

A RESILIENT VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR



WORKSHOP ON RESILIENCE

At the North Yorkshire Wider Partnership conference on 19 November 2021 Community First Yorkshire led a workshop considering key questions about the resilience of the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector. This was to develop an increased understanding of VCSE resilience and how to overcome any barriers.

THE STARTING POINT

The key questions were:

- What is resilience?
- Examples of resilience in your organisation.
- What are the barriers to achieving resilience?
- What solutions help to build resilience?



WHAT IS RESILIENCE?

- Flexibility/adaptability.
- Planning for times of challenge.
- Ability to bounce back when things are hard.
- Staying positive about tackling challenges.

EXAMPLES OF RESILIENCE

- Keeping people informed, feeling valued and respected.
- Jointly finding solutions.
- Wellbeing support/reassurance.
- Deeper relationships with partners.
- Improving skills – eg technological abilities.



BARRIERS TO RESILIENCE

- Increased workload + complexity for workforce.
- Red tape.
- Impact of Covid – both emotionally and burnout.
- Recruitment and retention difficulties.
- Impact on relationships of limited face to face contact.
- Financial pressures.

The impact of Local Government Reorganisation remains concerning for VCSE groups, and equally challenging for the public sector itself. Participants had concerns about wellbeing and the continuing pressure and stress their teams are under. Funding continues to be a challenge. VCSE groups want more stability and longer grant periods so they can concentrate on delivery instead of expending energy constantly fundraising.

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SOLUTIONS

- Secure funding with longer terms and full cost recovery.
- Partnership working - sharing experience and skills between VCSE and public sectors.
- Developing more collaborative commissioning approaches.
- Training and career pathway opportunities for young people into the VCSE sector.

Discussions were positive and proactive, with actions for individuals, as well as VCSE organisations and the public sector. There was a strong sense of building resilience through collaborative working. Participants committed to supporting and leading on activities to strengthen the VCSE sector.

SUPPORT FOR INDIVIDUALS & ORGANISATIONS

By maximising support and skills building, especially for young people, the sector will attract new people and secure its future. Achieved through:

- A commitment to values based recruitment.
- Sharing training opportunities across organisations and sectors.
- Offering cross-team and organisational development support - through potential joint internship opportunities and shared staff.



- Maintaining connectivity - with other organisations and partners.
- Open conversations and friendly challenge.
- Sharing resources and data.
- Building relationships and being open to collaborative working.

- Being kind to ourselves and not pushing to breaking point.
- Looking out for each other, highlighting health and wellbeing support available to both the public and VCSE sectors.



PUBLIC SECTOR & SUPPORT ORGANISATIONS' NEEDS

- A potential platform (Voluntary Sector Academy?) to enable skills sharing and development for young people and those looking to build skills and confidence.
- Training for commissioners/funders to improve approaches to accountability, performance management and funding application processes.

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- Recognising the value in using grants to facilitate stability and resilience.
- Flexible approaches, as we saw during the pandemic, to contracts enabling a more agile VCSE sector with little red tape.
- More core funding options, especially for collaborative projects or funding at scale.



- Reviewing current procurement processes and providers lists to support resilience, e.g. increased security of longer grants and contracts.
- Guidance on how to become an approved provider.
- Continuing and improved communication – accessible and open, demonstrating contract management excellence by working through issues together to build stronger relationships.



WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Community First Yorkshire will take forward the recommendations to be considered in work plans and longer-term strategic planning. Key items and ideas will be added to strategic partnership meetings, and actions raised.

Specifically, some of these points will be fed into the business agendas of :

- North Yorkshire Thriving Communities meeting .
- North Yorkshire and York Recovery Framework Communities Action Plan.
- North Yorkshire Market Development Board.
- Humber Coast and Vale Integrated Care System VCSE Leaders' Group.
- North Yorkshire and York Local Enterprise Board.



Progress will be reported back to the sector through quarterly briefing papers and via the quarterly North Yorkshire VCSE Leaders' meetings.

We would like to thank everyone who took part in the discussion, and encourage you to share your thoughts by emailing info@communityfirstyorkshire.org.uk

Please note that support for VCSE organisations can be found on [Community First Yorkshire's website](#) and North Yorkshire County Council's [Stronger Communities web page](#).

