

THE 'STATE' AND VOLUNTARY SECTOR COLLABORATION

Communities 1st - What We Stand For Policy Statement (7)

Introduction

At Communities 1st and within our wider network of member Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations, we're on the frontline, working together to make our communities stronger and more inclusive. This position statement highlights our partnership with the 'State'. It's about getting to the heart of our collaboration, the hurdles we face, and our collective vision for a better way forward. We're focused not only on current operations but also on shaping a future where our sector can better serve our communities. It underscores our essential role and the challenges we face in gaining the necessary support, recognition, and resources to succeed.

Navigating the Collaborative Landscape

The VCSE sector, essential in community well-being and public service delivery, continuously faces challenges such as fluctuating funding and bureaucratic hurdles. The sector's unique, qualitative contribution differs markedly from the statutory sector, addressing diverse community needs with agility and resilience. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted not only the critical nature of these services but also the disproportionate impact of underfunding on smaller, vulnerable-group-representing organisations. With the forthcoming Procurement Act 2023, which has an anticipated "go-live" date of October 2024, it's crucial to make sure these challenges are recognised and supported to ensure the sector's sustainability and effectiveness in serving the community.

Our Pledge

As Communities 1st and our member organisations, we pledge to:

- Foster and maintain flexible, adaptive partnerships, valuing both formal and informal collaborations that enhance service delivery and community support.
- Continuously building our organisational capacity and skills, especially in areas like bid-writing and systems development, to better serve our communities.
- Advocate for greater recognition of the VCSE sector's role and contributions, seeking equitable support and funding to ensure the sector's sustainability.

Our Ask of Decision-Makers and Influencers

To effectively support our communities, we call upon our politicians, senior leaders, and officers within governments, local councils, the NHS, and other public sector bodies to:

1. Ensure the Procurement Bill facilitates easier access to public contracts for VCSE organisations, making the system more inclusive and simpler to navigate.
2. Acknowledge the unique, qualitative contribution of the VCSE sector in public service delivery and provide equitable support and funding to bridge current gaps.
3. Foster stronger, more collaborative relationships between the public sector and VCSE organisations, recognising them as equal partners in service delivery.
4. Provide targeted support for capacity building within the VCSE sector to enhance the sector's capability to meet community needs and address the specific impacts of funding cuts on statutory services and the wider voluntary sector.