**VCS Strategic Forum**

**29th June 2015**

**Investment Programme Engagement discussion**

Key

Table 1

Table 2

Table 3

**Questions**

1. What are the potential vulnerabilities for Camden residents from your perspective?
2. How would you make rent relief equitable?
3. Partnerships are going to be crucial in future; how can we make them equitable, transparent and impactful?
4. **What are the potential vulnerabilities for Camden residents from your perspective?**

* Reduction of services and changes in welfare impact those most in need of services
* What does Camden Plan say about needs?
* Use new Commissioning Strategic Board to ensure VCS are involved in commissioning earlier.
* Options seem devoid of understanding of needs – more process driven.
* Where is community participation? Is there a perceived hierarchy of needs?
* Will the needs of the more marginalised be left out if they are not coming to anyone’s attention?
* Welfare reforms = big impact. Resilience of individuals reduced due to overwhelming nature of problems which are multi-layered, access/information issues. E.g. Elfrida led on partnership project working with families with complex needs but ending.
* Hard to assess in Camden across the board as borough has extremes of wealth/poverty.
* Can Camden make better use of its funding across the Council?
* No willingness to engage with VCS re complex/troubled families
* LB Camden good to work with/innovative but since having to make cuts been a bit of a lockdown.
* Direct payments failing – Personal assistant problems, process too complicated, people need lots of support and handholding, end up reverting to statutory provision.
* Gap between Health and Social Care – questions around funding lead people to ricochet between the two - Hospital discharge – people returning home with no care package.
* Independent living payments reduced as they moved to local control
* Increased advocacy and signposting needed and information sharing opportunities needed
* All above health and social care issues for disabled people exacerbated by DISC closure.
* Data – broad statistics that statutory sector produce but expect VCS to go down to detail of individuals – harder to capture.
* Risk that cuts are made in isolation
* Commissioning and social value is important but before that, residents are slipping through the gaps. Conversations and relationships need to change.
* How does the ASC forum feed into commissioning?
* Housing and Benefits reform
* People who are currently FACS eligible but as Social Care Act is implemented are seen as more and more “moderate” as Council funds reduce. People with moderate needs will start using wider VCS, this will put additional pressure on the staff in the sector. .
* Universal services – keeping people healthy and active in the community, preventative service are useful, as preventative services are deprioritised consequences of this can be more people using A&E instead
* How can money used by A+E/Health be used for preventative services?
* Useful to have some data and information on how preventative services save money upstream
* Needs of homeless families will increase with raise in rent, impact of welfare benefit cuts, homeless young people, and disabled people will also be affected.
* Youth offending, high risk Camden offenders – impact on community is high 5-20 years down the line. Impact of prioritising high risk cases will mean less work will be undertaken on preventative work earlier on.
* In BMER Communities – Concern around radicalisation of young people and that this work to combat this is not being funded. That is not correct there is a separate pot of money from Home Office for this area and it will continue to be a high priority.
* There will be overall reduced capacity as work will be concentrated on complex and high need individuals – so VCS staff will be constantly fire-fighting and there will be lack of time.
* Are we at risk of spreading our resources too thinly? How do we use our resources strategically?
* What information do we get from Council around needs?
* Social care contracts and model of commissioning favour larger orgs who deliver for cheaper but smaller organisations can’t compete but they deliver to wider social value to local residents. Increasingly it is going to be import to ensure that social value and social capital are intrinsic part of all council and health commissioning.

1. **How would you make rent relief equitable?**

* Unfair but vital to those community centres in receipt of rent relief.
* Need an analysis – proportion of rent relief vs other funding
* Can’t withdraw rent relief suddenly whatever system is developed, it needs phasing in e.g. if withdrawing then needs tapering over 3 years.
* Develop criteria:
  + Quality/outcomes
  + Value for money
  + % of residents servicing/priority of need
  + Support community use of space
  + Measure of utilisation of space
  + Tiered levels of rent relief (25% - 50% etc.).
  + LB Camden needs to develop Community Asset transfer strategy to incentivise VCOs to take on property
  + Leases needs to be addressed.
* Misunderstanding around ”market rent”
* Need to understand the conflict between subsidising Community centre tenants vs income generation
* Different rates for different types of organisations – but would need to change view on income generation
* Need to have open and honest discussion with sector
* Consider new assets, need a strategic approach to assets
* Be flexible
* Voluntarising libraries and other buildings - Need to look at non-Council buildings
* Need to unpick the link between Section 106 and rent relief
* Need to allow time for changes
* Should be outcomes-focused rather than space-focused – could use credit system.
* Fairness vs spreading the resources too thinly.
* More realistic than peppercorn
* Currently rent is not market rent.
* Any change needs to be on taper as it has not been costed in their budget
* Negotiations between those who pay rent and those who don’t
* As large proportion of property is on estates, Camden needs to look at realistic financial value
* It is likely that in some cases rent relief receiver might not include rental element in their Business at the same time commissioners colluding in this by not valuing /costing contracts on full cost recovery .

1. **Partnerships are going to be crucial in future; how can we make them equitable, transparent and impactful?**

* Good protocols re developing partnership and keeping them sustainable
* Council should support partnerships initiated by the sector
* Partnership development is v. resource intensive – doesn’t just happen
* Can’t force people/groups into partnerships – if Council wants to establish one then needs to be clear/transparent.
* LB Camden can help to facilitate partnership working
* Partnership between departments in Camden Council would be a good thing.
* Shared and clear aims
* Being able to contribute at different levels (where there are differences in organisational capacity, it can create unequal relationships).
* Organisations need to be aware of what they can give as well as how they can benefit.
* Need to understand that bigger organisations are more likely to be able to coordinate partnerships, and the impact of this fact.
* Can’t only be based around funding.
* Existing relationships are key – need to know each other’s strengths and weaknesses - Networks can support this
* Partnerships are dependent on how easy is it to work with each other.
* One way to ensure equity is by Commissioners to include it in a specification be clear about the type , size and character of partnerships expected
* Knowing when opportunities are coming, if there is early notice than it
* As commissioners if we built in outreach and engagement before market positioning statement is prepared
* Need for honest broker to facilitate partnership ate
* SPV [Special Purpose Vehicle] – like Hackney – framework and coordination may facilitate better partnership working. Also creation of transparent skills based approach with an honest broker.

End