

tackling worklessness

a series of 'how to' guides
for councils and their partners

5

targeting and outreach work with
the voluntary and community sector



1. why adopt this approach?

Worklessness is not homogeneous. Available data clearly demonstrates concentrations of worklessness in particular neighbourhoods and across minority communities, lone parents and other disadvantaged groups. In these neighbourhoods, it is vital to address the complex barriers to training and employment.

To significantly reduce worklessness in the most deprived communities, therefore, requires a targeted and multi-sector approach. The voluntary and community sector (VCS) is a vital resource and can help councils to deliver successful outreach activities that:

- provide access to tight-knit communities
- have local knowledge and intelligence
- offer locally-available capacity
- develop innovative approaches to engagement.

For the purposes of this guide, VCSs are defined as any independent self-governing body of people who have joined together to take action for

the benefit of the community. This includes registered charities, large and small not-for-profit voluntary organisations and social enterprises.

2. steps to achieve this approach

a) data gathering and analysis

The starting point to achieving effective targeting is robust data analysis. The principal national sources of data include:

- The Office of National Statistics, which places a vast range of data, including employment and skills, in the public domain – often available to neighbourhood level www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/
- NOMIS, the standard source of labour market statistics, again available to a local level www.nomisweb.co.uk
- The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) web-based tabulation tool, which offers access to the benefits data that is available at neighbourhood level. www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/tabtool.asp

The advantage of using National Statistics is it has been validated as robust and reliable and can provide comparative data over time. However, not all data is available for small areas and some data may be a year or more out of date. To enhance understanding of the performance of neighbourhoods, national data can be supplemented with information from public sector organisations. While this approach does require some expertise in data analysis, it can be effective in understanding the barriers to work for individuals in target areas.

Data from Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) members can include the following:

- DWP/Jobcentre Plus (JCP) 'job outputs', and some performance information, for example star ratings for non-JCP Pathways to Work areas
- educational attainment
- further education participation for young people and adults
- Sure Start delivery
- social housing information on tenants and tenant services
- council tax and housing benefit

- connexions data particularly on NEETs (see glossary on page 11)
- performance data from locally-commissioned engagement or employability projects.

Bringing this additional information together can provide a rich resource and support a deeper understanding of the barriers, such as child poverty, faced by residents in target communities. While helpful, this approach does also require challenge from local voluntary and community groups not only to ensure that data is correctly interpreted but also to check that delivery arrangements are focused on the right issues.



case study 1

Resident Wages Project, Manchester City Council and Manchester Geomatics

Manchester Geomatics linked together a range of administrative data from public organisations at individual and household levels. This spatial analysis identified clusters of excluded households in the target areas which are thought to reinforce a culture of worklessness in those communities. It also identified significant variation in education performance with a tipping point after Key Stage 1. This analysis has shaped Manchester's delivery of services to families in the most deprived neighbourhoods.

www.manchesterpartnership.org.uk/includes/uploads/File/Manchester%20Board/MPBOARD220708.pdf

b) design of local services

A partnership approach to analysis allows for a wider discussion of the best ways to tailor services to meet the needs of residents. Although obvious, it is fundamental that any re-design of local services should be built around the needs of customers rather than those of service providers. The VCS has a unique role to play. It can provide further interpretation and challenge to the analysis and will have a detailed understanding from the client's perspective of the drawbacks of current services. VCS organisations can often be a trusted voice of groups or communities and offer an opportunity to consult and engage with residents when designing new interventions.

Local authorities should use Compact arrangements where available as these provide a structure for formal engagement with the VCS.

www.thecompact.org.uk

Effective services are designed with a 'no wrong door' approach, so they are accessible via a wide range of ways. This is particularly important when dealing with individuals who are reluctant to engage or who are furthest away from the labour market. Services are strongest when all front-line workers, mainstream and VCS, who are working together within an area, have a clear understanding of their respective roles and are able to wrap services around individuals and families.



case study 2

SPOTLIGHT, Salford City Council

SPOTLIGHT adopts a new approach to community regeneration. It is an intensive six-week programme of neighbourhood-focused reviews and investigation undertaken by public partners and community researchers. The aim of SPOTLIGHT is to develop an in-depth understanding of issues affecting targeted areas and to engage residents in a process of practical problem solving. Following the six-week programme, the SPOTLIGHT partner team produce an action plan of improvements for the LSP with a community feedback loop to ensure accountability.

www.salford.gov.uk/living/regeneration/spotlighting.htm

www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelId=9433355&aspect=full

c) delivery

Following data collection, analysis and local service design, any gaps in services can be filled through targeted commissioning. Further information on effective and intelligent commissioning can be found in **Guide 3** on commissioning in partnership, and **Guide 9** on capturing the resources of the third sector. The VCS can make a unique contribution to delivery in neighbourhoods not engaged with employability support services. They are often well known, highly visible and trusted within the targeted community. This offers new opportunities for councils, but equally can offer challenges to standard operating practice. The example of Nottinghamshire right shows that VCS organisations can provide real added value to mainstream contract providers.

case study 3

Enable (Nottinghamshire)

Enable is a successful VCS consortium providing targeted employment and skills services in Nottinghamshire. Enable is a sub-contractor to the national provider Working Links for the East Midlands European Social Fund (ESF) programme. Enable established a delivery vehicle called JobMAET (joint public and VCS employment teams) to engage residents and address barriers to work in a holistic way linked to the main Working Links employment support contract.

www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=9439883&aspect=full

VCS organisations often deliver very specialist activities within excluded communities. Councils can use this to access residents who would not normally approach public services. For example, there are many groups that work with people with disabilities, such as the Leonard Cheshire project in London which supports people with disabilities to start a business.

www.lcdisability.org/enabled4enterprise

Or, as in the case study (right), it can mean working with major employers to get excluded young people into training and work.

case study 4

BBC Recruitment Northwest

In September 2007, the BBC launched a recruitment process for 20 apprentices in broadcast production. As part of their commitment to making the media industry more accessible and inclusive, the BBC worked closely with Connexions and voluntary organisations in the north west including Barnardo's and Music Stuff, to identify talented young residents of deprived areas. Central to the BBC's approach to this recruitment process was that applicants could not have qualifications higher than level 2, so they worked with the VCS to go to places that young creative people used and did not just rely on traditional recruitment processes.

<http://www.barnardos.org.uk/>

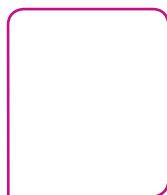
VCS organisations can also be vitally important in helping to target specific sections of the community that may have been identified as part of local research and consultation activity. Many councils will have targets to improve English as a second language (ESOL) skills but struggle to gain access to minority communities. Using existing funding can be effective, such as the Learning and Skills Council's (LSC) Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities (NLDC), a resource that is intended to support VCS groups to increase engagement in learning. But councils need to design contracts to recognise the scale, capacity and specialisation of VCS organisations.

case study 3

NLDC, Manchester

Greater Manchester LSC and the city council pooled NLDC and Neighbourhood Renewal Funding to fund VCS to deliver City Strategy targets. A single programme prospectus was published that was structured to recognise the differing capacity and experience of VCS groups in Manchester. Contracts were set at three levels. Established level 1 providers have access to higher value and volume contracts whereas new or small VCS level 2 and 3 providers have smaller contracts but significant support to help build their capacity.

www.cn4m.net/workinggroups



d) monitoring and evaluation

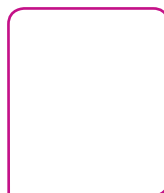
Monitoring the performance and evaluating the impact of VCS activity can be challenging. Problems may arise where there is a mismatch of expectations between the VCS and the council or where performance indicators are imposed that do not reflect what the VCS organisation is delivering. VCS groups are often most effective at first step engagement but less so at achieving formal work or qualification outputs. However, it is these first step activities that are often the most important in creating the foundations for future delivery.

For these reasons it is important to be very clear on contract performance targets and to match payments schedules to, for example, client progression or sustainability measures, rather than block grant funding. VCS organisations are different from the public sector. Many do not have the capacity or skills to manage the administration of performance reporting, and governance arrangements can make issues of accountability difficult. Councils should consider the following when designing

monitoring and evaluation arrangements:

- Question the relevance of 'standard' performance monitoring output to the type of activity commissioned.
- Ensure that no unnecessary administrative and financial burden is being placed on the organisation.
- Training on performance reporting and software should be provided, as well as ensuring that there is a named individual with a knowledge of the activity and organisation to provide additional support, particularly if this is an organisation new to the council or one that has undergone personnel changes.
- Consider monthly monitoring rather than quarterly. This should not be too burdensome on the VCS organisation – it could reduce the number of reports required - and it ensures underperformance can be tackled quickly.
- Alongside appropriate performance measures, VCS providers may need additional management support to meet public sector contract conditions.

The evaluation of VCS activities should be quantitative and qualitative, reflecting both the intended objectives and direct contribution to the progression of targeted community members. This should be used to inform future commissioning and be shared with the VCS community to spread best practice and innovation.



top tips

Be creative about the sources of information available but be prepared to challenge the data and underlying assumptions.

Only commission new services following discussions with partners and after identifying gaps in local provision.

Take risks and encourage innovation because traditional approaches often fail in neighbourhoods with excluded residents.

Exploit the local knowledge of VCS organisations but do not over-estimate the range and capacity of VCS delivery.

Recognise that VCS organisations are different from councils, may require a higher level of support, and may suffer from cashflow problems.

Encourage consortia and joint working among the VCS providers.

Building strong and trusting relationships with VCS providers will prevent risks becoming problems. Change in the most deprived communities is gradual and in small steps. Evaluation must be sensitive to this.

3. how to find out more

- IDEa case studies on council and VCS collaboration
www.idea.gov.uk/vcs
- National Council for Voluntary Organisations
www.ncvo-vol.org.uk
- Compacts provides information on setting up and using compacts between councils and voluntary organisations
www.thecompact.org.uk
- ACEVO – The potential role for the third sector in Welfare to Work reform
www.fullcostrecovery.org.uk/uploads/files/DWP%20taskforce%20Final%20Report.pdf
- Houghton review into council contribution to reduced worklessness
www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/tacklingworklessnessinterim

- LGA / NCVO Publication into councils and VCS working together during the recession
www.lga.gov.uk/lga/publications/publication-display.do?id=1568601
- DWP publications, for example Research Report No 482 Social housing and worklessness. Key policy messages:
www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/report_abstracts/rr_abstracts/rra_482.asp

4. glossary

- **City Strategy**
national DWP pathfinder programme to tackle worklessness in 15 pilot areas.
- **NLDC**
Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities – national LSC programme to support engagement in first steps learning through the VCS.
- **NEET**
16-19 year olds not in employment, education or training.

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Local Government Association

The Local Government Association is the national voice for more than 450 local authorities in England and Wales. The LGA group comprises the LGA and five partner organisations which work together to support, promote and improve local government.

