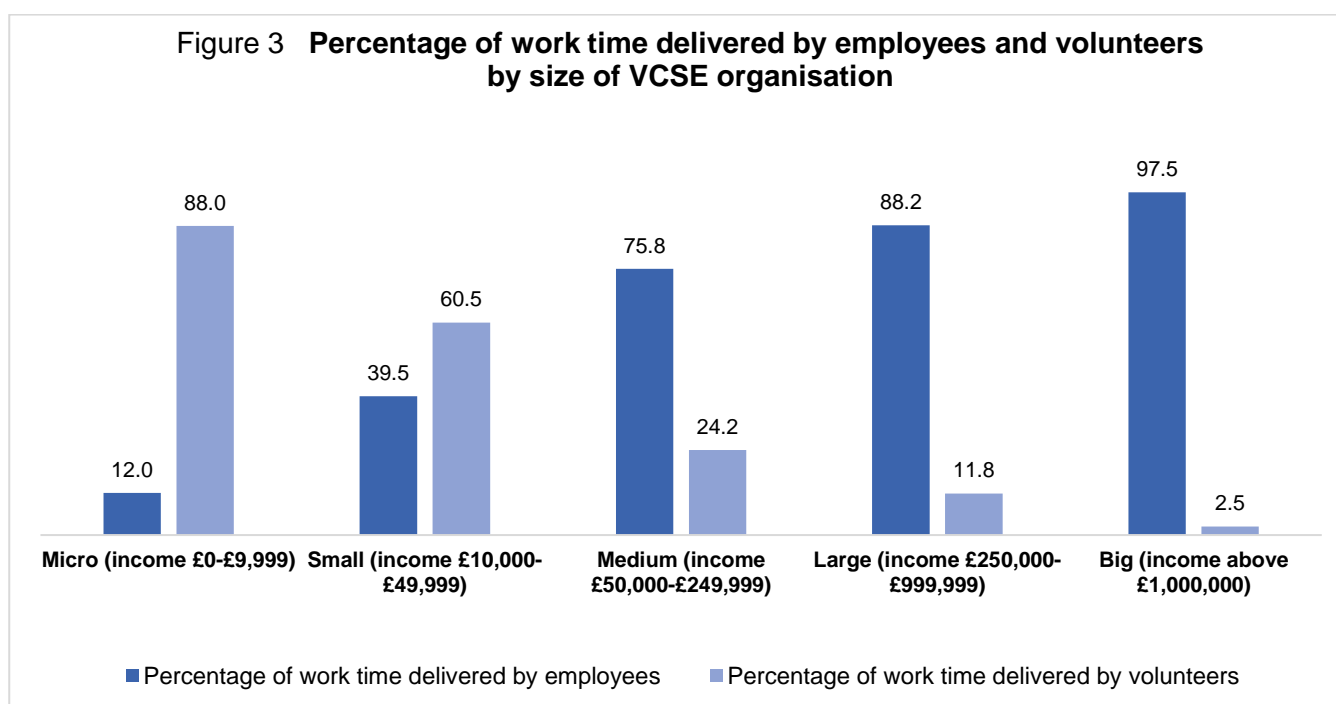
Table 2 Estimated VCSE sector employment and wage costs in Cornwall and Isles of Scilly

Estimated number of full-time employees	Estimated number of part-time employees	Estimated number of full-time equivalent employees	Estimated total hours worked (millions)	Estimated total cost of wages (£ millions)	Wages as a percentage of total sector income	Wages as a percentage of total sector expenditure	Total sector income (£ millions)	Total sector expenditure (£ millions)
4,560	5,060	6,080	10.0	142.8	65.0	69.8	219.6	204.6

<sup>3</sup> Full details on how estimates were constructed are included in the main report, Section 5.

Volunteers play a vital role in sustaining the activities of the VCSE sector – and especially so in smaller VCSE organisations. Over 70 per cent of volunteer time is delivered in small VCSE organisations (with income below £50,000). The biggest organisations (with income between £1m - £25m) only account for about 4 per cent of volunteer time (see Figure 3).

Estimated number of volunteers	Hours worked (average 72 hours per annum)	Proxy value at National Living Wage (£ millions)	Proxy value at 80% average regional wage per hour (£ millions)	Sector income (£ millions, excluding organisations with income above £25m)	Added value to sector income (at National Living Wage)	Added value to sector income (at 80% average regional wage)
51,650	3,719,000	32.4	47.3	219.6	14.8	21.5



## 4 Added value

Often the term ‘added value’ is used by VCSE sector stakeholders. But the term can be defined in different ways which can cause confusion when attempts are made to pin down ‘how valuable’ added value is. This research project has adopted a set of definitions of added value which draw a distinction between ‘tangible’ measurable outputs and ‘intangible’ factors that rely on informed judgement.

- **Economic value:** the economic contribution that the local VCSE sector makes to the area through ‘multiplier effects’ driven by: organisational expenditure; spending by employees in the local economy; and, productivity from trading activities.
- **Fiscal value:** savings gained by local public sector agencies and government departments because of VCSE activity (either by delivering services under contract more efficiently or cheaply, or by reducing service need).
- **Use value:** direct personal or social benefits gained by VCSE sector service users which in turn incentivises, empowers and facilitates greater socially, economically or environmentally beneficial activity by the resident population.

- **Social value:** the alleviation of the impact of specific social problems and investment in personal and community wellbeing to generate or embrace new opportunities to strengthen economy and society locally.
- **Community value:** strengthening the quality of life, enriching culture, and encouraging cohesion, tolerance, trust and belief in civil society through the collective contribution of the VCSE sector working in complementary ways.
- **Existence value:** when VCSE sector investment in community wellbeing is valued by the general population though not used personally. Existence value includes extant and latent VCSE sector capacity to tackle local challenges or crises.

Figure 4 Realms of measurement and informed judgement

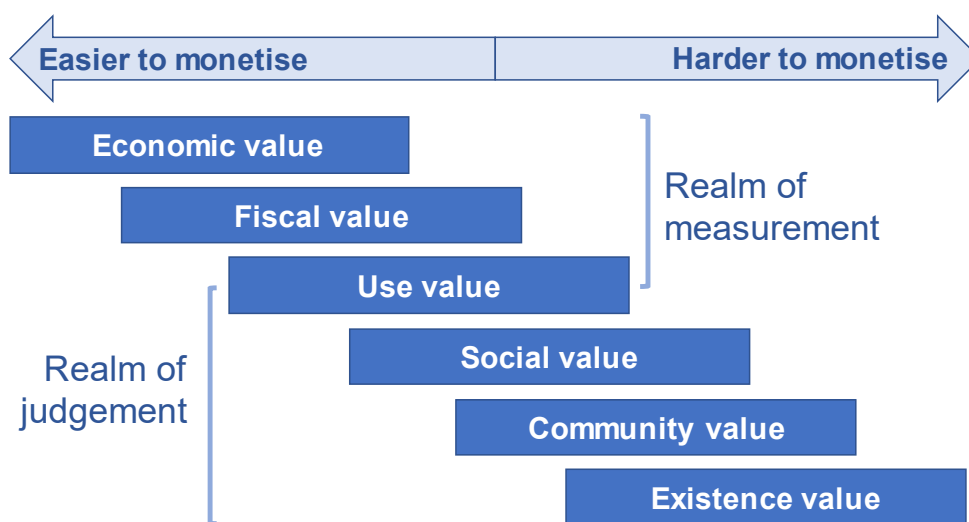


Table 4 provides estimates of the ‘added value’ the VCSE sector contributes to local economy, environment and society in Cornwall and Isles of Scilly. It is estimated that the sector injects the equivalent of £249 million into the local economy annually (including the replacement value of volunteer time).

The added value the sector contributes can be split into *tangible values* (aspects of sector output or ‘hard outcomes’ that can be measured) and *intangible values* (which includes ‘soft outcomes’ such as tackling social isolation, building confidence and strengthening cohesion and pride in the community).

VCSE sector activity is estimated to produce a multiplier effect of £387 million of tangible economic, fiscal and use value and £250 million of additional intangible value. It is estimated that the VCSE sector produces a ratio of 3.6 to 1 added social and economic value relative to the energy injected.

Table 4 Social and economic value of VCSE sector activity in Cornwall and Isles of Scilly (mid-point estimates)	
	Estimated energy invested and added value (£ millions)
Value of sector energy directly invested in by VCSE sector	249.6
Estimated added economic, fiscal and use value	386.9
Estimated social value multiplier (at least equal to the value of energy put in by the VCSE sector)	249.6
Total value of sector energy and impact	886.1
<b>Overall value added multiplier ratio</b>	<b>3.6:1</b>

## 5 Sector capacity at local level

Providing reliable estimates on the contribution of the VCSE sector at local levels is difficult due to cross-boundary working by VCSE organisations which are based in Cornwall and Isles of Scilly, and because organisations based outside the area also make a contribution.

In Primary Care Network areas, there is evidence of variation in sector capacity. Specifically, sector capacity is more heavily focused in larger urban centres across Cornwall and Isles of Scilly – and especially so in Truro. Furthermore, there tends to be a higher concentration of VCSE organisations in areas with low to middling levels of deprivation. But it would be a mistake to over emphasise such differences because distinctions about capacity are blurred by cross-boundary sector activity.

Even at integrated PCN area level, interpretation has to be undertaken with care – but the indications are that the value of VCSE sector energy and impact is quite evenly balanced across the *West, Central and North and East* integrated care areas of Cornwall and Isles of Scilly (see Table 5).

	Total VCSE income (£millions)	Number of VCSE organisations	Average income per organisation	ONS total population by ward	Number of VCSE orgs per 1,000 population	VCSE income per 1,000 population
West	73.9	862	£85,700	217,900	4.0	338,900
Central	77.1	741	£104,000	176,100	4.2	437,700
North and East	68.6	866	£79,300	200,500	4.3	342,300
<b>Cornwall and Isles of Scilly<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>219.0</b>	<b>2,516</b>	<b>£87,300</b>	<b>573,000</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>369,300</b>

This may not sound like much of a research finding. But actually, *it is*. In metropolitan areas or areas with a mix of densely populated urban areas and a large suburban or rural hinterland, there are usually much clearer demarcations between rich and poor localities. This changes the structure and dynamics of the VCSE sector because organisations based in specific areas tend to have substantially different priorities and consequently focus on different aspects of activity.

In Cornwall and Isles of Scilly, VCSE sector structure, dynamics and purpose appears to be much less fragmented – which may help the sector as a whole to be more responsive to calls to work in a more flexible and integrated way than can be the case in heavily polarised areas.

## 6 Three sectors in one?

The objectives of VCSE organisations are often ambitious, but the available resources they can draw upon to achieve them are finite. This means that there is competition over resources. Because the values, objectives and practices of VCSE sector organisations vary, it is not always easy to get organisations to align with shared strategic aims.

This is not to argue that organisations within the VCSE sector cannot work well together. The indications are that about 82 per cent of organisations have useful informal relationships with other organisations, that 73 per cent work closely but

<sup>4</sup> Due to statistical overlaps by ward boundaries in PCN and ICA areas, the sum of the three areas does not match that of Cornwall and Isles of Scilly as a whole.



informally with other organisations and that about 29 per cent work in formal partnership arrangements. Nearly two thirds of the biggest organisations engage in formal partnership working, but only about 14 per cent of micro organisations do so. The size of VCSE organisations affects the way they think and work:

- **Larger VCSE organisations** have the capacity and greater interest in tackling issues which connect with local authority and NHS strategic priorities. They tend to have larger numbers of employees who have the expertise and professionalism to deliver services and are more accustomed to doing work which has clearly defined tangible objectives and can comply with public sector expectations surrounding monitoring and accountability.

Because they operate across wider areas, larger VCSE organisations tend to be more able to deliver public services under contract. This does not mean that large VCSE organisations are, ostensibly, *the same* as public sector bodies. They are not. Operating within the realm of civil society, larger organisations (like their smaller counterparts) share values about organisational independence and are often keen not just to *respond* to the expectations of public bodies but they also want to *shape* them.

- **Medium sized VCSE organisations** tend to be more heavily rooted in localities. They work at a scale that does not allow them to, or they are disinterested in developing formal and hierarchical ways of working that are more common in larger organisations. Many organisations working at this scale cannot or do not want to engage directly in aspects of public service delivery but their activities, funded from other sources such as grant making foundations, underpin or complement aspects of such work.

Their local knowledge of and often long-standing connections with the community help to build understanding and trust with local people. This is a valuable resource for public sector bodies which seek to devise strategic plans to tackle social, economic and environmental issue. But that know-how is not always easy to access because medium sized organisations may not have the capacity to or interest in engaging in protracted and complex policy debate. Consequently, trusted intermediaries are often needed to help bridge the gap between higher level strategic planning with realistic and practical know-how of organisations which are rooted in communities.

- **Smaller VCSE organisations** tend to get on with their own thing and are rarely interested in getting involved in strategic debate. They may be less interested in articulating or demonstrating that their work makes a strong social impact – and their interest in connecting what they do with the strategic aims of other organisations or agencies may not be much of a priority. But as demonstrated in this report, their collective contribution to social wellbeing is enormous. So it is vital not to overlook their contribution just because it is hard to enumerate in a tangible way.

Smaller organisations are usually volunteer-led and run and as such, have limited time to engage with the priorities of others. This does not mean that small organisations do not work well with others; most do so, providing those interactions are relatively informal, do not require too much effort and are of mutual benefit. Small VCSE organisations may not have complicated structures or divisions of labour, but that does not mean that they lack social complexity. Often small organisations have to work hard to keep relationships working well and can be nervous about attempts to unsettle the equilibrium when asking them to do things that may push them out of shape.

The VCSE sector in Cornwall and Isles of Scilly is large, productive, well established and is deeply engrained within civil society. When there is talk in the air about ‘harnessing’ the value of the sector, strategists need to tread carefully. The organisations and groups which constitute the VCSE sector are autonomous entities which determine their own objectives, decide how to tackle them and work hard to garner the resources they need to get things done.

From a birds-eye perspective it is tempting to construct and impose models of VCSE sector structure, as policy-oriented think tanks often do, to determine which levers to pull to get the sector to move in a desired strategic direction. Such perspectives are

often naïve at best and when employed in practical terms can have unforeseen and undesirable consequences.

The VCSE sector is not a system where levers can be pulled. It is not even a jigsaw where the pieces fit neatly together. Instead the sector has complex dynamics which continually change in response to immediate circumstance whilst also being characterised by its *longevity*, *continuity* and, sometimes against the odds, *sustainability*.

## 7 Discussion

*Good evidence and insights from open debate can be used to confirm or challenge well-rehearsed narratives about what goes on inside the VCSE sector and to explore factors which make inter-sector relationships prosper or founder.*

The summary of findings presented above provides an overview of the evidence which is currently available on the structure, dynamics and impact of the VCSE sector in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. This provides a useful starting point for debate on the current capacity and future potential of the VCSE sector to contribute to social, economic and environmental wellbeing.

It is, of course, far too early in the process to make firm recommendations on how sector energy might be refocused or impact increased.<sup>5</sup> Instead, the following general observations on sector interactions are offered to stimulate debate and help frame strategic discussions on how to encourage constructive and complementary action or more formal collaborative working within the VCSE sector which aligns with the objectives of public sector and health sector bodies.

### **VCSE Sector intelligence**

Good cross-sector strategic thinking is generally based on a shared understanding of what is desirable and possible within resource constraints. Sector intelligence in Cornwall and Isles of Scilly is quite limited at the moment. Too little is known about sector *capacity to* and *interest in* working in complementary or collaborative ways to tackle pressing social, economic and environmental issues.

It would seem to be advisable that time and energy is invested in VCSE sector debate about its potential to engage productively with emerging public and health sector initiatives – and especially so at the very local level where critical social and health needs must be addressed.

Good evidence and insights drawn from open debate can be used effectively to confirm or challenge well-rehearsed narratives about what goes on inside the VCSE sector and to explore those factors which make inter-sector relationships prosper or founder.

But debates usually need to happen on different levels. Higher level strategic debates on sector engagement across Cornwall and Isles of Scilly are likely to be dominated by larger VCSE organisations because they have the capacity to and interest in doing so, but also because they work at scale and have a broad overview of issues that relate to their area of specialism.

This does not mean that larger organisations necessarily have fine-grained understanding of issues in localities and they may struggle to hear or speak for the concerns and interests of people in local communities. At this middle range, medium sized VCSE organisations generally have their ear to the ground on local issues and because they are *in* and *of* the community are held in a position of trust with local people.

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<sup>5</sup> In Cumbria, North East England and Yorkshire and Humber, where similar studies have been running for well over a decade, it is much easier to make well informed and realistic recommendations on how to maximise the impact of sector practice. See, for example, Chapman, T., Mawson, J., Robinson, F. and Wistow, J. (2018) *How to work effectively with the third sector: a discussion paper for public sector organisations*, Durham: Institute for Local Governance: <https://www.stchads.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/ILG-How-to-work-effectively-with-the-third-sector-discussion-paper-March-2019-.pdf>.

To bridge the gap between higher and middle-range debate, larger organisations (sometimes known as ‘anchor’ organisations) can help facilitate discussion with medium-sized VCSE organisations which can, in turn, connect with very small organisations that show an interest in taking part in debates on area need.

Engaging very small organisations and groups in debates on local priorities and needs can be fruitful but also challenging as their close focus on specificities sometimes run counter to more generalised or broadly-based objectives. But just because debates can be difficult does not mean that these small organisations and groups do not have grounded insights on what is possible and desirable for local communities.

Imposing standardised practices and principles on what ‘outsiders’, even with the best intentions, think that needs to be done can alienate local communities from getting involved. It is not a question of getting them ‘on side’, but working with them to find out what they feel is important and what will make a difference to their lives.

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### ***It's not all about money***

New initiatives always have costs attached to them. People in the VCSE sector know this and are often enticed by news about potential initiatives that might attract investment from one source or another. VCSE organisations are adept at aligning with new initiatives even if, on the surface, the connection is not immediately apparent. When an area announces an intention to bid for, say, the ‘City of Culture’, it can be expected that many VCSE organisations will be thinking hard about how they can capitalise on this.

Often this is clearly justified and the connection is entirely transparent. For example, VCSE organisations which have a track record in running arts, heritage and culture projects would be expected to get involved. Others may emerge in less obvious, but no less plausible ways. Mental health charities, for example, may have been using therapeutic arts projects for years. Youth organisations, similarly, may realign the way they work by referencing their existing volunteering projects that connect with arts and heritage.

Others may emerge in much more unexpected ways. But it would be wrong to assert that these new alignments are purely opportunistic (although there may be an element of that). Instead, they may inject real energy into the initiative and produce innovative interactions and linkages which had previously been unrecognised or did not exist at all.

The same principles apply to debates about public health – many organisations may be interested in getting involved once they recognise that they can and do play an effective role, for example, in the prevention of ill health or recovery from illness – and not just the delivery of practical help or treatment.

### ***Talking about money***

Productive debates about the allocation of financial resources can be undermined if the purpose for its provision is unclear. So it is useful to draw a distinction between *financial investment* and *buying services* in such debates.

***Investment*** in VCSE sector activity can take many forms such as *capital investments* (for example, enhancement of conversions of property, the transfer of community assets, etc.); *infrastructure support* (such as the enhancement of digital skills, volunteer management, back office services, etc.); and, *investment in sector energy* (such as organisations’ core costs, appointing development workers, etc.). Investments may pay longer-term dividends if things work out well, but there is always a risk that when investment stops – the work will no longer continue.

***Buying*** services from the VCSE sector is usually associated with the letting of public service delivery contracts. Due to public procurement regulations, contracts are issued following competitive tendering processes which are open to private sector or VCSE sector bids. The objectives of contracts are defined by the funding organisation and as such are not, strictly speaking VCSE activities – though they may be delivered by VCSE organisations and such organisations may choose to add value to the work they deliver by other means.

## **Complementary and collaborative working**

*VCSE organisations rarely feel comfortable about 'pooling' financial resources, but that does not mean that they are unwilling to work collaboratively towards shared objectives.*

Complementary working tends to be relatively informal and can often continue over long periods of time. Some organisations work alongside each other for many years while others may step-in or step-out from such arrangements depending upon circumstance. Only very rarely do VCSE organisations feel comfortable about 'pooling' financial resources, but that does not mean that they are unwilling to work collaboratively towards shared objectives from time to time.

Working in consortia can be more challenging but has become more common in response to changes in the procurement practices of some statutory bodies. With a view to delivering services at scale, many public sector and health sector bodies, for example, issue lets that call on VCSE organisations to submit consortia bids. This can work well if VCSE organisations have built a good deal of trust based long-standing experience of collaborative working. But when partnerships are untested consortia working can be less successful. The cost savings achieved by statutory bodies which issue large complex contracts to deliver public services can be offset by the increased costs associated with the complexities surrounding VCSE organisations working within consortia.

Similar problems can arise when investing in VCSE sector capability and capability if strong emphasis on formal collaborative arrangements is stipulated when working relationships amongst VCSE organisations are under-developed. This is why effective investment initiatives often put little money on the table at the outset, but instead offer in-kind support to initiate and facilitate new connections between VCSE organisations, help to build trust and confidence amongst them and ultimately result in the evolution of interesting and effective new approaches to practice. Investing heavily in untested collaborative arrangements too soon can often produce disappointing outcomes.

## **Local initiatives**

Cornwall and Isles of Scilly differ from many other parts of England because, unlike metropolitan areas, distinctions between more and less affluent areas are somewhat blurred. This presents the area with something of an advantage – because VCSE sector activities are less likely to polarised. But that does not mean that working in collaborative or complementary ways will all be plain sailing.

The social and economic landscape Cornwall is characterised by a multiplicity of small pockets of deeper deprivation and social exclusion. This can make it easier for such communities to be overlooked. While the general distribution of VCSE organisations across more or less affluent wards in Cornwall and Isles of Scilly is relatively balanced – this does not necessarily mean that energy is expended evenly in areas – nor that organisations feel that it should be. More needs to be known about who is doing what to support communities,

In locality-based funding initiatives, it can be beneficial to draw a clear distinction between 'buying services' to deliver tangible and measurable 'hard outcomes' and 'investing' in VCSE sector activities that deliver 'soft outcomes' and thereby strengthen personal and community confidence, interaction, cohesion and resilience. It is helpful to keep this distinction in mind so that the destination of funding aligns with reasonable expectations of what can be achieved and which types of VCSE organisations may be best positioned to deliver them.

Modest investments in micro and small VCSE organisations can often produce a great deal of benefit for communities and strengthen the social glue without necessarily achieving 'radical' or 'transformational' change. Contributing to social wellbeing in the community is, after all, a valuable outcome which is hard to measure when it is there, but easy to measure when it has gone.

It is worthwhile to think carefully about when transformational change is possible and when it is not. VCSE organisations tend to focus on providing support or encouragement for individuals, families and communities to get on with their lives reasonably successfully. 'Changing' attitudes and behaviours in a fundamental way is a big ask – so funding bodies and VCSE organisations alike, need to be careful before they ask for or promise that.

*Contributing to social wellbeing in the community is a valuable outcome which is hard to measure when it is there, but easy to measure when it's gone.*



Similarly, when calling for 'innovative approaches', it is important that funders and VCSE organisations ask themselves why that might be beneficial. Often, innovation is unnecessary – it is getting the job done well, based on understanding, experience and established and skilful practices that counts. The best forms of innovation often arise from the way that a group of organisations bring more benefit through their collective (but often relatively autonomous) efforts - rather than from discrete aspects of innovative practice.

With limited funding available, choosing when to invest in localities is a complex process. At a practical level, people in affluent communities tend to be more adept at forming VCSE organisations to meet their needs or desires and have sufficient confidence and expertise to secure the financial resources they need from, for example, charitable trusts and foundations.

In less affluent areas, aspects of social or financial deprivation diminish the scope for local communities to tackle issues – but this does not necessarily mean that there is an unwillingness or absence of commitment locally to try to deal with them autonomously if investment and support is provided. While the marginal costs of developing and sustaining such work are likely to be higher, the benefit of investing more resources in such areas, in relative terms, may be greater.

*Asking for too much change, too soon, rarely pays off. It is better to build an appreciation of what is there now and build on this in constructive and complementary ways.*

### ***Keeping it simple***

Debating issues surrounding resource allocation is never easy. The VCSE sector is always ambitious to achieve a great deal. That means there will always be competition amongst individual organisations over finite resources. It is equally important to remember that funding organisations, no matter how large, cannot define or direct VCSE activity. The VCSE sector relies on a wide range of resources which, to a degree, allows them to pick and choose what they want to focus upon.

Asking for too much change, too soon, rarely pays off. It is better to recognise and appreciate what is there now and build on this in constructive and complementary ways. As this report shows, the local VCSE sector in Cornwall and Isles of Scilly invests enormous amounts of energy to tackle issues that it feels are important. There is much to work with, without knocking things too far out of shape.



# Policy&Practice

## St Chad's College, Durham University

Policy&Practice is a multidisciplinary research group based at St Chad's College, Durham University. Our staff, research associates and fellows are committed to the promotion of social justice in the United Kingdom and beyond.

*Policy&Practice* is the banner under which this work is communicated to a wider community of interest. The College is committed to undertaking research, policy analysis and evaluation that makes a difference to the way policy makers and practitioners carry out their work, aimed ultimately at increasing the benefit gained by the people for whom they work. We do this through applied research and evaluation for a wide range of private sector organisations, independent charitable foundations, national and local government, charities and other non-profit organisations.

Our work is heavily embedded in the North of England, but we do not confine our work to this area. Several national and international studies have been undertaken over the years in continental Europe, the United States, South Africa and Japan. What we hope to do is to use our learning to help increase our scope for understanding complex social, economic and political issues and our ability to help people tackle challenges in a positive, pragmatic and effective way in new contexts.

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