

Appendix 1

Islington Voluntary and Community Sector Conference 2013: Full discussion notes

Tweets

These notes were written as short summaries of key points from discussions that could be shared on the Twitter website. They were collected during discussions and many were 'tweeted' live. You can find those messages by searching for #ivscon13 on Twitter.

Messages for policymakers and funders

Table 1

- Ensure that money is distributed according to need.
- Ensure information about how services can be co.
- Find the balance between generic and specific needs. Funding
- Wider access to affordable housing and information.

Table 2

- Fund and facilitate odd connections.
- Support campaign to release Work Programme money to locality.

Table 3

- # Section 106 negotiated directly with voluntary sector – not council alone.

Table 4

- Really like not repairing road surface in road where cars park in street.
- National lobbying

Table 5

- Council requirement to pay living wage clashes with DWP requirement to work a minimum of 16 hours per week. More flexibility required. Can't afford living wage at 16 hours per week.
- Council support voluntary organisations in other ways – e.g. i) Accountable body, ii) Practical support
- Council more open to ideas from voluntary sector.

Table 6

- Keep protecting the most vulnerable
- Prioritise the referral of advice for support people very vulnerable.
- Misinformation around welfare reform. Impact on stress levels of those affected.
- Issues with housing and council tax when people come off benefits.
- Service users being stopped from volunteering by Job Centre.

Table 7

- Core funding for community organisations and clear communication about opportunity and process.

Table 8

- Share data resources on LBI website: What works?
- Min 5 year contracts for providers. Tenders costly 4 all!

Table 9

- Do a premises audit of all council/non-council premises in Islington.

Table 10

- New approaches to the way volunteers are engaged and valued.

Table 11

- Need to see organic, grassroots VCS work and more formal, borough-wide activities as equally valid.

Table 12

- Policymakers and funders: more grants, less contracts.
- Capacity-building for brokerage of partnerships based on cross- borough mapping of need.

Table 13

- Policymakers and funders need to ask for the views of VCS network and forums and then listen to them and prioritise their feedback.

Table 14

- Raise awareness of existing services.
- Increase funding and training for social enterprise development.

What are our priorities?**Table 1**

- Holistic Service approach.
- Ensure all the needs of the individual are met.

Table 2

- Explore volunteers' full skills - showcase hidden talents.
- Engage all communities in benefits of volunteering.

Table 3

- Facilitate more interaction and social cohesion.

Table 4

- Duplication of services.

Table 5

- Engage business (expertise, knowledge, sponsorship).
- Getting people back to work.
- Training (for women over 45, various ethnic groups)
- Linked up with 'like' organisations - sharing of ideas.

Table 6

- Keep protecting the most vulnerable.

Table 7

- Advice

Table 8

- Retain Breadth of service.
- Maintain Flexibility.
- Share resources and analyse needs.

Table 9

- Need to be able to measure the impact of services/activities to determine priorities.

Table 10

- Focus on vulnerable & disadvantaged groups.

Table 11

- VCS orgs to find other sources of funding, then reshape their relationship with the council on less dependent, more equal terms.
- Long term and sustainable investment is needed to support good business planning, e.g. money, networks, support.

Table 13

- new funding models, more partnerships, less duplication; better promotion of our role and value; all to better support vulnerable folk.

Table 14

- Need online portal with clear, accessible, easy to navigate information for grants and resources.

Table 15

- Peer led skills building for young people in social enterprise and volunteering.

How can we do things differently?**Table 1**

- More effective collaboration and partnership.
- Encourage volunteers.
- Training for volunteers.

Table 2

- Follow enterprise example of Crouch End Coffee Bean - local products = local profits.
- Encourage volunteering through points + award ceremony.

Table 3

- Build effective relationships; more partnerships and information sharing.

Table 4

- Smarter working.

Table 5

- Joint venture and consortia.

- Support for bidding for contracts and funding.
- Provide buildings (Ideally Affordable).
- Council or VAI bring groups together – info on local organisations.

Table 7

- Enable sharing of resources by bulk purchasing and negotiating on organisations behalf.

Table 8

- Focus on the client not organisation
- Volunteering into employment
- Social enterprise and partnerships.

Table 9

- Developing more comprehensive partnership working on joint bids.

Table 10

- Mergers provide the potential for different ways of working in the long term.

Table 11

- Work with different people and challenge each other to work differently.
- Can we trade / develop a business?
- Charity mergers, done right, can bring benefits to both parties over the longer term, e.g. Help the Aged + Age Concern = Age UK.

Table 12

- Doing it differently: better promo; more outreach; build links between business & communities; help vulnerable folk get on-line.

Table 13

- More training and resources for developing income generation / social enterprise models.

Table 14

- Partnership working, collaboration, sharing spaces and services.

General Notes

Table 1

Message for policymakers and funders

- Emphasis on advice and information regarding employment.
- Access to external agencies in order to meet individual needs holistically.
- Ensure continued funding for IAG.
- Ensure information about how services can be accessed is easily available to organisations.
- Partnership working.
- Council should provide more affordable housing.
- Look at allocation criteria of housing.
- Ensure that money is distributed according to need.
- We can't run all our services with just volunteers.

What are our priorities?

- Housing
- Youth
- Welfare benefit
- Availability of Information
- Holistic Service Approach

How can we do things differently?

- Collaboration (Effective)
- Partnership
- Encouraging volunteers
- More training for volunteers – Skills Development
- Sponsorship
- Signposting
- Do we need to wait for conferences to know about community groups?

Table 2

- Link between housing and health is strong
- Street property – many are in a dilapidated state (drafty windows)
- Sustainable funding need
 - Short term funding provides a challenge to business planning e.g. lose staff then need to recruit
 - Good things need to keep going – need to be perfected
 - Social outcomes do require investment
- Pace of policy changes is challenging
 - need expedient and clear communication – partner organisation to help do this e.g. do not rely on council having to do it all
- Poverty can equal mental health issues - city farm helps
- Winning contracts too difficult for small organisations vs big ones
 - too big / onerous process
 - need to value local knowledge
- Increasing stress levels and anxiety
 - increasing family tensions
 - People having to move out of borough
- Some parts of council doing well but others (e.g. housing , council tax) could be more supportive
 - stupid mistakes being made which undermining good work, e.g. woman who's just started work sent council tax bill more than salary now off benefits

Table 3

GENERAL NOTES TO TYPE UP

- Talk about working with the private sector – but how? And how strategic/common interests
- key – staff team dedicated to corporate brokerage.
- Small orgs – call on others to help broker e.g. council /Islington Giving/BIG Alliance. (let charity sector do what it does best)
- Want entrepreneurs' not corporate employees.
- Specialists skills – where corporates can get involved – e.g. fundraising.

- Section 106 – voluntary get a say on how money is spent and meet developers to avoid wasted opportunities.
- Charities need to adapt to engage and learn from private sector.
- Be clear with what you want – really specific and create win/win situation.
- ‘Everyone has something they can potentially give you’.
- Small steps to really engaged – and long term partnerships - Takes time.
- What key services?
- Continue current offer – core mission.

Table 4

Messages for policymakers

- Facilitate premises sharing.
- Lobbying nationally to get more devolved powers, e.g., welfare to work.
- But acknowledge that local people want to have local politicians focussing on local issues.
- Sharing resources.
- Identify where need is and where it can be most effective.
- Facilitating networking.
- Broker arrangements to combat isolation.

What are our priorities?

- Reducing isolation
- Young people
- Look at duplication of services. Have a clear map of who’s delivering what, so some organisations can work better together, maybe give up some core services if it is being delivered elsewhere, less “funding chasing”.
- But retain core services where there is a need.
- LBI and voluntary organisations could be a bit more assertive where duplication is identified.
- Encourage intergenerational activities.
- Promote valuing elders’ experience.

How can we do things differently?

- Pay attention to small things to save money.
- Volunteering, make coherent approach to value volunteers – formal and informal.
- Smarter working – e.g., from home.
- Merging/partnerships?
- Think carefully about social enterprises – works for some.
- Be alive to e.g., new funding sources, e.g., crowd funding.

How to share the value of volunteering?

- Refugee and asylum seekers - how to encourage to volunteer and to use skills.
- Young professionals – Time banking.
- Expert volunteers - skills sharing - volunteers to define roles.
- Volunteer certificate - online portfolio? - Points scheme? - Awards ceremony
- Volunteer = training, mutual opportunities – creating skills.
- Local products % to local charity – council to facilitate.

Table 6

- Smoother journey for people who've just back into work
- BEST team – doing good work and income max creating good relationships with residents
- People not treated with respect at job centre and they are discouraging volunteering
- Keep protecting the most vulnerable

Table 7

Core Funds:

- Salary – Key coordinator / administrator
- Rent & utilities
- Leverages other funding
- Multi-year funding
- Communications
 - Key person within the council to facilitate this
 - Help available on website but people don't access
 - Use of bus stops very good
 - Umbrella organisations – regular updates
 - Transparency ... & decisions – needs assessment

Advice:

- Disabled
- Young people
- Education
- Anti-social behaviour
- Health
- Housing
- Isolation
- Welfare
- Unemployment
- Elderly

Resources:

- Sharing premises
- Lateral thinking
- Services – Legal – Accounts / finance (use same organisation)
- Equipment – phones (bulk purchasing)
- Administrative – IT – (bulk purchasing)

Table 8

Message for policymakers and funders

Data:

- Texture
- Identifying need
- Local data/knowledge
- Sharing Info

Resources

Evidence based practice:

- What works
- Linking in with organisations and institutions

Issuing longer contracts:

- Minimum 5 year
- Tenders - costly

What are our priorities?

- Maintaining the breadth of local voluntary organisations/groups.
- Need to maintain flexibility for changing needs.
- Analysing need – whose out there and what they are doing?
- Sharing resources of all.

How can we do things differently?

- Not be inward looking – No silo thinking.
- Enabling clients.
- Focus on the client not organisation.
- Volunteering into employment.
- Social enterprise and partnership work.

Table 9

Messages for Policy makers

- Council owned buildings/premises vol. sector getting reduced rent, rent holidays, reduce utility bills – subsidised rent and utility
- Lease holder fees/ rent going up £10,000-£30,000/year (Chinese association cannot pay this.)
- Cheaper premises needed
- Co-locating with other organisations/similar activities- solution
- Work together with the org. that you co-locate with
- Need a warm, safe, welcoming environment in their premises –to encourage people to visit service
- Getting a list of premises – conduct a premises (not just) audit –where org. are, what premises available (London, nat.)
- Funders have misperception that Islington is rich
- Use facts and figures
- Provide organisations with facts and figures to use in funding applications
- Identify pockets of deprivation/ward level
- Joint Funding bids/work in partnership with organisations
- Including smaller organisations in Funding bids - need a mechanism for this
- Community hubs

Priorities

- Vol. sector to complement & support council services
- What resources have you got that you can draw upon in the community
- What areas do we *have* to get involved in?
- Lots of org. offer advice sessions
- Afterschool clubs for children & YP
- Need to be able to measure the impact/to know what works/what has an impact - to determine what the priorities are.

Table 11

Relationships:

- Supportive
- Bringing / tapping into expertise
- Paternal
- Criticism

- Find other sources of funding and remake relationship with the council on move equal terms.
- Find Funding elsewhere
- The view of the volunteers/change roles
- Top down/ground up- Start again with the way volunteers are viewed and treated.
- Foster ground roots activity-equal validity to grass roots & top down
- Mergers- success in the long run - social enterprise.

Table 15

- Training to help set up
- Space for venues
- Volunteering
- Funding
- Front line service
- Health and Education
- Employment / Skills
- Information
- Sharing experience
- Young people and developing their skills
- Self-led skills building for young people in social enterprise and volunteering
- Partnership working, collaboration, sharing spaces and services