

Shaping the future...

The development of voluntary and community sector
infrastructure in County Durham

County Durham voluntary and community sector
infrastructure sub-regional mapping report
to the One Voice Network

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This is the final report to the **One Voice Network** of the **County Durham Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure sub-regional mapping** project, incorporating results from additional research funded through the 'Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure - early spend fund' administered on behalf of the Home Office Active Communities Directorate by Government Office North East.

The sub-regional mapping report was undertaken as a contract between **Voluntary Organisations Network North East (VONNE)** and the **One Voice Network (OVN)**. OVN is a '*network of networks*': an umbrella group of community and voluntary organisations in County Durham. It aims to improve communications and develop networking opportunities for community and voluntary organisations in County Durham; assist with cross-sector consultations: lobbying on behalf of, supporting and unifying the voluntary and community sector in the sub-region; and raise awareness of opportunities or difficulties that arise for communities and volunteers in the county.

The associated 'early spend' research was undertaken for the **County Durham CVS Network**, which consists of the following infrastructure organisations:

- Chester-le Street & District Council for Voluntary Service and Volunteer Bureau
- Derwentside Council for Voluntary Service and Volunteer Bureau
- Durham City District Council for Voluntary Service and Volunteer Bureau
- Easington District Council for Voluntary Service and Volunteer Bureau
- CAVOS (Community and Voluntary Organisations Sedgfield)
- 2D (Support for the Voluntary and Community Sector in Teesdale and Wear Valley)
- Durham Rural Community Council

The research upon which this report is based was carried out by the **Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research at Sheffield Hallam University**, in collaboration with **Research Solutions UK Ltd**. The project was undertaken between April and September 2004 and managed by the County Durham One Voice Network.

However it is important to recognise that many other people and organisations have given both time and resources to support the work. As well as those who have participated in the research in various ways, this includes those people who have been actively involved in planning, organising, facilitating and note-taking at various consultation events undertaken as part of the study (detailed in the Appendix).

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Section 1.

Introduction

1.1 Background context: the development of *ChangeUp*

The current Labour government has seemingly made strenuous efforts to boost the role of the voluntary and community sector in the UK. Since taking office in May 1997 it has sought to develop a deeper and clearer relationship with the sector, so much so that one recent commentator has suggested that the sector is now being brought into the mainstream of the policy making process (Kendall 2003). This 'mainstreaming' of the sector can be seen in many policy developments, but perhaps stands out in four main initiatives:

- the unprecedented launch in November 1998 of the national **Compact** between central government and the sector (Home Office 1998),
- the more recent reviews of the legal structure and role of the sector, both published in September 2002:
 - firstly the Cabinet Office Strategy Unit **review of charitable law** (Cabinet Office 2002), and
 - secondly by the Treasury into the **role of the voluntary sector in the delivery of public services** (HM Treasury 2002),
- the relaunch and expansion of the Active Community Unit in the Home Office, the primary department with responsibility for the sector, and the associated development of **an agenda of 'civil renewal'** as a potential key theme for the government's agenda in the next few years (Blunkett 2001, 2003).

As part of the emerging 'civil renewal' agenda, Home Secretary David Blunkett recently stressed the significance of the voluntary and community sector to the Government's aspirations and overall programme:

Departments are already engaging a wider range of partners in their work than ever before but they need to go further, recognising the range of people and organisations who share their objectives and have a part to play in delivering them. In particular they need to reach out to the many voluntary organisations and community groups who are much closer to the problems which Government is seeking to address, and to involve them as strategic partners, valuing their expertise and knowledge and recognising their ability to devise new and different ways to solve difficult problems. Government needs to be prepared to resource them to do this and develop their capacity to make the contribution of which they are more than capable, providing they have the right kind of support.

(Blunkett 2003: 26, emphasis added)

The publication of the Treasury's Cross Cutting Review on 'the role of the voluntary sector in public service delivery' on the 10th Sept 2002 to coincide with the 2002 spending review, marked a significant change in that dedicated funds were to be made available to advance the development of the sector over the three year period 2003-2006. Alongside the new **future builders** fund, a one-off capital investment fund amounting to £125m over three years, the Home Office was given responsibility for developing a 'Capacity Building and

Infrastructure Strategy' to develop the voluntary and community sector's infrastructure. This would inform the appropriate allocation of an additional sum of £93m for VCS infrastructure over the same period.

The Home Office published its Draft Infrastructure Strategy for consultation in September 2003. The final framework - '**ChangeUp-Capacity Building and Infrastructure Framework**' (Home Office 2004a) was published on 24th June 2004. Allied spending programmes are being developed at the moment, in order to allocate £72m through to 2006 on key priorities.

The premise of *ChangeUp* is signalled in the preface by Fiona Mactaggart, the government minister with responsibility for the voluntary and community sector:

"Many groups and organisations, are prevented from achieving their potential because they cannot access the support and expertise they need to improve and expand"

(Fiona Mactaggart, *ChangeUp*, p.5)

The framework is then set out as a tool to inform more detailed local, regional and national infrastructure planning and development through to 2014. It suggests that each local area should undertake strategic review and planning exercises in order to produce an Infrastructure Development Plan.

The high-level aim of *ChangeUp* is

"that by 2014 the needs of frontline voluntary and community organisations will be met by support which is available nationwide, structured for maximum efficiency, offering excellent provision which is accessible to all while reflecting and promoting diversity, and is sustainably funded"

(*ChangeUp*, p.7)

The framework suggests that the key support needs for frontline groups and organisations are:

- performance improvement
- workforce development
- ICT
- governance
- recruiting and developing volunteers
- financing voluntary and community sector activity

Importantly, the framework signals the government's intentions in two key passages. Firstly, in relation to the appropriate *geographical scale* of infrastructure provision, the framework discusses the notion of '**Geographic hubs of infrastructure activity**', whereby

"It is envisaged that at regional, sub-regional and local levels infrastructure should gradually coalesce into geographic hubs of activity with services sharing premises, back office facilities or merging depending on needs" (*ChangeUp* p.9)

This reflects the view that infrastructure has developed in a somewhat haphazard, piecemeal and ad hoc manner over time, and that there is scope for rationalisation (or 'reconfiguration') to reduce duplication and address gaps.

Secondly, in relation to **funding VCS infrastructure**, *ChangeUp* notes the significance of strategic public sector support, but also signals the possibility of increasing the role of

charging for services, and potentially therefore developing more of a 'market' for infrastructure:

"a higher proportion of infrastructure costs should be funded by frontline organisations through membership fees and sale of services.

Public sector funding should be long term, strategic and focused on clear objectives which infrastructure bodies should deliver to agreed standards" (ChangeUp p.10)

Subsequent announcements have provided more detail about the spending priorities and programmes under the *ChangeUp* framework (Home Office 2004b). Three main programmes have been outlined:

***ChangeUp* spending programmes**

1. 'embedding quality and improving reach' (£33m)
better access for frontline organisations to high quality support
2. 'modernising infrastructure' (£29m)
configuring infrastructure services to better meet users needs, ensure coordination, efficient delivery and sustainability
3. 'driving up activity in key service areas' (£5m)
increased engagement of voluntary and community sector in areas of deprivation and in priority public service areas

The regional allocation for the North East, plus an amount under spent from the 'early spend' programme¹, comes to a total of **£4,350,716**.

1.2 Local developments

In County Durham the **CVS Network** (consisting of the six district-based Councils for Voluntary Service and the Durham Rural Community Council) began work to prepare for the infrastructure framework at the end of 2003. The CVS network responded to the consultation draft, and then held an away-day in January 2004 to start a process of examining the extent, quality and reach of existing VCS infrastructure in the County. Since this was a one-day exercise involving infrastructure agencies themselves considering current provision, it was agreed that there was a need to examine infrastructure from the bottom up - from the users perspective. This would primarily be an exercise examining what was needed - the 'demand' for infrastructure.

A successful bid was made to the 'Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure - early spend fund' administered on behalf of the Home Office Active Communities Directorate by Government Office North East. The bid outlined a proposal to undertake some research and consultation around what aspects of infrastructure are most needed and in need of development in County Durham. Work was to be undertaken on three strands:

- Infrastructure needs and steps towards the development of a 'brokerage model'

¹ This was an early allocation (of £6.25m) of the funds made available under the Cross-Cutting Review, designed to facilitate mapping exercises both nationally and between each region to prepare the ground for the main investment fund to develop infrastructure.

- Social Enterprise, and
- Community Buildings.

In addition, a further sum was made available for 'sub-regional mapping' in each of the four sub-regions in the North East. In County Durham it was decided to use this extra resource to supplement the 'early spend' research with a complementary analysis of the 'supply side' - of the circumstances and capacity of infrastructure provision.

1.3 Definitions

ChangeUp has an extensive definition of infrastructure (Home Office 2004: 15):

"Infrastructure describes the physical facilities, structures, systems, relationships, people, knowledge and skills that exist to support and develop, co-ordinate, represent and promote front line organisations thus enabling them to deliver their missions more effectively. Infrastructure organisations are those whose primary purpose is to provide infrastructure functions or services (support and development, co-ordination, representation and promotion) to front line organisations. They are sometimes called umbrella organisations, second tier organisations or intermediary organisations".

For the mapping exercises in the North East, a two-part refinement to this definition was adopted.

Firstly, a definition was offered of the kinds of activities implied by infrastructure services:

"Infrastructure Services provide support and development, co-ordination, representation and promotion to the voluntary and community sector and groups within it.

***Support and Development** includes the provision of: information and advice; consultancy; training; fund distribution; and incubation facilities.*

***Co-ordination** includes: co-ordinating the delivery of services and initiatives across the sector' brokering services - guiding groups to providers of relevant services and/or establishing special deals with providers; co-ordinating common interest groups - organising or providing support for voluntary and community groups wishing to work together to learn, develop policy and to campaign; and cross sector working - co-ordinating cross sectoral partnerships for the delivery of services and initiatives*

***Representation** includes: consultation - consulting 'front-line' organisations on issues concerning the sector; and lobbying - advocating on behalf of the sector to Government and the private sector*

***Sector Promotion** includes: research - undertaking and publishing research into the sector; policy - developing and promoting policy and policy positions; standards and best practice - developing standards and best practice and reviewing and benchmarking performance; and sector development - identifying new needs and taking new initiatives".*

'Infrastructure Strategy Early Spend - County Durham', undated

Secondly, the notion of an infrastructure organisation was broken down into various elements:

"Infrastructure Organisations are organisations providing infrastructure services to voluntary and community groups. These embrace a wide range of organisations, at the core of which are voluntary and community organisations whose main purpose is the provision of infrastructure services to other voluntary and community groups. In addition to these core infrastructure groups there are a range of voluntary and community organisations whose main purpose may not be the provision of infrastructure support to other groups but who either are providing some of these services or are organisations who provide all of these services but only to their own branches or members. Finally there are a range of organisations, including organisations from other sectors, who are providing elements of these services to voluntary and community groups.

The three different types of infrastructure organisation are as follows.

***Primary Infrastructure Organisations (PIOs)** are voluntary and community groups whose main purpose is the provision of infrastructure services to other voluntary and community groups and who provide all four elements of infrastructure services - support and development, co-ordination, representation and promotion.*

***Generalist PIOs** provide infrastructure services to all types of voluntary and community group (e.g. CVS and Community Empowerment Networks).*

***Specialist PIOs** provide services to groups who work on particular issues or who share particular interests or identities (e.g. Regional Voluntary Youth Work Networks and Black and Minority Ethnic Networks).*

***Secondary Infrastructure Organisations (SIOs)** are voluntary and community groups who either provide some infrastructure services to other groups as a subsidiary activity to their main front line activities (e.g. some of the larger service delivering charities providing support to local small charities), or who provide all aspects of infrastructure services but only to their local branches or members (e.g. national federal organisations like Age Concern and NACAB).*

***Tertiary Infrastructure Organisations (TIOs)** are groups from outside the voluntary and community sector who provide some infrastructure support to groups (e.g. local authorities providing employment advice or access to their training to groups in their area, and private business companies providing consultancies or technical support in things like ICT)".*

'Infrastructure Strategy Early Spend - County Durham', undated

This report has attempted where possible to work in line with the above definitions, although it must be noted that there may be cases where organisations bridge the distinction between PIO, SIO and TIO.

1.4 The structure of the report

The rest of this report is structured as follows.

In **section 2**, a detailed analysis is undertaken of the '**demand**' for infrastructure support. This is drawn from the extensive survey and the consultation events detailed in the appendix.

Section 3 then undertakes a similar analysis of the '**supply**' of infrastructure support in County Durham, based on the survey, the consultation events, and interviews with key infrastructure organisations.

In **section 4** an attempt is made to draw the supply and demand sides of the analysis together by looking at **gaps and duplication** (or 'under-supply' and 'over-supply'). As will be seen however, this is not as straightforward as it might seem.

Finally, **section 5** involves a reflection on the research and analysis in terms of a presentation of a series of **options for the development of infrastructure** in County Durham.

Section 2.

The 'demand' for infrastructure support: what support do voluntary organisations and community groups need?

Much of the research and consultation work examining VCS infrastructure in County Durham has involved a detailed exploration of the circumstances of 'ordinary' (frontline) voluntary organisations and community groups. This has occurred through two main sources:

- the series of district-based consultation workshops and the countywide conference
- the extensive telephone survey.

These two sources of information complement each other. The survey allows us to examine the infrastructure requirements in terms of a snapshot of a large number of groups. The consultation events have allowed us to gain a clearer picture of what exactly the needs are in relation to specific areas.

In the survey there are potentially three main questions which address what might be the needs of 'frontline' voluntary organisations and community groups:

- the forms of support which had been used by respondents in the past ('past access')
- the forms of support which respondents would like to use in the future ('potential future access')
- what were thought to be the main priorities for external support.

The main purpose of these questions was to examine whether clear differences emerged between different forms of support. It has also been worthwhile exploring the extent to which there might be systematic variations between organisations based in different districts and between organisations with or without staff.

2.1 Use of external support in County Durham overall

Table 2.1 indicates the pattern of use external support in the past, and potentially in the future. Figure 1 illustrates this graphically.

'Funding information and advice' emerges as the only form of support in which over half of respondents state both that they have accessed support in the past, and would like to in the future. At the other end of the scale, the lowest use reported was support around 'office administration' in the past, at around 1 in 8 respondents.

The overall picture is one where the different forms of support have been used in the past, or respondents would like to use in the future, in relatively similar proportions. This might make the task of identifying priorities for future investment somewhat problematic.

However there are some clear patterns. Five of the seventeen forms of support used in the survey have rates of access in the past, or potentially in the future, of 33% or more:

- 'funding information and advice' (51% past access and 53% potential future access)
- 'networking with others' (39% and 42%)

- ‘finding and keeping volunteers’ (24% and 34%)
- ‘attracting new members/users’ (21% and 33%), and
- ‘forming your group’ (38% and 20%).

Table 2.1: Past and potential future use of external support

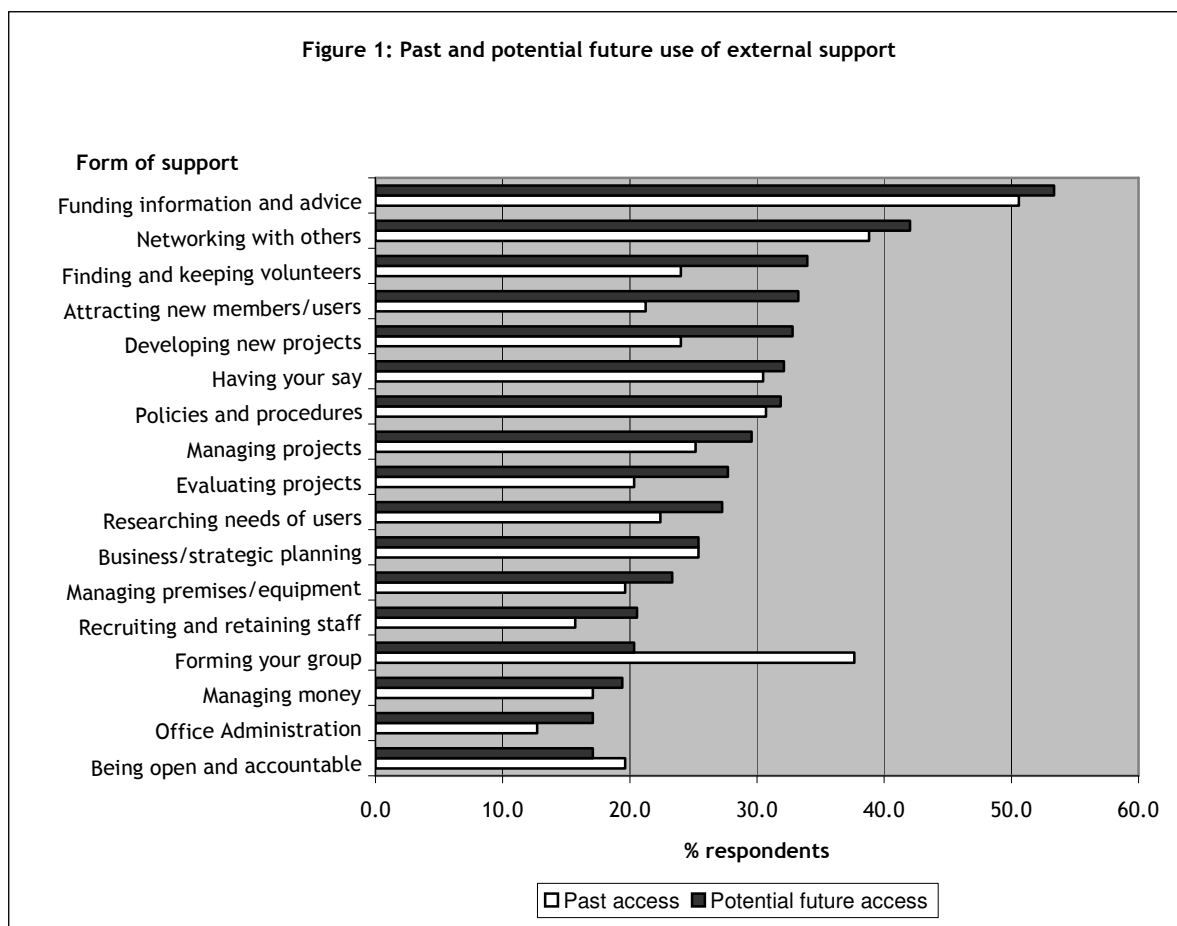
Rank	Form of support	Past use			Potential future use		
		Freq.	%	Est.	Freq.	%	Est.
1	Funding information and advice	219	50.6	669	231	53.3	706
2	Networking with others	168	38.8	509	182	42.0	551
3	Finding and keeping volunteers	104	24.0	312	147	33.9	440
4	Attracting new members/users	92	21.2	283	144	33.3	440
5	Developing new projects	104	24.0	312	142	32.8	420
6	Having your say	132	30.5	392	139	32.1	416
7	Policies and procedures	133	30.7	395	138	31.9	412
8	Managing projects	109	25.2	330	128	29.6	383
9	Evaluating projects	88	20.3	264	120	27.7	355
10	Researching needs of users	97	22.4	287	118	27.3	352
11	Business/strategic planning	110	25.4	328	110	25.4	325
12	Managing premises/equipment	85	19.6	251	101	23.3	298
13	Recruiting and retaining staff	68	15.7	191	89	20.6	250
14	Forming your group	163	37.6	501	88	20.3	269
15	Managing money	74	17.1	222	84	19.4	249
16	Office Administration	55	12.7	169	74	17.1	226
17	Being open and accountable	85	19.6	260	74	17.1	221
	<i>Average</i>	<i>111</i>	<i>25.6</i>	<i>334</i>	<i>124</i>	<i>28.7</i>	<i>371</i>

Notes:

1. N=433; the percentages are out of 433
2. The table is rank ordered in terms of ‘potential future use’ of external support
3. ‘Est.’ is the weighted estimated number of organisations in County Durham

The differences between reported access in the past and potential future access are worth noting here. Both ‘funding information and advice’ and ‘networking with others’ have relatively high rates of past *and* potential future use. However external support in the future around ‘finding and keeping volunteers’ and ‘attracting new members/users’ appears to be a concern for notably higher proportions of groups than in the past. These are potentially the areas in which demand for external support will continue to grow. In contrast ‘forming your group’ would appear at first sight to be an area of declining demand for external support. However, there is a possible bias in the survey here, since this category relates to basic governance issues which perhaps tend to be less relevant (though never of course entirely irrelevant) for more established groups. Issues around forming groups, forming and running management committees and drawing up a constitution are all fundamentally a part of the process of establishing a group on a firm foundation. As such these tend to be issues raised more by groups early on in their ‘life-cycle’, although they never entirely go away in later stages.

Almost by definition, the survey will have captured organisations which currently exist and maybe more established, even if still quite ‘young’. These organisations may not require such support in the future, but a focus on this result in isolation runs the risk of downplaying the likely needs of younger and newly emerging groups, which appear to be significant from the question of access in the past. This point will have significant implications for future planning around the provision of different kinds of infrastructure support, including that required for groups yet to be established.



The consultation workshops provide some more detail about the specific issues faced by voluntary organisations and community groups. In turn, the most significant issues are discussed below, namely:

- funding information and advice
- networking with other groups and organisations
- finding/keeping volunteers and attracting new members and users, and
- questions of the governance of voluntary organisations and groups

Across the seven district events, issues around '**funding information and advice**' were by far and away the most significant for the workshop participants². Support around funding advice was raised in all workshops at all events. In particular, participants raised issues about funding at different levels:

- the need for accurate, timely and up to date information about suitable funding sources and specific eligibility criteria;
- assistance with the task of completing funding applications, including shaping project ideas, having supporting research at your fingertips, putting together budgets, and crucially, assistance with how best to 'pitch' an application, and

² An indication of its significance is provided by a prioritisation exercise which was undertaken at each event. Each participant was given five 'sticky dots' which they could use to indicate what they considered to be the most significant issues of those which had been raised by their group. Added together, across all groups at all events, issues around funding gained about a third of all the 'sticky dots'. However, it must be stressed that this is *only an indication* of the significance for those organisations that were able to take part. Appendix One provides further information and reflections on this methodology.

particularly the appropriate language or 'buzzwords' to use. This kind of support also includes reading over and commenting on applications in draft;

- help with planning and securing ongoing funding, including issues around the problems of short term funding, sustainability and diversification of income streams;
- assistance with monitoring and reporting back to funding bodies, and dealing with issues around matched funding and retrospective funding
- the need to raise the concerns of ordinary groups at a higher strategic level with funders and statutory authorities, for example about the language used in funding application forms, the fact that some areas or groups are targeted and others not, the amount of information required and the term over which funding is offered.

For some larger organisations, or for those participants with more experience of raising funds, the issues raised were around planning, matched funding, retrospective funding and sustainability. However, for many participants it was noted that it was difficult knowing where to begin and where to go for support. During several workshops participants raised the issue of gaining access to assistance around which funders to approach. Since not all funders will be applicable for a particular group or project, the task of simplifying information, through database searches, directories and up to date newsletters, was thought to be particularly important. Whilst for some participants the issue was about being pointed in the right direction in terms of likely sources of funding, participants also noted that identifying potential funders was insufficient in many cases.

There was a sense that infrastructure support should involve experts with wider knowledge of how the funding 'system' works (including who best to apply to, what to say and when funding becomes available). Others sought more intensive support, which might include a one-to-one 'surgery' session, or a series of meetings between a group and an adviser. One participant in Durham City noted that it involves support in turning a 'wish-list' into something more concrete. In Easington another participant noted:

"we need help and advice with how to present the application form - make sure the buzzwords are there - make sure there is something which jumps out at the person making the decision....I know what I want to say but I am scared filling in application forms in case I get something wrong and don't get the funding even though the cause is worthy.....It would be good to explain to someone what your group is and what you need and they would know what is available for your group so you could target your funding applications. It's knowing there's a person out there to help which will make people more confident undertaking fundraising applications".

Support for **networking with other groups and organisations** was also raised in most districts, although with less priority than in the case of 'funding information and advice'. However, for some participants networking events around funding were thought to be a good idea. Gaining direct access to funding organisations at 'Meet the Funders' sessions was important, including the chance to ask clarifying questions about different programmes. However, some participants noted that it would be useful to have one-to-one appointment systems alongside presentations and question and answer sessions. In some workshops the idea of holding events where successful funding applicants might share their experiences, stories and tips with others was discussed, or where small groups of organisations in similar situations might learn about drawing up funding bids together. Some participants thought there might be limits to sharing experiences and ideas given how competitive the funding environment had become, but it was not clear whether these approaches had been tried or currently take place in County Durham.

The importance of networking was stressed by participants. It offered the chance to share experiences, ideas, information, and 'best' practice amongst groups and people who often operate in isolation, either because of the scattered nature of many of County Durham's communities, or because groups, organisations, active volunteers and paid workers often become heavily pre-occupied with the day-to-day tasks of keeping their activities going. It was mentioned that information about, for example, new funding sources or sources of help from infrastructure bodies, often circulates through 'word of mouth' amongst groups and people in regular contact. In Derwentside the participants in one workshop group reported that they tend to rely on other people and their expertise: *"It is who you know and feel comfortable with"*.

Regular networking events or themed sessions (for example, for trustees, or around 'employing staff') appeared to be a good opportunity to bring groups together to discuss common issues and problems. As well as providing a *"space for ideas"*, it was suggested that this helps overcome isolation, avoid duplication, create new activities and partnerships and find out what has worked or not in other places.

Concerns around getting and keeping **volunteers**, and **'attracting new members and users'**, also featured in every workshop event³. Although these were taken as distinct categories in the survey, discussions in the consultation events indicated how closely related they are in practice for participants. The main issues for participants were:

- how to attract volunteers, members or users, particularly amongst certain age groups, such as younger and older people, or amongst people who might not otherwise have thought it 'was for them'. Anxiety and confusion over the rules relating to social security benefits and volunteering was thought to put many people off getting involved;
- how to encourage volunteers to take up places on management committees or boards of trustees, and especially how to get people who might be willing to take up officer positions such as chair, secretary, and seemingly the biggest challenge of all - treasurer. Concern was raised in several workshops over how much of the activities fall on relatively few shoulders. Suggestions here included training on committee skills and roles, responsibilities and liability; 'real' job descriptions and induction packs;
- how to support, sustain, encourage and develop volunteers and active members, including issues of training and accreditation. Supporting volunteers once matched with an organisation was also raised here;
- promoting the value of volunteering as a whole, as a way of appreciating the role volunteers play, changing attitudes to volunteering and encouraging more volunteers in general.

Lastly, many issues were raised around basic **governance** questions within voluntary organisations and community groups. These include issues around constitutions, charitable status and forming committees (grouped together as 'forming your group' in the survey), but also might include support to develop appropriate policies and procedures. Once again the workshop consultation events suggested that participants tend to view these issues together.

Several participants noted the need for support in bringing people together to start a group or develop a project. They may have an idea they wish to develop, but have little

³ In terms of 'sticky dots', issues around volunteering came second only to 'funding' across the seven consultation events as a whole.

idea about how to make it concrete. In Durham City one participant indicated the difficulty of knowing where to start, and who might help as a first point of contact to provide direction, describing a case of "stumbling across" the things he needed to do. As a result, he considered that two years were potentially wasted not knowing how to 'go on' or from where to obtain help. This issue is discussed in greater depth in section 4 of this report, but here it is worth noting that this kind of basic start up support was an important feature of many of the discussions, including how to run meetings, apply for charitable status and hold Annual General Meetings.

In addition, support around issues of legal status and liability appeared to be a central concern for participants. Several noted the need for up-to-date and practical information about the latest and forthcoming changes in legislation and regulations, for example around disability access, health and safety and child protection. In Wear Valley one participant indicated that there were potentially very important issues or regulations which he may simply be unaware of, indicating a need for up to date checklists or templates of policies in order to maintain compliance with legal requirements. One participant suggested that an annual intensive ½ day session to bring people up to date would be worth pursuing.

Using external support to supply and advise about adapting model constitutions, policies and procedures was also raised in several of the sessions. In addition, a need for an independent point of contact to talk through difficult or intractable issues was raised, for example when an organisation becomes overwhelmed with work, or when key 'lynchpins' might leave. Infrastructure support for organisations seeking to change direction or restructure was also raised.

1.2 Use of external support - district patterns

It is important to examine whether the patterns of past and potential future use for County Durham as a whole are replicated at district level. Infrastructure planning is mainly being organised at regional (North East) and sub-regional (County Durham) level, but this would prove problematic if major variations were noted *within* sub-regions. Tables 2.2a and 2.2b consider how the highest ranked five forms of support in County Durham overall are ranked for organisations based in each of the districts.

Table 2.2a: Past use of external support - variations in ranks by district

Form of support	Overall	Chester le street	Derwent-side	Durham City	Easington	Sedgefield	Teesdale	Wear Valley
N	433	53	58	79	63	79	50	51
Funding information and advice	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Networking with others	2	2	3	3	2	3	2	3
Forming your group	3	3	2	2	3	2	3	2
Policies and procedures	4	4	5	4	5	4	4	6
Having your say	5	5	4	5	4	5	6	4

Table 2.2b: Potential future use of external support - variations in ranks by district

Form of support	Overall	Chester le street	Derwent-side	Durham City	Easington	Sedgefield	Teesdale	Wear Valley
N	433	53	58	79	63	79	50	51
Funding information and advice	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1
Networking with others	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	3
Finding and keeping volunteers	3	7	7	3	4	3	12	5
Attracting new members/users	4	4	3	7	3	6	11	12
Developing new projects	5	8	6	4	8	5	4	2

Notes to tables 2.2a and 2.2b

1. The 'N' figures are the number of organisations in the survey based in each district
2. The rank figures are out of 17 forms of external support overall

Some differences between districts are apparent, but broadly speaking there is little variation overall. 'Funding information and advice' emerges as the highest ranked category in all districts regarding past use of external support, and all but one regarding potential future use of external support. The 'top 5' for past use remain generally the same in each district. Overall, taking all 17 forms of support, the pattern of past use of external support is closest to the overall picture in Easington, followed by Sedgefield, Derwentside, Wear Valley and Chester le Street. The patterns of past use in Durham City and Teesdale are least like those in the County as a whole.

There is greater variation by district in the highest ranked categories for potential future use of external support than for past use. Here the overall pattern breaks down somewhat. For example, 'attracting new members/users' appears to be relatively less important in both Teesdale and Wear Valley, while 'finding and keeping volunteers' is seemingly also less important in Teesdale. Overall, taking all 17 forms of support, the pattern of potential future use of external support is closest to the overall picture in Sedgefield, followed by Easington, Derwentside, Durham City and Chester le Street. The patterns of potential future use in Wear Valley and Teesdale are least like those in the County as a whole.

1.3 Use of external support - by organisations with or without staff

It is also important to consider whether different kinds of organisation have the same patterns of past and potential future use. Tables 2.3a and 2.3b consider how the highest ranked five forms of support in County Durham overall are ranked for organisations with and without any paid staff.

Table 2.3a: Past use of external support - variations in ranks by organisations with or without staff

Form of support	Overall	No staff	Staff
N	433	234	199
Funding information and advice	1	1	1
Networking with others	2	3	2
Forming your group	3	2	5
Policies and procedures	4	5	3
Having your say	5	6	4

Table 2.3b: Potential future use of external support - variations in ranks by organisations with or without staff

Form of support	Overall	No staff	Staff
N	433	234	199
Funding information and advice	1	1	1
Networking with others	2	2	2
Finding and keeping volunteers	3	4	4
Attracting new members/users	4	3	12
Developing new projects	5	8	3

Notes to tables 2.3a and 2.3b

1. The 'N' figures are the number of organisations in the survey with or without staff.
2. The rank figures are out of 17 forms of external support overall
3. The category ranked 5th for organisations without staff was 'managing projects', and for those with staff was 'having your say'.

Once again 'funding information and advice' emerges as the highest ranked category in terms of both past use and potential future use for both organisations with and without staff, and 'networking with others' features highly as well. The pattern of use of external support in the past appears to be similar for the highest ranked categories for organisations both with and without staff. Once again, though, potential future use shows a slightly greater deal of variation. In particular, whereas 'attracting new members/users' is ranked third for organisations without staff, it falls to 12th for organisations with staff. Conversely, 'developing new projects' appears to be a concern more for organisations with staff (ranked 3rd) than it is for those without (ranked 8th).

1.4 Use of external support - extent

Having considered the **pattern** of use of external support overall, both in the past and potentially in the future, and examined any variation across districts and between organisations with or without staff, it is also appropriate to consider differences in the **extent** of past and potential future use. We have already seen how this might vary overall between the 17 forms of support used in the survey. We know that 'funding information and advice' appears as the category for which the highest proportion of respondents have used external support in the past and would like to use external support in the future. But it is worthwhile assessing the extent to which respondents *in different circumstances* have accessed support in the past or would like to in the future. This could cover, for instance, organisations based in different districts in County Durham, and organisations with or without staff⁴. This might provide us with a picture of how overall demand for external support might vary.

Tables 2.4 and 2.5 below take the five most important categories from section 2.1 (these being those for which a third or more respondents had accessed support in the past or would like to access support in the future) and examines the differing extents to which respondents in different circumstances use external support. In addition an average is taken across all 17 forms of support. Table 2.4 considers past use of external support, whilst table 2.5 considers potential future use of external support.

⁴ It would also be useful to examine any systematic variations between organisations based in different types of rural area compared with those based in urban areas, and between organisations based in areas considered to be more or less deprived. There are plans to examine this further using the County Durham survey findings, but this has not been possible in the time available for this study.

Table 2.4: Variations in the extent of past access to external support

		Funding Information and advice	Networking with others	Finding and keeping volunteers	Attracting new members and users	Forming your group	Average 'propensity'
	N	%	%	%	%	%	%
Overall	433	50.6	38.8	24.0	21.2	37.6	25.6
Wear Valley	51	60.8	45.1	29.4	23.5	45.1	31.3
Derwentside	58	55.2	41.4	24.1	32.8	46.6	29.6
Chester-le-street	53	50.9	47.2	26.4	22.6	37.7	28.4
Sedgefield	79	48.1	36.7	26.6	21.5	41.8	24.9
Easington	63	58.7	38.1	23.8	22.2	28.6	23.6
Durham City	79	40.5	30.4	24.1	19.0	34.2	23.2
Teesdale	50	44.0	38.0	12.0	6.0	30.0	19.8
No staff	234	44.0	29.5	16.7	17.1	32.5	17.5
Staff	199	58.3	49.7	32.7	26.1	43.7	35.2
1 to 4 staff	114	60.5	54.4	31.6	29.8	48.2	35.6
5 to 9 staff	45	62.2	51.1	31.1	17.8	46.7	37.5
10 or more staff	40	47.5	35.0	37.5	25.0	27.5	31.6

Notes

1. Some caution is required in interpreting the results for those sub-sets of organisations with low 'N' numbers.
2. The 'propensity' to access external support is an average taken across all 17 forms of support used in the survey.

Table 2.4 illustrates some important variations. Across districts, a higher proportion of organisations based in Wear Valley, Derwentside and Chester le Street appear to have accessed external support for the most important five categories in the past than in Durham City and Teesdale. In fact, with minor variations, this pattern remains consistent across all 17 forms of support in the survey. Consequently we might refer to differing 'propensities' to use external support across the districts. The final column in table 2.4 indicates this, by taking the average rates for all 17 forms of support. Overall, for all organisations and all categories of external support, an average 'propensity' of 25.6% of respondents have accessed support. We know that this varies considerably across the 17 categories (from 51% - 'funding information and advice' to 13% - 'office administration'), but the patterns between districts appear to be consistent. In Wear Valley the average 'propensity' is 6% higher than that for County Durham overall, while in Teesdale the average 'propensity' is 6% lower.

Differences between organisations with or without staff are even greater than those across districts. Organisations without staff are less likely to have accessed external support in the past across the five forms of support shown in table 2.4 than organisations with staff. Taking an average 'propensity' across all 17 forms of support, organisations with staff are around twice as likely to have accessed external support in the past than organisations without staff. Variation between organisations with different levels of staff appear to be less significant, but those with 5 to 9 staff appear to show the greatest 'propensity' to have accessed external support in the past.

Table 2.5 illustrates the same issue, but this time considers the results for potential future access, or the extent to which respondents would like to access external support in the future.

Table 2.5: Variations in the extent of potential future access to external support

		Funding Information and advice	Networking with others	Finding and keeping volunteers	Attracting new members and users	Forming your group	Average 'propensity'
	N	%	%	%	%	%	%
Overall	433	53.3	42.0	33.9	33.3	20.3	28.7
Wear Valley	51	64.7	47.1	43.1	35.3	45.1	36.4
Derwentside	58	53.4	48.3	36.2	48.3	17.2	33.4
Sedgefield	79	61.9	44.3	36.7	31.6	25.3	30.0
Chester-le-Street	53	52.8	39.6	34.0	35.8	11.3	27.7
Easington	63	57.0	41.3	34.9	36.5	7.9	26.1
Durham City	79	44.3	32.9	31.6	25.3	15.2	24.2
Teesdale	50	40.0	44.0	20.0	22.0	24.0	24.2
No staff	234	45.7	30.3	22.2	27.4	14.5	18.0
Staff	199	62.3	55.8	47.7	40.2	27.1	41.2
1 to 4 staff	114	64.9	60.5	44.7	43.0	29.8	40.2
5 to 9 staff	45	57.8	51.1	48.9	40.0	26.7	44.4
10 or more staff	40	60.0	47.5	55.0	32.5	20.0	40.3

Notes

1. Some caution is required in interpreting the results for those sub-sets of organisations with low 'N' numbers.
2. The 'propensity' to access external support is an average taken across all 17 forms of support used in the survey.

Similar patterns emerge from table 2.5 concerning potential future access to external support as were found in relation to past access. Once again the pattern is remarkably consistent across the 17 categories of support. Organisations in Wear Valley, Derwentside and this time Sedgefield show a greater apparent 'propensity' to wish to access external support across the different forms of support. Once again organisations based in Durham City and Teesdale appear to be less inclined to wish to access external support in the future.

The differences between organisations with and without staff are both starker than across districts, and also in relation to potential future access than past access. Organisations without staff tend to indicate in much lower proportions than those with staff that they would like to access external support across the 17 forms of support. Overall organisations with staff are between 2 and 2½ times as likely to indicate a wish to access external support in the future as organisations without staff. Organisations with 5 to 9 staff are again the group most likely to wish to access external support as a whole, although there are only minor variations between organisations with different levels of staff.

Comparing past access with potential future access, it appears that overall, and in most categories of support, potential future access to external support is likely to be greater than past access. Organisations based in Wear Valley and Sedgefield, and those with 5 to 9 and 10 or more staff show the greatest increase between past use and potential future use.

Figures 2 and 3 illustrate the idea of differing propensities to use external support in the form of bar charts. The charts show the variation between respondents in different sets of circumstances in the extent to which they have accessed external support in the past (figure 2) or indicated that they might wish to access external support in the future (figure 3). The data is drawn from tables 2.4 and 2.5, with each bar representing the average 'propensity' taken across all 17 forms of external support.

The charts also include additional data, by breaking down the district results between organisations with or without staff. A degree of caution is required here, since this involves breaking the sample down into ever smaller sub-sets, in which minor variations in results appear more significant in percentage terms than they are in reality. However, this part of the analysis allows a first indication of whether variations across districts are related to variations between organisations with or without staff. In all districts organisations with staff are more likely to have accessed support in the past and to indicate a wish to access external support in the future than organisations without staff.

Organisations in Wear Valley, both with staff and without, show the highest tendency to wish to access external support in the future, with Derwentside following closely behind for both. Organisations based in Chester le Street and Sedgefield both with staff and without come next in the listing. Organisations with staff in Teesdale show a greater wish to access external support than might otherwise have been expected, whilst for those in Easington it is less than would have been expected.

Although we have outlined seemingly systematic variations between respondents in different circumstances as regards the extent to which they have or would like to access external support, we have yet to offer any explanations which might account for these differences.

This might have some bearing on how the development of infrastructure services are planned. For example, if the lower actual or potential use of external support by organisations without staff reflects less need exhibited amongst these organisations, it may be appropriate to focus the development on services to those organisations which are most likely to use them, namely those with staff. However, if it reflects issues around access and accessibility, then it may be more appropriate to develop services which try to reach out more to those organisations which currently tend not to access external support.

The shaded box following figures 2 and 3 indicates the range of explanations and theories which have been offered during the course of the research as ways to account for the variations we have noted. It is probable that no single theory could account for the differences. More likely several factors may be working in combination, or be relevant for different groups. Further work is currently being undertaken with the various data sources we have in order to understand which factors, or combinations of factors, might be more plausible than others.

Figure 2: Variations in 'propensity' to access external support in the past

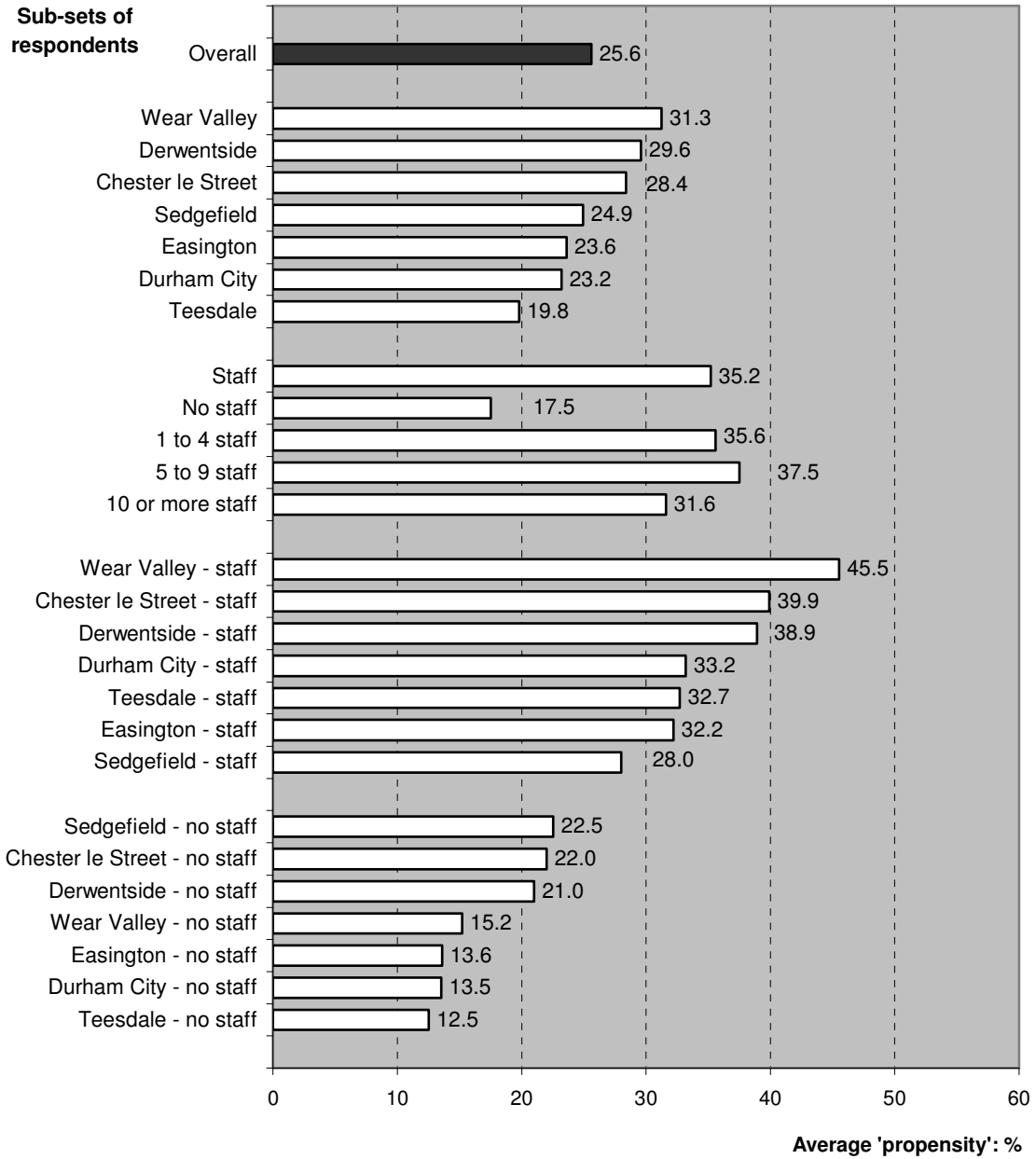
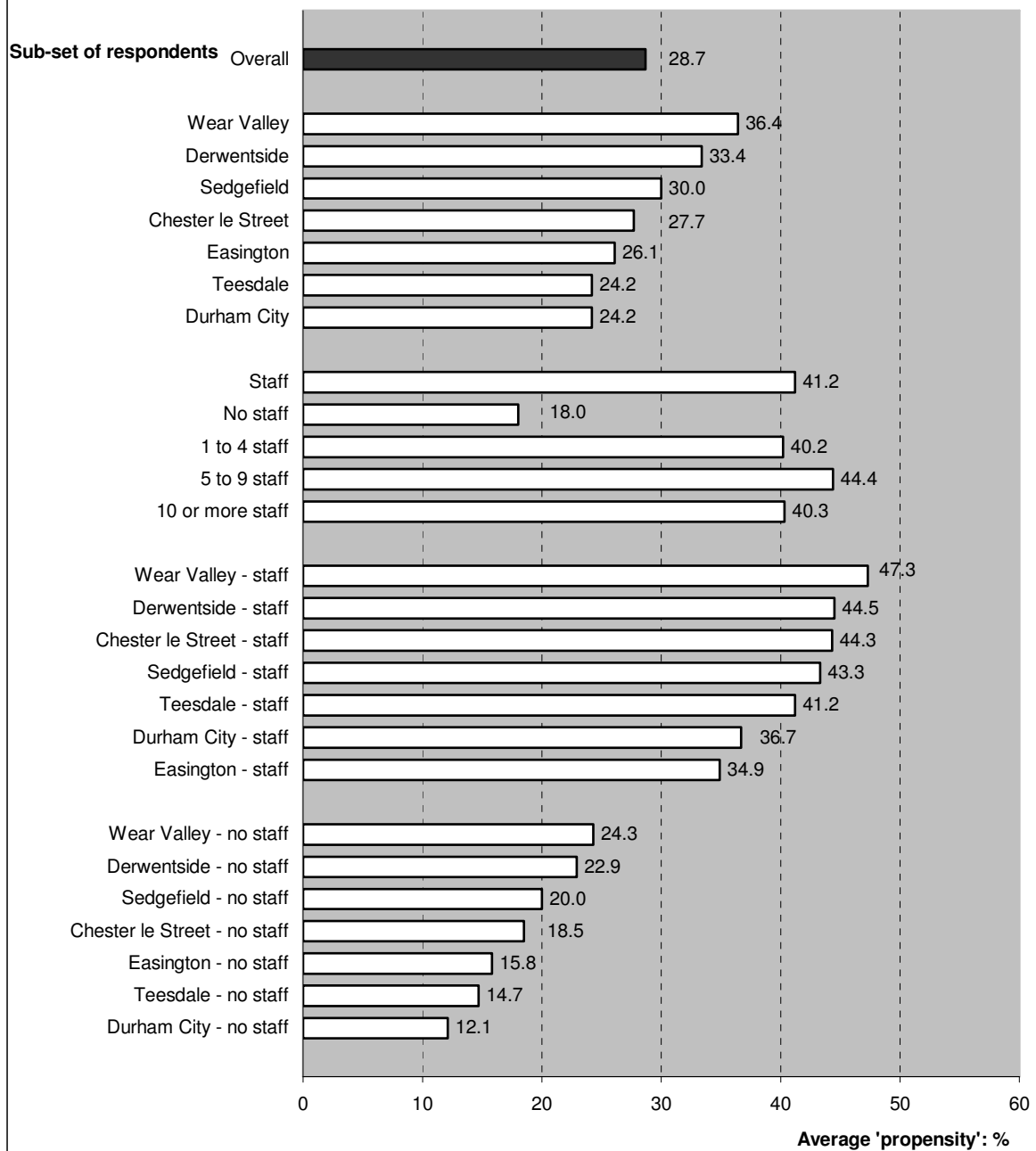


Figure 3: Variations in the 'propensity' to indicate a wish to use external support



Explaining variations in access to external support

1. Variations in 'need'

This explanation is partially offered in *'ChangeUp'* itself, and reflects a view of external support being required in different ways depending on stages in an organisational 'life-cycle'. Organisations without staff are likely to be at an early stage of development and may therefore not have the complex range of needs for which external support might be required. Organisations with staff are likely to face more challenging circumstances, including more complex funding regimes, and may therefore require external support across a broader range of issues. It is unlikely that organisations in different districts would have radically different needs for external support, although some in more deprived areas may require support in dealing with the complexity of targeted funding regimes.

2. Variations in organisational and individual 'capacity'

There are two aspects to this explanation. The first looks at 'need', and suggests that those organisations which have accessed or would wish to access external support need it more than others (see above). Those not accessing support may already have the 'capacity' to function without external support. As organisations get bigger, they may be able to use in-house resources more readily.

But there is a second aspect here. Those accessing external support may have more 'capacity' to access the support. This could be because they have the time to do so (and for staff it may be part of their expected role). In addition, some groups may have more of a sense of the importance of external support, recognise the need for it and know how to access it.

3. Variations in awareness of external support

Some organisations may be more aware of what is out there, or more tapped in to the networks of support that are available so may be better able to access external support, including knowing that it exists, and how it works.

4. Variations in availability, accessibility and quality of external support

In some places availability, accessibility and perhaps quality of external support will be different to others. This may explain why some access appears to differ. As part of an accessibility explanation it is possible that organisations providing external support are more geared to supporting organisations with staff.

5. Variations in survey response

Were respondents in organisations with staff, or in some districts, more likely to have understood the survey question, or more likely to claim to have used external support?

Given the numbers of respondents in the survey, this is unlikely to account for the systematic differences.

1.5 Priorities for external support

In order to obtain a sense of the priority among the 17 forms of support for each respondent (other than through counting how many groups had accessed, or would like to access, each form of support), we asked respondents which were the top three priorities amongst the 17 plus any additional areas raised by respondents themselves. Table 2.6 presents the results.

Table 2.6: the top priorities for external support

Of the areas where you would like to access support, which would you say are the top three priorities?

	Form of support	Priority			Score	%
		1st	2nd	3rd		
1	Funding information and advice	119	36	26	455	25.7
2	Attracting new members/users	38	28	22	192	10.8
3	Finding and keeping volunteers	34	36	18	192	10.8
4	Policies and procedures	15	24	19	112	6.3
5	Networking with others	12	18	31	103	5.8
6	Recruiting and retaining staff	13	18	13	88	5.0
7	Evaluating projects	12	11	25	83	4.7
8	Managing premises/equipment	13	14	7	74	4.2
9	Managing projects	12	13	11	73	4.1
10	Business/strategic planning	13	8	5	60	3.4
11	Developing new projects	4	12	21	57	3.2
12	Researching needs of users	5	12	12	51	2.9
13	Having your say	3	16	9	50	2.8
14	Managing money	7	4	3	32	1.8
15	Office Administration	5	5	2	27	1.5
16	Forming your group	4	4	2	22	1.2
17	Being open and accountable	3	3	3	18	1.0
	Others	15	15	9	84	4.7
	Total	327	277	238	1773	100.0

Notes

1. N=327, 106 respondents did not state any priorities
2. Each respondent was asked what they considered to be the 1st, 2nd or 3rd priorities for them.
3. The 'score' is a weighted sum of 1st priorities (x3), 2nd priorities (x2) and 3rd priorities (x1).
4. 'Others' include 'marketing and publicity', computer training and website design, and health and safety/hazard risk assessments

We asked for first, second and third priorities, and in order to come to a single assessment, the table weights the results by assigning 3 points for a first priority, 2 points for a second and 1 point for a third. The table is then rank ordered by the forms of support attracting the highest 'score'.

'Funding information and advice' emerges as the highest priority form of external support, attracting a score nearly 2½ times higher than the next highest. This was made up of more than 3 times the number of first priorities than any other category, more second priorities than any other category and the second highest category of third priorities. Beyond this 'attracting new members and users' and 'finding and keeping volunteers' were thought to be the next highest priority categories (both just above 10% of the total), followed by 'policies and procedures', 'networking with others' and 'recruiting and retaining staff'. The remaining categories of support each received under 5% of the total score.

Table 2.7 below indicates the extent to which priorities for external support vary across districts and between organisations with or without staff. The darkest shaded cells in the

table represent those priorities attracting 20% or more of the available 'points'. Medium shaded cells represent those priorities attracting between 10 and 20% of the available 'points', and the lightest shading represents those priorities attracting between 5 and 10% of the available 'points'.

Overall the scores and list of priorities are similar across sub-groups, particularly amongst those forms of external support considered to be the highest priorities. Amongst districts, Derwentside, Durham City and Sedgefield are closest to the overall picture, whilst Easington and Wear Valley's priority lists are least similar to the overall list. Organisations with staff appear to be closer to the overall picture of priorities than those without staff.

Once again 'funding information and advice' emerges as the highest priority across all sub-groups of respondents, attracting over 20% of the available points in all cases. The priority appears to be strongest in Wear Valley and Easington. External support around 'attracting new members/users' gains 10% or more of the available 'points' in all cases apart from Sedgefield, Wear Valley and amongst organisations with staff. 'Finding and keeping volunteers' gains 10% or more points in all cases except Chester le Street, Derwentside and Sedgefield. The only other example of a form of support attracting more than 10% of the total points available is in Teesdale, where 'networking with others' which gains 12.8% of the total available points.

Having considered the 'demand' for infrastructure support, the next section considers provision - the 'supply side'.

Table 2.7: The top priorities for external support, by district and staffing

Of the areas where you would like to access support, which would you say are the top three priorities?

		Score	Overall	Chester le Street	Derwentside	Durham City	Easington	Sedgefield	Teesdale	Wear Valley	No staff	Staff
Rank	Respondents stating priorities (N)	327	327	37	49	50	48	64	36	43	154	173
1	Funding information and advice	455	25.7	24.6	20.2	24.5	29.6	23.7	24.6	33.6	27.6	24.0
2	Attracting new members/users	192	10.8	13.8	13.7	10.2	13.1	8.8	10.7	6.4	14.1	8.2
3	Finding and keeping volunteers	192	10.8	7.7	8.7	14.7	10.4	9.6	11.2	13.6	11.3	10.4
4	Policies and procedures	112	6.3	7.2	5.1	5.7	5.0	9.0	7.5	4.3	4.7	7.6
5	Networking with others	103	5.8	6.2	4.0	4.5	3.1	8.2	12.8	3.0	5.3	6.2
6	Recruiting and retaining staff	88	5.0	4.1	6.1	6.8	4.6	5.6	2.1	3.8	1.6	7.7
7	Evaluating projects	83	4.7	9.2	2.9	3.4	6.9	5.4	3.7	1.7	3.7	5.5
8	Managing premises/equipment	74	4.2	3.6	6.1	1.9	1.9	7.3	2.1	4.3	5.1	3.4
9	Managing projects	73	4.1	1.5	8.3	4.9	7.3	1.7	2.1	2.1	5.2	3.2
10	Business/strategic planning	60	3.4	0.0	3.6	4.5	4.2	2.3	3.7	5.1	1.9	4.6
11	Developing new projects	57	3.2	2.6	4.0	3.8	1.2	2.5	4.3	4.7	3.0	3.4
12	Researching needs of users	51	2.9	3.1	2.5	3.0	3.1	4.5	1.1	1.7	2.0	3.6
13	Having your say	50	2.8	5.6	2.9	1.1	1.9	2.8	2.7	3.4	2.4	3.2
14	Managing money	32	1.8	1.0	2.2	2.3	2.3	2.5	1.1	0.4	1.2	2.3
15	Office Administration	27	1.5	1.0	1.8	1.5	0.4	2.3	2.7	0.9	2.9	0.4
16	Forming your group	22	1.2	1.5	1.1	1.1	1.2	0.6	0.0	3.4	1.0	1.4
17	Being open and accountable	18	1.0	1.5	0.7	1.1	2.7	0.8	0.0	0.0	1.7	0.4
	Others	84	4.7	5.6	6.1	4.9	1.2	2.3	7.5	7.7	5.2	4.3
	Total	1773	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	Sum of differences in ranks		NA	38	24	28	40	28	38	48	40	18

NB:

1. Other than the top and bottom rows, and the 'score' column, all figures are percentages, of the weighted 'score' for each individual form of external support (see table 2.6) as a percentage of the total scores available within each group of respondents.
2. The 'sum of differences in ranks' is a way of measuring how close the priorities of a particular sub-group are from the overall priorities. It is adding up the differences in ranks between the priorities indicated in each sub-group and those indicated overall.

Section 3.

The 'supply' of infrastructure support: what support is provided for voluntary organisations and community groups?

In section 2 we have examined at some length the main needs, wishes and priorities for external support raised by 'ordinary' voluntary organisations and community groups. This section looks at the 'supply side' - at what infrastructure is provided to meet the demand in County Durham.

There are many ways of differentiating between different forms of infrastructure provision. This could be, for example,

- by sector - support provided from within the voluntary and community sector itself, or through the public or private sectors
- by scale - support provided at neighbourhood, local, sub-regional, regional and national levels
- by focus - support which is a central function of an organisation, compared to more informal provision; specialist provision (for particular kinds of group or over specific forms of support) or generic provision.

In this section we will be mainly exploring infrastructure support provided from within the sector itself, and from within County Durham. However, where appropriate a description of other forms and scales of support is offered.

3.1 Voluntary and Community Sector infrastructure in County Durham: an overview

i. Primary Infrastructure Organisations - generic and specialist

In County Durham infrastructure support within the voluntary and community sector had for many years largely been the sole preserve of **Durham Rural Community Council (DRCC)**. DRCC has a long history dating back to the interwar depression, and during the 1990s expanded to take on new areas of work and new community development projects in both West and East Durham (most notably the large scale East Durham Community Development Initiative). Rural Development Programme resources, and other regeneration funds helped support district-based community development work, so that by the end of the 1990s its turnover had reached £1m per year. In addition, the '**Standing Conference of Voluntary Organisations**' (SCVO) and the '**Durham County Federation of Community Organisations**' (DCFCO) provided some support to community associations.

Alongside DRCC's expansion, other larger voluntary organisations have developed in specialist areas. Two **Groundwork Trusts** were established in the County, covering East Durham (established 1986) and West Durham (1992), specialising in landscape improvements, sustainable development projects and community-based environmental regeneration. The **Durham Co-operative Development Association** was established in 1989 after a two year pilot project. This organisation, which grew rapidly towards the end of the 1990s on the strength of growing policy interest in community economic development and community enterprise, specialised in the provision of support, services and projects in the social economy, including co-operatives and credit unions. However, under the increasing weight of retrospective funding regimes, it went into liquidation in

July 2001. The **County Durham Foundation** was established in 1995, specialising firstly in building an endowment fund from which small grants can be paid to community groups, and secondly in administering a number of small grants and 'community chest' regimes.

In the second half of the 1990s developments to establish a cross-organisational network were set in train to explore the benefits of collaborative work in the sector and to advance its interests as a whole. The '**One Voice Network**' (OVN) stresses that it should be seen as a network rather than an organisation in the usual sense, and was established after a groundbreaking conference in the winter of 1996 to 'unite voluntary and community groups across County Durham and Darlington by examining the practical benefits of working together'. OVN has a small secretariat managed by DRCC. Its work is organised through a steering group which meets bi-monthly and bi-annual conferences are also held to discuss issues of common concern in the voluntary sector. Significantly, the work of the One Voice Network has brought major developments to the work of the voluntary and community sectors, including the New Deal Voluntary Sector Option (with one of OVN's steering group members, DISC, being the lead agency), the successful development and eventual launch of the local Compact agreement for County Durham in October 2001, and finally the lead role in three phases of a large SRB5 programme to strengthen the role of the voluntary and community sectors in community regeneration throughout the County.

Research commissioned by OVN into the development needs of the voluntary and community sectors in the County set the stage for an action plan and an SRB5 funded programme of work to develop the sector. Among other things, the research called for greater clarity of roles and responsibilities between organisations in the voluntary and community sectors, which could be achieved through enhanced collaboration between local development agencies, beyond that already achieved in the One Voice Network. Lack of collaboration, based on short-term and competitive funding regimes, had created a situation of possible duplication, where end-users would be confused as to which organisation was responsible for what activities and services. The report recommended the development of a 'pact' or framework of understanding within the sector outlining roles and relationships between organisations to complement the Compact between the voluntary and statutory sectors. Three main strands of work are underway at the moment on this programme: a 'Voluntary Sector Academy' has been established to coordinate training and improve skill levels in the sector; a voluntary sector support and quality assurance project, now mainstreamed into the CVSs, and finally ongoing work to achieve the full development and implementation of the local Compact. Separately One Voice Network is seeking to use interactive Information Technology systems to develop specific issue-based 'communities of interest' for voluntary organisations and community groups. The latest of these, around the funding of village halls, has attracted national attention since the local Compact was invoked in an effort to resolve the issue.

The One Voice Network was also instrumental in the development of a full complement of district-based **Councils for Voluntary Service** in the County. Two phases of development work managed through OVN in each of the districts was significant in helping to complete the jigsaw of CVSs across the County. Taking a broad overview, CVS development in County Durham has taken place in roughly four stages:

1. 1966-1995: **Easington CVS** was established in 1966, and for most of the time subsequently has been the only CVS in the County.
2. 1996-1998: From 1996 three Volunteer Development Agencies were established in Wear Valley, Derwentside and Chester-le-Street with support from the Home Office 'Make a Difference' programme designed to encourage volunteering. These subsequently became Wear Valley Volunteer Development Agency; **Derwentside CVS and Volunteer Bureau** and **Chester le Street CVS and Volunteer Bureau**.

3. 1999-2000: Work throughout 1999-2000 in Sedgefield and Durham City, assisted by the One Voice Network, led to the establishment of CVSs in each district in the middle of 2000: **CAVOS** and **Durham City District CVS**.
4. 2001: Finally in 2001 the CVS/VB in Wear Valley has re-launched as '2D': a new organisation covering both Wear Valley and Teesdale.

Although the network is complete, it is somewhat fragile, and is built on relatively small funding from District and County Councils topped up with short term project funding. The more recent development from 2001 of **Community Empowerment Networks** in four of the districts has also added to the development of the County's infrastructure, but has strained relationships between the newly emerging CENs and the host CVSs. Two of the four CENs in County Durham (in Derwentside and Sedgefield) have recently moved out from the auspices of their respective CVSs to be hosted by other bodies. The need for a robustly managed accountable body for the CEN led to the demise of Easington CVS in 2002. The CVS has recently been re-established in the last 12 months, but the CEN is hosted by Groundwork East Durham. Further change took place in September 2001 when **Durham Association of Youth and Community Organisations (DAYCO)** was created from the amalgamation of the Standing Conference of Voluntary Organisations and the Durham County Federation of Community Organisations.

Until more recently, because there was only partial CVS coverage across the County, DRCC fulfilled many of the functions of a CVS, especially in those areas with no CVS or only newly emerging CVSs. From around 2000, as a result of the development of the CVS network, DRCC, like many other organisations, has sought to re-examine its focus and remit, reformulate strategic plans, and reorient its work in the light of the changing voluntary sector environment. Durham Rural Community Council and the CVSs participate in the '**CVS network**', which has been seeking to bring core infrastructure bodies together develop new services to plug gaps in infrastructure provision, such as the proposed 'Community Accountancy Service'. DRCC participates as a countywide member of NACVS.

In addition the County has a range of specialist capacity - for example through organisations such as **Age Concern Durham County**; **Durham and Darlington Race Equality Council**, and 'industry-specific' organisations such as **Centrepont**. In Teesdale the **Teesdale Village Halls Consortium** provides services and support to its member network of village halls.

ii. Secondary and Tertiary Infrastructure provision

Secondary infrastructure provision in County Durham consists of the potential capacity within neighbourhood and village-based community associations, village hall associations and community partnerships. There are a number of these which are seen within the County as beacons for community-based regeneration, for example in Craghead, Delves Lane, Tow Law, Cornforth, Trimdon and Wheatley Hill. Typically these have involved sustained investments in community-based regeneration over a period of 5 to 10 years, such that 'capacity' has arguably been developed quite strongly. As a result there is a cohort of community activists and development workers who have a 'story to tell' about the approaches they have taken to community-based regeneration and the lessons they have learnt. There may be potential to draw upon the experiences and skills involved amongst those heavily involved in refurbishing buildings and developing a range of projects and initiatives in their villages.

Tertiary infrastructure provision comes primarily in the form of dedicated units and staff within Durham County Council (for example the Community Support Division, established in 2000 to coincide with the formation of cabinet government within Durham County Council)

and within each district council. Whilst the former is relatively securely funded through a mainstream council budget, the latter typically have been funded through the Single Regeneration Budget and Neighbourhood Renewal Funding. For example, Durham City has the large scale 12-village SRB6 Community Development programme; Wear Valley and Derwentside each employ a number of capacity building workers, and in Easington there is a community development team. In addition there are a number of private consultants operating in the County, offering services around training, research and consultation, project management and mentoring. Some private firms also offer direct support to the sector, for example accountants specialising in charity finance.

3.2 Sources of support for voluntary organisations and community groups

The remaining part of this section examines in some depth data from the extensive survey undertaken as part of the 'early spend' project. The survey asked respondents to indicate where they might go for external support. Respondents could name multiple sources, and overall the 363 respondent organisations answering this question cited 716 places where they might typically go for support, averaging 1.97 sources of support. This average figure varies somewhat for organisations in different circumstances. Those based in Wear Valley, for example, tended to cite more sources of support (2.23) compared to those based in Chester le Street at the other end of the spectrum (1.75). This might imply that there is a narrower range of suppliers in Chester le Street, or that more organisations based there have a preferred provider of support. Organisations with staff cited more sources of support (average 2.24) than those without staff (average 1.73). Table 3.1 lists the most commonly cited forms of support.

The most striking thing about the response is the sheer range of places organisations might go for support. In addition to the 28 sources listed here, another 97 sources were cited, such as, for example, the Countryside Agency, One North-East, Arts Council, local partnerships, newspapers and the library. Councils for Voluntary Service emerge as the most frequently cited single source of support, by just under 50% of those answering this question. This was followed by the County Council and District Councils, funding organisations and regional and national offices.

Of course this is only a crude picture of the overall situation. The survey question here asked only where respondents might go for external support across a range of (17) categories, and asked respondents to cite a list of places, rather than to detail where they went, what they went for, how frequently and how intensive the support offered was. This kind of detail would be required before a full analysis of the composition of the overall 'market' for external support could be offered.

Table 3.1: Sources of support in general for voluntary organisations and community groups

Thinking about the issues we have been talking about, where might you go for support in these areas?

Source of support	f	%
Councils for Voluntary Service (CVS)	169	46.6
One Voice Network	17	4.7
DRCC	29	8.0
Teesdale Village Halls Consortium	9	2.5
Groundwork	6	1.7
DAYCO	6	1.7
Other local voluntary organisations	23	6.3
VONNE	4	1.1
Other regional voluntary organisations	7	1.9
Other national voluntary organisations	14	3.9
Regional/National office	46	12.7
Church organisations	8	2.2
Sports organisations	8	2.2
Charity Commission	8	2.2
Funders, of which:-	46	12.7
<i>County Durham Foundation</i>	9	2.5
<i>Big Lottery/Community Fund/Awards for All</i>	16	4.4
<i>Northern Rock Foundation</i>	11	3.0
District Council	68	18.7
County Council	69	19.0
Parish and Town council	9	2.5
Health services and professionals	11	3.0
Colleges	7	1.9
Sure Start	6	1.7
Early Years Partnership	9	2.5
Business Link	6	1.7
Business Development Agencies	6	1.7
Local company	6	1.7
Consultants	8	2.2
Professional expertise - accountants and solicitors	7	1.9
Internet	7	1.9
Others	97	26.7
Don't know	32	8.8

NB1: N=363; percentages are out of 363.

NB2: Percentages do not total 100% as multiple answers were possible

Table 3.2 below takes the most frequently cited single source of support, Councils for Voluntary Service, and examines the profile of organisations which indicated that the CVS might be somewhere they would go for help on the range of 17 forms of external support.

Overall about 47% of respondents indicated that might go to the CVS for help on the range of forms of support, but this varies in different districts, from 37.7% and 41.4% respectively in Derwentside and Durham City, to 61% in Wear Valley and 63% in Chester le Street. Meanwhile 51.1% of organisations with staff indicated that they might go to CVS for help, whereas only 42.3% of organisations without staff might go to CVS. This may be a reflection of the profile and extent of CVS services in each district, or of its reputation and the quality of its services, or it may reflect the existence of a number of alternative suppliers within a district.

Table 3.2: Using Councils for Voluntary Service as a source of support

	A. Number citing CVS as a source of support	B. Number citing any sources of support	% A out of B
Overall	169	363	46.6
Chester le Street	25	40	62.5
Derwentside	20	53	37.7
Durham City	24	58	41.4
Easington	21	50	42.0
Sedgefield	30	70	42.9
Teesdale	23	49	46.9
Wear Valley	26	43	60.5
No staff	80	189	42.3
Staff	89	174	51.1

3.2 The usefulness and accessibility of external support

The survey asked respondents to consider how they would rate the usefulness of the external support they may have received in the past, on a scale from 1 to 4. Table 3.3 presents the overall results. Overall nearly 90% of respondents considered that the external support they had received in the past was either very useful or useful.

Table 3.3: The usefulness of external support

Thinking of the help you have received in the past, how useful would you say this has been using a scale of 1 to 4 with 1 being very useful and 4 being not very useful?

Usefulness	Freq.	%
1	193	58.0
2	102	30.6
3	32	9.6
4	6	1.8
Valid	333	100.0
No answer	100	
Total	433	

NB: The question refers to the usefulness of external support overall, not the usefulness of a particular provider

There are some variations between organisations based in different districts, and between those with staff and without staff, as illustrated in Table 3.4 below. However, these are relatively minor compared to the overall picture. Organisations based in Derwentside, Wear Valley and Chester le Street appear to be more satisfied with the usefulness of external support received in the past than those in based in Durham City, Easington and Sedgefield. Organisations with staff tend to be slightly more satisfied with the usefulness of external support than those without.

Table 3.4: The usefulness of external support - by district and staffing

Thinking of the help you have received in the past, how useful would you say this has been using a scale of 1 to 4 with 1 being very useful and 4 being not very useful?

	N	1+2	3+4
Overall	333	88.6	11.4
Chester le Street	41	92.7	7.3
Derwentside	48	93.8	6.3
Durham City	48	85.4	14.6
Easington	47	85.1	14.9
Sedgefield	69	84.1	15.9
Teesdale	36	88.9	11.1
Wear Valley	44	93.2	6.8
No staff	160	86.3	13.8
Staff	173	90.8	9.2

NB: The question refers to the usefulness of external support overall, not the usefulness of a particular provider

This pattern, of organisations with staff being happier with the usefulness of external support than those without staff, runs through each of the districts apart from in Wear Valley and Teesdale, where marginally more organisations without staff than those with staff are happier with the usefulness of external support. The highest proportion of organisations who appear to be satisfied with the usefulness of external support are those based in Easington with staff. However, at the same time, the lowest proportion of organisations satisfied with external support appears to be those based in Easington without staff⁵.

A representative selection of the comments made by those who regarded external support as useful and not so useful are listed respectively in tables 3.5 and 3.6 below. Key themes in the usefulness of external support appear to be accessibility and the sense of being ‘pointed in the right direction’ when faced with a problem. For those less satisfied, issues raised include the patchiness, relevance and clarity of support.

Table 3.5: Comments on the usefulness of external support (1)

Usefulness	Comment
1	<i>All been excellent help</i>
1	<i>Always been very happy with wherever I've gone and pointed me in the right direction</i>
1	<i>Always had a good report with them we get what we've asked for nine times out of ten</i>
1	<i>Always on end of phone e mail usually give answers needed if not signpost us in right direction</i>
1	<i>Because help was provided locally</i>
1	<i>Because of the excellent quality of content and presentation</i>
1	<i>Because they always come up with the right answers</i>
1	<i>Been very helpful in the up and running of our organisation</i>
1	<i>Brought results - CVS</i>
1	<i>Charity commission -registered charity number - very helpful guiding through process</i>
1	<i>Couldn't have done it without this</i>
1	<i>Council has been very useful</i>
1	<i>CVS - Easy to access; efficient and effective</i>
1	<i>CVS are there for you all the time, especially the development worker</i>
1	<i>Excellent help in the past good response</i>
1	<i>Gave direction and focus</i>

⁵ Some caution is required in the analysis of organisations with or without staff in each of the districts, since the numbers in each sub-set become quite low, and are therefore more prone to bias or rogue results.

1	<i>Gives practical examples to gain access to funding</i>
1	<i>Got right advice when needed. Got answers in reasonable amount of time</i>
1	<i>Got what we wanted to achieve our goals</i>
1	<i>Group setting up information is good</i>
1	<i>It was great. Gave good training and we did learn</i>
1	<i>Knowing advice is accessible</i>
1	<i>Opened our minds to other things and what we do we might be able to do better</i>
1	<i>Pointed us in the right direction and gave relevant details to contact others</i>
1	<i>Policies and procedures very helpful - Independent consultant. Funding information good - CVS</i>
1	<i>Signposting to other organisations. Very helpful</i>
1	<i>Somebody else's perspective</i>
1	<i>Tap in on experience and expertise of others</i>
1	<i>Visit from regional co-ordinator - put us in touch with other people. We don't feel so isolated</i>
1	<i>Without help we would not have been able to get off the ground</i>
1	<i>Without this help we would have ceased to function</i>
1	<i>Would not have known how to run the organisation without the training received</i>
2	<i>Accurate information given</i>
2	<i>Because there is a good choice of different organisations who are all very comprehensive</i>
2	<i>Business planning, funding bid - help received was useful</i>
2	<i>Gave good advice on different avenues to take</i>
2	<i>Helped us to set up and get on track for bigger projects</i>
2	<i>Most been very helpful</i>
2	<i>Often useful as a pointer</i>
2	<i>Quite difficult to find people to talk to. Networking has proved useful</i>
2	<i>Tend to be interested after a while no follow up</i>
2	<i>The quality of consultants is variable - some good, some not so good</i>

Table 3.6: Comments on the usefulness of external support (2)

Usefulness	Comment
3	<i>Don't seem to be very constructive; float in and out</i>
3	<i>Don't seem to get anywhere, just not helpful generally</i>
3	<i>Feel we could have done just the same on our own</i>
3	<i>Help has been either very good or very bad</i>
3	<i>Help received not relevant RE: Networking</i>
3	<i>Ideas that we are unable to carry out at the moment very frustrating</i>
3	<i>If you live in an affluent area and your 'face fits' then help is available; if not, there is not much help</i>
3	<i>Just got lists of people, and we were left on our own</i>
3	<i>Libraries are a little behind with information</i>
3	<i>More geared to new personnel. Lot of training not applicable my level of experience</i>
3	<i>Not a high priority charity</i>
3	<i>Not a lot they can do</i>
3	<i>Not clear enough</i>
3	<i>People have problems with "faith" organisations</i>
3	<i>Some areas excellent, some poor</i>
4	<i>Can't identify with my organisation</i>
4	<i>CVS - Not been able to help us</i>
4	<i>Didn't get the grant</i>
4	<i>No support at all</i>

Tables 3.7 to 3.9 provide an insight into how accessible external support is thought to be by respondents. Overall just under 19% of respondents indicate that they do not require external support. Around 41% of respondents indicate that there are no barriers to accessing external support. However, some 173 respondents (40.1%) cited at least one barrier to accessing external support in the past. A breakdown by district and by organisations with and without staff is indicated in table 3.7. Organisations based in Derwentside and Easington are most likely to cite at least one barrier to access, whereas

those in Durham City, Teesdale and Chester le Street seem least likely. Organisations with staff are more likely to cite at least one barrier compared with those without staff.

Table 3.7: Barriers to access to external support - overall, by district and by staffing

		Not needed	No barriers	Barriers
	N	%	%	%
Chester-le-Street	53	20.8	41.5	37.7
Derwentside	58	17.2	32.8	50.0
Durham City	79	26.6	43.0	30.4
Easington	63	14.3	38.1	47.6
Sedgefield	77	9.1	49.4	41.6
Teesdale	50	26.0	38.0	36.0
Wear Valley	51	17.6	43.1	39.2
No staff	232	28.0	40.9	31.0
Staff	199	7.5	41.7	50.8
Total	431	18.6	41.3	40.1

NB: N=431; Don't know/No answer=2

As table 3.8 indicates, the main issues preventing or limiting access appear to be around awareness; availability; cost; time and a lack of volunteers or interest in accessing support. Some of the barriers cited by respondents are listed in table 3.9.

Table 3.8: Barriers to access to external support

What, if anything, has prevented or limited your organisation from accessing support in the past?

Barriers to access	Total	%
Don't know where to go	44	10.2
No support available locally	11	2.5
Too expensive	24	5.5
Time	26	6.0
Lack of volunteers; small group; apathy	8	1.8
Other	79	18.2
Nothing	178	41.1
No external support needed	80	18.5

NB: N=433; percentages are each out of 433. Percentages do not total 100% as multiple answers were possible

Table 3.9: What prevents or limits organisations accessing external support?

Barriers to access
<i>Always the same people attending meetings, etc. Only 1 or 2 doing all the work, others not so committed</i>
<i>Awareness</i>
<i>Capacity and lack of enthusiasm within the group bit jaded now 10 years on</i>
<i>Committee members very elderly/don't drive/no one willing to attend meetings, etc.</i>
<i>Don't know what's available</i>
<i>Everything seems to be geared towards charities and community groups</i>
<i>Finding the right organisation for the right project</i>
<i>Geography. Lack of outside knowledge</i>
<i>Haven't got the time due to lack of staff or volunteers</i>
<i>Having an effective committee</i>
<i>Insufficient knowledge of sector</i>
<i>Knowing where to go</i>

Lack of knowledge of what was out there
Lack of knowledge of where to go
Lack of manpower within our organisation & lack of time and physical well-being
Lots of in-house experience ourselves
Low intake / small group
Mobility of group members to move forward
Money is tight and not easy to find enough
No one to spend time on researching
Not enough other people prepared to volunteer
Not sure skill of people giving advice
People not getting back to us when they say they will
People too busy to go
Physical and financial resource
So small an organisation
Staff time is limited
Standard of support offered
The times of the training is not always convenient
The value of the external support
Time - to meet people that we should be meeting
Transportation
We feel discriminated against, because we are a church

3.3: Who provides infrastructure support?

Each respondent in the survey was asked whether they themselves offer support to other voluntary and community organisations. Table 3.10 below indicates the response.

Table 3.10: Infrastructure provision - survey results and County estimates

Does your organisation offer advice, training or support services to other voluntary and community organisations and/or other branches of your organisation?

	Survey		County estimate
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency
yes	130	30.0	380
no	303	70.0	949
Total	433	100.0	1329

NB: the County estimate is weighted

Just under one third of organisations say they offer advice, training and support services. This may represent around 380 organisations in County Durham. This finding is somewhat unexpected, and opens up the possibility that external infrastructure support is offered by a much wider range of organisations than perhaps traditionally assumed. It is also possible that some respondents may *claim* to offer advice and support, but their capacity to do so is limited, or the offer is only a relatively marginal aspect of their activities.

Table 3.11 examines the distribution of these organisations by district and in terms of staffing. The district picture offers a first look at whether there might be gaps in infrastructure provision. Higher proportions of organisations based in Derwentside (two-fifths), and lower proportions based in Teesdale (one fifth), indicate that they offer advice and support. Organisations without staff are much less likely to say they offer advice and support (15.8%), than those with staff (between two fifths and three fifths). Overall just over half of organisations offering advice and support have between 1 and 10 staff.

Table 3.11: Infrastructure provision by district and staffing

Does your organisation offer advice, training or support services to other voluntary and community organisations and/or other branches of your organisation?

	Organisations in the survey overall	% offering advice (of survey)	County estimate offering advice	% offering advice (of estimated total)
Chester-le-street	53	30.2	50	13.1
Derwentside	58	39.7	70	18.4
Durham	79	26.6	60	15.7
Easington	63	30.2	55	14.4
Sedgefield	79	31.6	69	18.1
Teesdale	50	20.0	29	7.6
Wear Valley	51	31.4	48	12.6
Total	433	30.0	381	100.0
No staff	234	15.8	121	31.8
1 to 4	114	40.4	142	37.4
5 to 9	45	60.0	68	17.9
10 or more	40	50.0	49	12.9
Total	433	30.0	380	100.0

NB1: the estimated figures are weighted

NB2: the first column of percentages is a 'row percentage', the second column of percentages is a 'column percentage'.

NB3: the district classification is where organisations are based, rather than in which districts they operate

As well as looking where organisations are based, it is also appropriate to consider their coverage in terms of the districts in which they operate. Of the 130 organisations in the survey which indicate that they offer advice and support, 73% (95 cases) operate in only 1 of the 7 districts, compared to 27% in more than one district. Of these 20 organisations (15%) operate in between 2 and 6 districts, and 15 organisations (12%) operate in all 7 districts. Forty-two percent of the 130 organisations are active in Durham City, 29% in Sedgefield, 27% respectively in Easington and Derwentside, 25% respectively in Wear Valley and Chester le Street, and finally 24% are active in Teesdale. The higher proportion in Durham City reflects in part the tendency of many countywide organisations to have a base in the City of Durham itself.

The survey also asked what forms of support were offered to other voluntary organisations and community groups. Table 3.12 below illustrates over how many of the 17 forms support is offered. Do organisations who offer support offer it across a broad or narrow range of categories?

Just under a half of organisations who offer support do so in 2 areas or less, three-fifths of cases offer support in 5 areas or less, and only a quarter of cases (33) offer support in 10 areas or more. The impression is that very few organisations offer support over a wide range of areas, and most takes place over a limited range. In addition, there does not appear to be a relationship between the number of districts covered by an organisation providing infrastructure support, and the number of forms of support provided. The fifteen organisations active across all 7 districts do not as a whole tend to offer support in a wider range of categories.

Table 3.12: Infrastructure provision - narrow or broad?

Forms of support	Frequency	Percent (of n= 433)	Percent (of n=130)	Cumulative Percent
0	28	6.5	21.5	21.5
1	20	4.6	15.4	36.9
2	13	3.0	10.0	46.9
3	8	1.8	6.2	53.1
4	6	1.4	4.6	57.7
5	3	0.7	2.3	60.0
6	4	0.9	3.1	63.1
7	6	1.4	4.6	67.7
8	6	1.4	4.6	72.3
9	3	0.7	2.3	74.6
10	4	0.9	3.1	77.7
11	6	1.4	4.6	82.3
12	2	0.5	1.5	83.8
13	2	0.5	1.5	85.4
14	3	0.7	2.3	87.7
15	4	0.9	3.1	90.8
16	0	0.0	0.0	90.8
17	12	2.8	9.2	100.0
Total	130	30.0	100.0	

NB: The 28 organisations who say they offer support in none of the 17 forms of support used in the survey refer to support offered in other areas.

Table 3.13 below indicates what proportion of organisations offer support in each of the 17 different forms of support. This might offer further information over the extent to which there might be gaps in provision.

None of the 17 forms of support is offered by more than half of the organisations who say they offer support, and on average (across the 17 forms of support), 42 organisations (32%) offer support per category. The forms of support offered by most organisations are: 'forming your group', 'managing projects', 'networking with others' and 'funding information and advice'. Those areas with the lowest numbers of potential providers are 'managing money' and 'managing premises/equipment'.

Support is most frequently offered to 'any voluntary organisation' or 'any organisation' across all 17 forms of support, averaging 70% of organisations offering support. More restricted support - to 'internal branches/departments' or to specific types of voluntary organisation only - features in lower proportions, averaging 30% across the 17 categories. However, in four areas ('attracting new members/users', 'networking with others', 'having your say' and 'recruiting and retaining staff'), support appears to be more 'restrictive' than usual. Separate analysis across districts suggests that there are broadly comparable numbers of organisations offering support in each of the districts across all 17 forms of support. Once again, Durham City has slightly higher numbers of organisations offering support across each of the categories than the other districts.

Table 3.13: Support in what areas? And who is it provided for?

		Do you offer support in these areas?			Who to?					
					A: Internal branches	B: Specific vol-orgs	C: Any vol-org	D: Any org	A+B	C+D
	Form of support	Freq.	% (out of 130)	% (out of 433)	Frequency				%	
1	Forming your group	60	46.2	13.9	4	13	20	23	28.3	71.7
2	Managing projects	59	45.4	13.6	4	14	16	25	30.5	69.5
3	Networking with others	58	44.6	13.4	5	17	15	21	37.9	62.1
4	Funding information and advice	57	43.8	13.2	1	15	19	22	28.1	71.9
5	Finding and keeping volunteers	50	38.5	11.5	6	10	14	20	32.0	68.0
6	Policies and procedures	45	34.6	10.4	3	10	13	19	28.9	71.1
7	Attracting new members/users	42	32.3	9.7	6	11	10	15	40.5	59.5
8	Having your say	41	31.5	9.5	3	12	11	15	36.6	63.4
9	Being open and accountable	39	30.0	9.0	2	10	12	15	30.8	69.2
10	Developing new projects	38	29.2	8.8	3	7	10	17	27.0	73.0
11	Recruiting and retaining staff	38	29.2	8.8	3	10	11	14	34.2	65.8
12	Researching needs of users	36	27.7	8.3	3	8	9	15	31.4	68.6
13	Business/strategic planning	35	26.9	8.1	3	7	12	13	28.6	71.4
14	Office Administration	35	26.9	8.1	1	6	12	15	20.6	79.4
15	Evaluating projects	34	26.2	7.9	4	4	9	15	25.0	75.0
16	Managing money	26	20.0	6.0	1	4	6	15	19.2	80.8
17	Managing premises/equipment	19	14.6	4.4	0	2	6	11	10.5	89.5
18	Other	57	NA	NA	2	12	20	23	24.6	75.4

NB1: the first column of frequencies shows the number of surveyed organisations which offer support in each of the 17 areas.
 NB2: the second set of frequencies indicate the number of organisations offering support, in each of the forms of support, for different types of client.

NB3: A (internal branches) and B (specific vol-orgs) can be thought of as 'restricted support', whilst C (any vol-org) and D (any org) can be thought of as more open-ended. The last two columns indicate the relative proportions of support in each category which can be regarded as restricted or open-ended. The shaded cells represent those forms of support with the highest proportion of 'restricted support'.

For each of the 17 forms of support offered, and any others which respondents raised themselves, the survey also asked what that support involved. Unfortunately, the answers to this question were not particularly illuminating in many cases. A large number of respondents repeated the same answer in respect of each form of support they offered. For example, one case answered 'supply advice as necessary' to all 17 forms of support.

For each respondent, the answers to this question provide an initial indication of the kind of support offered. For example, it is possible to distinguish between cases:

- whose offer of support tends to involve signposting groups to other organisations
- could offer support if asked (referring perhaps to having the skills, experience or training at hand, as opposed to actually offering that support as a matter of course)
- offered informal support, based on sharing their own experience, to groups as part of personal or local networks, or
- offer support (over a wide or narrow range of areas) as part of the organisation's main function

This provides an indication that the 130 respondents who might claim to offer advice and support to others might do so to varying extents and in different ways. For example 37 of the 130 have no staff, and therefore the support offered to others occurs entirely on a voluntary basis. To explore this further, semi-structured interviews were undertaken with a selection of potential infrastructure providers (see Appendix for details).

Section 4.

Improving infrastructure support: gaps and duplication

This section looks beyond the separate analysis of the demand for and supply of infrastructure support, and attempts to draw them together, by considering in turn gaps in provision, suggestions for improvement made by infrastructure users, in particular around duplication and the potential for collaboration between infrastructure providers.

4.1 Comparing demand and supply: where are the gaps?

We have already seen in section 2 where demand for external support might be highest:

- around issues relating to ‘funding information and advice’, ‘networking with others’, ‘finding and keeping volunteers’, ‘attracting new members and users’ and ‘forming your group’;
- in some districts more than others⁶
- for some kinds of organisation rather than others.

By ‘highest’ we mean only in terms of numbers of organisations which might seek support. We do not have much information about the nature and intensity of the support they would be seeking. Is merely accessing support in terms of one-off requests for specific information or advice, or is it likely to involve more intense support offered over a prolonged period of time over a number of issues dealt with in-depth? It is not clear whether any research has attempted to map the scale *and* intensity of demand over a large geographical scale. We do not have much evidence about this, other than in the consultation workshops where some participants indicated the need for ‘hands on’ one-to-one support.

Our analysis of the supply of external support is less well developed. We have a sense of how many organisations say they provide external support across a range of issues, but not sufficiently robust information about the capacity to provide external support. Once again though the information we have is in terms of the number of organisations, rather than what that support entails, i.e. over how long and to what degree of intensity. As a result, the research exercise in County Durham has only been able to make a start on the complex process of analysing provision, and therefore we have a much less clear view of the map of provision.

Furthermore, leaving aside the aspects of supply and demand we do not particularly know much about, analysing gaps in infrastructure provision is even more problematic when the nature of ‘gaps’ is considered further. There are potentially **three types of gap in infrastructure provision**:

1. provision gaps: there is either minimal or no provision at all
2. capacity gap: there is some provision, but it is overstretched

⁶ Although it must be noted that our analysis has been framed in terms of rates of access to external support (i.e. *percentages* of respondents) rather than aggregate estimates of organisations seeking external within each district. Overall demand in a district with a lower rate of potential access might, for example, be higher than in one with a higher rate of potential access if it has a larger voluntary and community sector.

3. quality gaps: there is some provision, but it is of poor quality, ineffective, or otherwise inappropriate or irrelevant to users

To add to the complexity, there are potentially **four dimensions of infrastructure provision** in which gaps may occur:

4. gaps in provision of specific forms of support
5. gaps in provision for certain groups
6. gaps in provision in certain areas or places (e.g. rural-urban differences and specific places not well served by infrastructure)
7. gaps in provision over time (e.g. where provision fluctuates over time as projects come and go in the context of short term funding regimes).

Clearly many of these gaps feed into each other, most obviously where overstretched provision leads to poor quality. In addition, all of these seven aspects may occur in a complex range of different combinations. This means that identifying gaps in anything other than a rudimentary way has been impossible in the terms of the research study, and further work on this amongst infrastructure agencies is clearly needed.

Table 4.1 indicates a provisional assessment of where gaps may be occurring in infrastructure support. This offers a simple assessment in terms of individual types/dimensions rather than trying to combine them. Because they cross-over, numbers 1 and 4 have been put together. This assessment is only the author's reflection based on the responses to the various research activities undertaken in this study, namely the survey, consultation events and interviews with providers. As such it is only one view, and should be treated as a point of departure for further discussion amongst infrastructure providers and others, rather than an authoritative statement of gaps.

Table 4.1 Gaps in infrastructure support - a provisional assessment

Type/dimension of gap	Provisional assessment
1. Provision gaps 4. Gaps in forms of support	Overall County Durham appears to lack coherent support in terms of 'managing money' (i.e. community accountancy/financial management); support on complex legal issues, including employment law; and in some places, in terms of support to develop Business Plans
2. Capacity gaps	Most respondents in the interviews with providers expressed the view that they were overstretched in some, if not all, areas of work. For some providers this was a more serious concern than others.
3. Quality gaps	<p>Amongst some participants in the survey and consultation events, critical comments were occasionally made about the quality and/or appropriateness of support. Yet most survey respondents rated the usefulness of external support overall quite highly, and appeared to be reasonably satisfied.</p> <p>On the other hand, amongst providers, critical comments were quite frequently made about the quality of service provided either by other agencies or the work of individual members of staff. Evidence to support claims for the lack of quality of other providers was usually anecdotal, relating to comments made by users who had tried one organisation after being dissatisfied with another. Clearly this has to be framed in the context of inter-organisational competition for resources, position and reputation, as well as occasional inter-personal animosity. There does not appear to have been any systematic attempt to assess the quality, effectiveness and appropriateness of external support across a number of agencies in County Durham. This is partly because the kinds of comparable benchmarks and frameworks are only just being developed now.</p>

	<p>Several interviewees noted the lack of basic community development/community work skills training amongst infrastructure staff and development workers.</p> <p>The existence of capacity gaps has meant that in some cases the support offered is somewhat 'thinner' than infrastructure providers would like. Managing high caseloads implies that the deeper and long term 'hand-holding' support, including proactive work, could not take place. Also, rather than refer users elsewhere if they were over-stretched, infrastructure agencies appear mainly to absorb the problem of under-capacity by having longer waiting lists or staff working excess hours.</p>
5. Gaps for certain groups	<p>Mention was made in several interviews that certain groups, or organisations representing certain groups, were not particularly well catered for. Examples include Black and Minority Ethnic groups, traveller communities and faith-based groups.</p> <p>Separately, it was thought that the smallest and newest groups were often 'out of sight' of infrastructure provision. One explanation for the lower past and potential future access indicated by organisations without staff could be that infrastructure providers are not well-equipped to work with informal and volunteer-only groups, although other explanations are possible.</p> <p>Lastly some of the larger respondents in the survey, including some infrastructure providers themselves, noted a lack of expert advice and support for larger organisations, around for example professional support or mentoring for senior staff.</p>
6. Gaps in particular places	<p>Infrastructure providers were asked about geographical gaps in provision within their area of benefit. Most thought there was adequate coverage, but historically, the location of, for example, CVSs in certain parts of their districts rather than others (e.g. Stanley not Consett; Peterlee not Seaham etc) is said to have privileged those areas where the CVSs are physically located. This may be more a matter of perception rather than reality, although it is not clear how systematic monitoring data is in terms of geography. In some cases, because infrastructure provision has only just been established in an area, it may take some time before such gaps are overcome.</p> <p>Interviewees, and some participants in the survey, raised the question of whether provision was adequate for organisations in isolated rural areas.</p> <p>Lastly, it was noted that much infrastructure work follows geographically the targeting of specific deprived areas for funding, either because an infrastructure agency may obtain funds for targeted work in some communities rather than others, or because groups might be more likely to seek support around funding advice if there is local regeneration funding available. This was said to have a knock-on impact on groups located in non-deprived areas.</p>
7. Gaps in provision over time	<p>The patchiness of provision over time was raised as a cause for concern in several interviews. Not only was this thought to be inefficient (a three year project takes up to a year to get going, a year of fully effective work and then the last six months winding down as employed staff seek further funding or a job elsewhere), it led to disillusion amongst those actively involved in community groups and voluntary organisations.</p> <p>Several of the infrastructure providers were also at some risk of losing staff and withdrawing services in the near future unless further funding was secured.</p>

Since this is based on the reflections of one researcher, it is perhaps more appropriate to consider what respondents and participants considered to be the biggest gaps or main areas where improvements could be made.

4.2 Gaps and suggestions for improving external support

Asked about gaps and areas of potential improvement, respondents referred to two main types of issue, although a wide range of other gaps/improvements were noted in much smaller numbers.

Unsurprisingly, given the findings discussed in section 3, funding issues predominate. Of the 254 separate responses to this question, 77 mention funding, although many cite the lack of funding as a problem, rather than ‘funding information and advice’ necessarily being a gap in terms of support. This was followed by a cluster of comments and thoughts relating to information, knowing where to go for support and duplication (46 responses). Mentions were also made in lower numbers of gaps/suggestions for improvement in terms of support for, for example:

- marketing,
- volunteers/volunteering
- networking,
- business and strategic planning,
- difficulties with premises,
- I.T. support,
- Disability access, and
- wider policy, strategic and campaigning work to raise awareness and change the conditions in which respondents operate.

Tables 4.2 and 4.3 provide some illustrations of the kinds of response to this question in relation to funding (table 4.2) and information-duplication (table 4.3). On funding there are some issues around finding out where to go and who to contact, as well as difficulties with the complexity of forms. Because the funding system can be so complex, it appears that some respondents struggle with making time available for preparing funding applications.

Table 4.2: Gaps and areas for improvement in external support - funding

*Do you have any views on what are the biggest gaps or areas for improvement in support provided for groups like yours in County Durham?
If Yes please list ideas on what should be improved and how*

Gaps and areas for improvement in support
Mainly cash flow
Access to money and access to who is best to give help
Awareness where to access funds. Jargon is above the average person
Funding - community fund application form is a complete nightmare
Funding information and guidance on funding
Fundraising side of things
Grant aid withdrawn from us - now have to work harder to make up shortfall.
Help preparing funding bids
Less form-filling for funding
More help for people to know where to go for funding
More help in fundraising - somebody employed by CVS to help organisations get funding and apply for it
Giving more time; i.e. it takes to long to write for funding etc.
More level playing field re funding. More information on criteria to qualify for grants
There is money, but forms are complicated and don't make it easy. Also time is an issue.
Procedures should be speedy in obtaining grants

The key issues regarding information and duplication (table 4.2) seem to be about knowledge and information about ‘who does what’; communication and information sharing between agencies, and the need to improve the coordination of services to overcome duplication.

Table 4.2: Gaps and areas for improvement in external support - information and duplication

*Do you have any views on what are the biggest gaps or areas for improvement in support provided for groups like yours in County Durham?
If Yes please list ideas on what should be improved and how*

Gaps and areas for improvement in support
Central point for information; too much duplication of work
Central point of contact is missing
Communication - what is out there that we can link with
Comprehensive database as to where to go for help
Don't have enough information about the support
Don't know where to go for help. Groups feel they are too small to ask for help
Having the right information for what you are looking for
Information - knowing where to go and where to look. Making it more accessible
Information web site or even a booklet showing all support services
Interagency working
Just where to go for help
Knowing where to go and who to approach
knowing who to contact
Lack of communication between organisations - as to what is going in the area. More communication needed
Lack of information regarding the support available - suggest meetings with organisation that can provide support
Lack of knowledge of "who is who" and where to get help
Local directory of organisations available in Co. Durham
More advertising of organisations that offer support so we know who can help
Need an access shop for advice and information
Need something which is easily identified e.g. "Who does what"
Need to improve on communication. To find out "who is who" and "who does what" would help
Needs to be better coordinated from a higher level. Too much duplication
Network i.e. a web site for information and referrals and documents i.e. how to seek support and quick start guide
Networking - communication letting people know what's there at all levels
People just don't know what is available
Promote more togetherness. Communication between different organisations, information can be shared.
Seems to be a lack of a central body/advice varies.
There is an awful lot of the same thing offered
To have an organisation with more comprehensive information ranging over a variety of different issues
To make people aware of any support available
Training in knowing what all agencies have to offer and being aware of other organisations

A similar range of issues were raised in the consultation workshops. One participant in Wear Valley noted that the existence of so many organisations competing with each other to offer help “seems to cry out for coordination”.

Some articulated the difficulty of dealing with the complexity of different organisations providing support:

- “We need to know what is out there, it’s about communication and knowing who to speak to”.

- *"It's difficult because there are a lot of different organisations.*
- *and a lot of different networks"*.

This was echoed by one participant in Chester le Street:

"Everything could be improved with greater communication, sharing knowledge, distributing information so people know where to access it".

Two participants in Derwentside noted the difficulties of accessing the right support if you were a new group:

"Can there not be a system were you can go and be put in the right direction?"
"It is hard if you are just starting up a group not knowing where to go, if you could just ring someone and they would point you in the right direction"

In another workshop in Derwentside, participants commented that a "One Stop Shop" was needed where you could go to get information about a range of issues, with: *"who can help with what, where to go, who can give advice"*. Although there may be differing interpretations of what a 'one stop shop' might entail, it was not necessarily considered appropriate in a County Durham setting, especially given the dispersed nature of its communities: *"I'm concerned a one stop shop is no good for people in rural areas....I think a free phone number would be good for them to get in touch with help"*.

In Teesdale a debate took place amongst participants about how to simplify infrastructure. It was thought that the wealth of information which gets sent out should be brought together in some way, and a 'step-by-step guide to infrastructure' was suggested. Another participant wanted more radical action to reduce the number of infrastructure organisations:

"There should be a clearer picture of who does what. Not just a directory, there should be less of them"

Participants in another workshop in Teesdale reiterated the need for better coordination:

- *"It's good to have a choice but it should be a co-ordinated choice. There needs to be better communication between infrastructure organisations"*.
- *"we need a more unified infrastructure"*.

From the perspective of ordinary community groups and voluntary organisations, the world of infrastructure support appears to be somewhat fragmented and confusing. How do infrastructure providers view this situation?

4.3 Analysing duplication - the views of providers

Questions of duplication, communication and coordination were also raised in the semi-structured interviews with infrastructure providers.

A small minority of interviewees suggested that there were few areas of duplication or that it was relatively insignificant. However, most identified potential areas in general where there was duplication in the range of services offered, and also noted the existence of potential competitors in some of the more important forms of support they in particular offered.

There has been a longstanding discussion about potential duplication between Durham Rural Community Council and the CVSs in each district. This had intensified since the completion of CVS coverage throughout all seven districts in 2000-2001. Both DRCC and the CVSs aim to promote the voluntary and community sector, and the countywide area of benefit of the RCC overlays the district areas of benefit of the CVSs. Traditionally it was thought that the distinction has been around a rural-urban divide, and a focus on community development broadly conceived (RCCs) compared to the organisational support offered through CVSs. However, in a mixed rural-urban setting like County Durham some of these traditional divisions appear less relevant. The formation of the County CVS network, and the subsequent inclusion of DRCC as a 'countywide CVS' (and member of NACVS) may have led to a clearer sense of roles and remits. There has been collaboration between DRCC and the CVSs, for example on the County Durham Community Accountancy Service, but it has not always been smooth and harmonious, and relationships remain somewhat uneven across the districts.

From the interviews undertaken here, however, it seems that at the moment the duplication between DRCC and CVSs is more theoretical and potential than real and current. Both DRCC and CVSs were aware of the possibility, but were more concerned with potential duplication between themselves and infrastructure support provided in each of the local authorities. It was difficult identifying DRCC's work in all of the districts. In contrast, there appears to be more concern with the services being promoted through district and county council regeneration, capacity building and community development staff. In the four Neighbourhood Renewal districts, there also appears to be some potential duplication, and in some cases actual conflict, between the CVS and the Community Empowerment Network.

The main areas in which duplication was thought to occur were around 'funding information and advice', community development and basic capacity building (including issues around forming groups, committees, constitutions and policies and procedures), and training. Interviewees tended to point to the competitive and non-strategic funding environment, whereby organisations were encouraged to bid for resources without necessarily considering who might be in the best position to undertake the work, as the main reason for duplication arising. One respondent described the situation as follows:

"[Duplication] has arisen because all of these roles are funding led rather than needs led. Therefore organisations go for funding because they can with no thought of how many other organisation already have these roles in place, therefore you end up with a lot of duplication of roles. This in turn causes confusion for voluntary groups and statutory agencies as they are not sure who does what and who can provide the best help"

This leads to inefficiency, a waste of money, and a sense of frustration and confusion for ordinary groups.

4.4 The potential for collaboration amongst infrastructure providers

Since many infrastructure providers can identify areas of duplication, it could be argued that the prospects for enhancing collaboration between providers might be quite bleak. This is especially the case given that the funding environment seems to encourage competitive bidding for scarce resources. Since this is unlikely to change, is talk of collaboration a waste of time?

In one very strong sense the answer is 'no', because collaboration does take place between organisations all the time. All the interviewees in the research identified other organisations that they have and do work with on joint projects and partnerships. The situation appears to be one in which collaboration and competition occur in the context of each other. Most respondents also indicated a wish to collaborate further with others, either in overall planning of services or on specific projects and initiatives. However, the existence of potential and actual duplication appears to be of concern to many infrastructure providers. Suggested ways to resolve the issue include the need for organisations to change their stance to others, to accept the possibility that there might be benefits of working together, to develop 'rules of engagement' and to open up lines of dialogue and communication between providers:

“At present there has not been any steps to resolve this. We need a network to co-ordinate this. To co-ordinate the strategy and planning to deliver both general and specialist advice across the county.....I don't see any barriers to further collaboration; we need a co-ordinated approach to areas such as funding bids, and facilitating forums”

Section 5.

Priorities for infrastructure development

This section seeks to look ahead from the analysis of demand (section 2), supply (section 3) and duplication/gaps (section 4) to consider some options for infrastructure development in County Durham. During the research, many different suggestions have been made by participants. The aim here is merely to reflect on the types of suggestion made (as shown in the shaded box below), and to think through some of the main principles of how to use *ChangeUp* main spend resources which may become available. It will be for interested parties to discuss collectively whether and how to take any of these suggestions forward.

Options for infrastructure investment in County Durham

In County Durham a number of options for infrastructure investment has been suggested. '*ChangeUp*' main spend resources could be used, for example:

1. to **develop new services**, or extend existing services in line with what are seen as the most evident needs identified from the research undertaken using 'early spend' resources,
2. as an **emergency contingency fund** to protect existing infrastructure, in line with what are seen as the most evident needs,
3. to **develop new ways of working** or new tools to assist infrastructure work, such as a 'diagnostic tool' for proactive work with groups,
4. to '**kick-start**' existing plans for the development of infrastructure support (e.g. the DEFRA work on community buildings; the County Durham Community Accountancy Service),
5. to develop and strengthen **networks of 'informal peer support'** amongst groups,
6. as an opportunity to **lever additional strategic support from statutory sources**,
7. to support the process of infrastructure organisations **responding to changing local government structures**, contingent on the outcome of the 4th November referendum,
8. to **reshape and simplify existing infrastructure provision** (for example through greater joint working between agencies, or the development of a 'brokerage model').

It is important to note that these do not necessarily exhaust the range of suggestions raised, and nor are they necessarily mutually exclusive options. They may be advanced on their own or in some combination. The intention behind describing them here is to use them as a springboard for discussion between infrastructure agencies and other interested parties. More detailed discussion of each of the options follows⁷.

⁷ More attention has been paid to some options than to others either because they require some background explanation, or, especially with regard to Option 8, because they are particularly sensitive and intractable.

Option 1.

Developing new services, or extending existing services in line with what are seen as the most evident needs identified from the research.

This option involves a potential focus on areas of service provision which appear from the research to attract the highest interest amongst ordinary community groups and voluntary organisations, and therefore might imply the highest aggregate demand for support. These may include:

- 'funding information and advice',
- 'networking with others',
- 'finding and keeping volunteers',
- 'attracting new members/users' and
- 'forming your group'

In addition, however, this option might take into greater account those areas which are the most under-resourced and/or fragile.

This option may not necessarily involve developing entirely new services. It could imply a development or extension of existing services, for example where services are currently running beyond their capacity, or where there are geographical gaps in service. It may imply developing support differently for different kinds of organisation. In particular the different needs and priorities expressed by organisations with and without staff could be worth considering. For those organisations seeking to expand and develop new services, it may be appropriate to examine the support they might need for the delivery of public services.

The advantage of this option lies in its responsiveness to the needs, priorities and concerns of both users and the relevant infrastructure providers, as long as it is directly related to the existing (or other) research evidence. However, the resources available under the *ChangeUp* main spend programmes are unlikely to stretch far enough to make a significant difference to service levels in any particular area, or combination of areas. More significantly there is no guarantee that resources would continue post March 2006. This is likely to call into question the sustainability of any new or extended services. Accordingly, if taken forward seriously this option needs to be related to the comments under option 6 about drawing in other funding streams.

Option 2.

Use some *ChangeUp* main spend resource as an emergency contingency fund to protect existing infrastructure, in line with what are seen as the most evident needs.

We have noted that much of the current infrastructure provision is fragile and insecurely funded. Option 2 addresses this issue by seeking to use some of the available resource as 'emergency funding' to provide some protection to existing services which are currently (or likely in the near future to be) at risk of closure or contraction. Such protection would only be short term whilst other resources were sought, and could perhaps best be justified in those circumstances where high demand for a service is unlikely to go away just because the service is no longer in place. The case would be that an infrastructure body, given the resources, would be likely to seek to develop such a service anyway as a core part of their work (i.e. 'if it didn't exist, would you need to invent it').

The starting point of this option is the view expressed by many participants in the consultation exercise that additional resources should work with what is already there. If there is already some basic level of infrastructure provision in a particular area, but that is likely to close in the near future, it may make sense to use resources to keep it going. This is particularly pertinent for those core forms of support which the research suggests are priorities for large numbers of community groups and voluntary organisations, such as, for example 'funding information and advice' and 'finding and keeping volunteers'. The significance of this option may be greater given that *ChangeUp* resources are only intended to be available for a short period.

This option could be criticised for being insufficiently strategic or innovative. It is about preserving the status quo, by offering a lifeline to existing services (which might not necessarily be a disadvantage). It might be seen and used by existing infrastructure agencies as a way of keeping 'pet' services (and staff) going, without much consideration of how they could or should relate to other services in their area.

Option 3.

Develop new ways of working or new tools to assist infrastructure work, such as a 'diagnostic tool' for proactive work with groups.

Option 3 again takes strength from the idea that resources in *ChangeUp* are fairly short term. The suggestion here is to examine the forms of support which appear to be key priorities and consider potential one-off developments which might benefit the way services operate in the long term. There may be many potential examples of this kind of support. One that has been suggested involves the development of a 'diagnostic tool' for use with groups by development workers and other infrastructure providers. Access to support for ordinary community groups and voluntary organisations frequently occurs through a combination of serendipity (for example through word of mouth, a chance encounter with a worker or sight of a leaflet) and history (individuals and groups coming back for further or different support on a particular issue having already accessed the service in the past). By and large this is reactive support, and several providers have indicated a wish to be somewhat more directive and proactive in identifying support needs within groups, especially around sensitive subjects such as, for example, 'managing money'.

The 'diagnostic tool' would be a means to work intensively with a group in a more holistic fashion, posing a series of questions across a range of issues, and then offering signposted support to deal with issues which emerge. Some of the issues or support needs raised through use of the tool may then involve intensive or specialist work for which a fee structure has been mooted. The tool would be a type of organisational health check or audit. There are existing systems in use within the voluntary and community sector (such as PQASSO) which could be used wholesale or as a basis for further refinement. A 'diagnostic tool' has some similarity to some of the proposals for supporting Community Buildings in the DEFRA infrastructure bid. *ChangeUp* main spend resources could be used to develop the tool itself, to facilitate its initial use, or to strengthen some of the support services which might then offer more intensive work.

Another suggestion is to use some of the resources to have regular themed networking events throughout the County. 'Networking with others' has been raised as a key issue by the research participants. Since such events are typically quite resource intensive for those involved, there may be merit in using *ChangeUp* main spend resources to organise and manage events for the County overall.

The main advantage of suggestions which might fall under this option is the fact that they respond directly to the fact that *ChangeUp* main spend resources are only available for the short term, perhaps therefore putting a premium on discrete, one-off pieces of work. The 'diagnostic tool' attempts to change the way external support is offered to groups (arguably more proactive, thorough, more holistic and group-centred); while networking events offer a space for groups to come together to discuss common issues and learn about different approaches. One risk is that resources may be used on a small range of pet projects or ideas which may not necessarily generate a significant impact on the sector as a whole. A central risk regarding a diagnostic tool is that resources could be used to develop a tool which may be used only rarely in practice. The tool would also work effectively only if its users (e.g. development workers and groups) were confident that a range of mechanisms were actually available to provide support in those areas identified through the process.

Option 4.

'Kick-start' existing plans for the development of infrastructure support (e.g. the DEFRA work on community buildings; the County Durham Community Accountancy Service).

This option involves using some or all of *ChangeUp* main spend resources to advance existing infrastructure plans which might otherwise founder for want of start-up funding.

Two examples are cited here, but there may be others similarly in development. The first is the proposal to use resources to supplement the DEFRA infrastructure allocation for County Durham. A consortium has already discussed and submitted a proposal to use DEFRA resources to offer a range of support mechanisms to groups responsible for managing and running community buildings. However, the budget for the proposal is greater than the likely County Durham allocation. When the final outcome of the process is known, there will thus have to be further discussions on how to 'bridge the gap', either through scaling back the project, securing additional resources, or some combination of the two.

A second example is the County Durham Community Accountancy Service, a sub-regional initiative developed through the County Durham CVS network (consisting of six CVSs and Durham Rural Community Council, with secretarial support provided through the One Voice Network). A feasibility study was undertaken in 2002, for which a Business Plan has been developed and funding proposals now submitted. However, several participants in the research noted how long it seemed to be taking to get the idea up and running. Some *ChangeUp* main spend resources could be used to 'kick-start' a service here.

This option seeks to devote resources to develop infrastructure services for which some form of process identifying and assessing need has already been undertaken. In effect there has already been some form of project development (in terms of identifying issues and needs, developing a response, and identifying mechanisms - lead bodies, partnerships and consortia - to take the idea forward). In effect the projects are 'ready to go', and may therefore be able to make a difference more rapidly than more embryonic ideas.

One difficulty with this approach is that it could be seen as disregarding the evidence drawn together under the 'early spend' research, and might therefore be challenged on this basis. In particular the evidence around a need for help regarding financial management provided in the feasibility study indicated general support but not necessarily overwhelming need. This has been confirmed in the large scale survey undertaken here, where past and potential future use of support around 'managing money' occurs at a fairly low level relative to other forms of support. But using *ChangeUp* main spend resources here would imply devoting resources to an area of support that does not appear to be needed as much as others. This may be justifiable, but a rationale would need to be provided.

Option 5.

Develop and strengthen networks of 'informal peer support' amongst groups

This option involves developing ways to strengthen and/or extend the informal support given to other groups. In section 3 we noted that a large degree of support provided for groups and organisations occurs through varying degrees of informality beyond those organisations specifically set up to provide infrastructure support as a main function. This is what we have termed 'secondary' infrastructure in section 1. For groups wanting or needing to access external support over a range of specific issues, to varying degrees, a first port of call is often specific individuals or other agencies they know and trust. This form of peer support is usually an unfunded informal exchange of favours between people and groups of different experiences, knowledge and skills. Organisations which undertake such support might not necessarily advertise a service, and may typically respond to calls for help from neighbouring or similar groups. Often the skills and capacity to respond in this way may revolve around one or two specific individuals.

Those in a position to do this, or interested to develop it could be brought together as part of a consortium or network of informal or 'peer support workers'. They might be offered support to develop specific skills or identified areas of weakness, and then referrals could be made to those individuals to provide more intensive one to one support. Because this may impact on their existing workload, resources could be used to pay a fee (for example per referral or time spent supporting a group) to the organisation providing the support. This would then offer an income stream to the organisation offering the informal support. Some mechanism may need to be developed to provide feedback on the support given in an attempt to maintain high standards of advice and support.

There may also be alternative ways of strengthening informal peer support between groups and organisations. For example, resources could be used to facilitate group learning between different organisations facing common problems or developing similar proposals. This has some similarity with the 'Action Learning' model recently undertaken in the County through Durham Rural Community Council, as part of a national pilot scheme.

For those seeking access to advice and support, informal sources appear to be an important element of the array of potential providers. Using resources to develop or strengthen this would be a recognition of its significance, and would be a means to support local, accessible and typically face to face methods of assistance. It may also offer a means to add to existing capacity of more formal infrastructure providers.

However, since this would be quite an experimental option, new mechanisms would need to be developed for supporting and developing a network of support workers, referring organisations to support workers, developing a charging framework and payments system, and monitoring quality and impact. This option therefore involves considerable 'set-up' costs. Organisations established to offer this kind of support on a more formal basis as a main function might argue that resources should be used to strengthen their work rather than that offered informally. There may be concerns about the quality and stability of support, particularly if it resides within one or a few specific individuals within an organisation. Finally this approach may involve too much of an attempt to formalise informal support. It may remove some of the very aspects (such as its informality and accessibility) which make it an attractive option in the first place.

Option 6.

Use *ChangeUp* resources as an opportunity to lever additional strategic support from statutory sources.

The programmes outlined alongside *ChangeUp* are intended to be a catalyst for change within voluntary and community sector infrastructure. At the moment there is no guarantee of resources beyond 2006. It has been regularly argued that local partners are the most appropriate statutory funders of local infrastructure. At the same time, *ChangeUp* recognises that statutory bodies also provide support and services to local voluntary organisations and community groups, and as such they are signalled as potential contributors to infrastructure planning in local areas. Given the key role of local statutory agencies, and in particular local authorities, both at a strategic leadership level, and as occasional infrastructure providers, it is important that there is some involvement of statutory agencies in the process of planning the development of infrastructure. This is not only because of the potential to pool resources and expertise, but also because of the potential for *ChangeUp* resources to be used to lever in significant statutory support for the development of infrastructure.

In County Durham, the role of the voluntary and community sector as a whole, and of its infrastructure in particular, will have a significant bearing on two important strategic developments currently in progress. Firstly, the development of the **Strategic Vision for County Durham** by the County Durham Strategic Partnership involves 12 'key challenges' which need to be addressed over the 20 years to 2023 if major improvements are to be seen in economic, social and environmental well-being. Challenge 8 - 'Empowered and Aspirational Communities' is to "*Build a strong voluntary and community sector with the capacity to encourage and support local people to make decisions that affect their lives and to expand social enterprises and voluntary organisations*" (CDSP 2003: 24). The document goes on to note that "*the need to strengthen the voluntary and community sector and its support structures, to increase their effectiveness*" (ibid) has already been identified. From further development of the County Durham Compact, research, consultation and representation, the aims in the next few years include increasing the capacity of community and voluntary groups and increasing the number of people involved in community activities. This last aim is also signalled in the recent development of proposals for a 'second generation' **Local Public Services Agreement (LPSA)** between Durham County Council and central government. Significant additional resources for County Durham are implied in the LPSA, due to start in April 2004, involving a pump-priming grant and a reward grant if 'stretch' targets are met.

These initiatives offer an opportunity to strengthen the relationship between statutory partners and the voluntary and community sector. The activity under the auspices of *ChangeUp* implies that there is now a timely opportunity to pool resources to ensure the strategic development of voluntary and community sector infrastructure in County Durham. The aim would be to place infrastructure support on a more secure footing, in order to meet the challenges and targets signalled in recent strategic initiatives. However, it is sometimes argued that closer relationships between statutory agencies and voluntary organisations and community groups often compromises the independence of the latter. If this is thought to be the case, some might suggest that knitting in *ChangeUp* resources to wider strategic developments is too much of a diversion from the task of providing basic infrastructure support to the sector.

Option 7.

Support the process of infrastructure organisations responding to changing local government structures, contingent on the outcome of the 4th November referendum.

The referendum for a potential Elected Regional Assembly for the North East takes place on November 4th. Alongside this, voters will be asked to consider how local government structures and boundaries should be reorganised if there is a 'Yes' vote on a Regional Assembly. The proposals are for a single unitary authority for the whole of County Durham, or three unitary authorities - North Durham, comprising the areas covered by Chester le Street and Derwentside district councils; East Durham, comprising the areas covered by Durham City Council and Easington District Council; and South Durham, comprising the areas covered by Sedgefield Borough Council, and Teesdale and Wear Valley District Councils.

Panellists at the afternoon session of the 'Shaping the Future' conference on 6th July 2004 were asked to consider the implications of potential local government reorganisation for the voluntary and community sector. These changes are likely to have major implications for infrastructure providers. Many will work within a particular geographical 'area of benefit', and this is often aligned with existing local authority boundaries. If these change, it may cast doubt on the rationale for the boundaries of existing infrastructure providers. Alongside this, infrastructure agencies would have to build relationships with new statutory structures and officers. That this is a cause for considerable uncertainty was reflected in many of the interviews with infrastructure providers, and particularly for the existing network of district-based Councils for Voluntary Service. Informally at least, and with some reluctance and difficulty, discussions about what might happen, how existing CVSs and others will relate to each other, and whether mergers/take-overs will be encouraged are beginning to take place.

This option involves using some *ChangeUp* main spend resources to facilitate a process through which infrastructure agencies affected by the possible reorganisation can discuss and plan future developments. Support could be provided for expert and independent facilitation in negotiating new relationships, areas of work and structures between agencies, as well as for some of the legal expenses which might be incurred where merger/take over are considered.

This option could be seen as a sensible approach to a foreseeable issue potentially affecting a number of key infrastructure agencies in the near future. Experience of the last round of local government reorganisation suggested that the implications for the voluntary and community sector can be particularly intractable, time consuming, and conflict-ridden. Using some *ChangeUp* resource here might mitigate some of these problems, and may also serve to address the issues raised in Option 8 below, regarding the simplification of infrastructure supply.

However, given the time lags likely for local government reorganisation if there is a 'Yes' vote, the discussions around the implications of reorganisation for infrastructure may not seriously start until after *ChangeUp* resources are intended to have been spent, i.e. after March 2006. In addition it could be argued that this option involves too much of a focus on the relationships (and inter-organisational politics) between infrastructure agencies at the expense of developing better services for users.

Option 8.

Reshape and simplify existing provision (for example through greater joint working between agencies, or the development of a 'brokerage model').

A final suggestion is to take seriously the point raised time and again by participants during the research and consultation events - that often ordinary community groups and voluntary organisations find it hard to know who is best or most appropriate to approach for external support. Provision through multiple agencies and sources runs the risk of duplication, wasteful competition between agencies, and for users of infrastructure, confusion and frustration. A similar point is made in more general terms in *ChangeUp* itself, with its suggestion that gradually over time local infrastructure support would be reconfigured into 'geographic hubs' of activity.

A range of possibilities emerge here, with different strengths and weaknesses. At one extreme would be the creation of a single new infrastructure organisation for a particular geographical area (be it sub-regional; district or 'new unitary' (under the three unitaries proposal)). This would draw in the resources from existing providers with the ultimate aim of replacing the multiple sources of provision which currently exist. Whilst elegant and simple, this possibility increases the risk of 'all eggs in one basket' such that any problems in one organisation would then affect all infrastructure provision. Interviews with existing providers noted that monopoly provision was not a particularly good model to pursue, given that it restricts choice for users. However, in any case, the movement from a situation of fiercely independent infrastructure organisations with multiple stakeholders and interests to a single provider is arguably unimaginable in practice.

The alternative is to simplify provision by building, facilitating and encouraging collaboration between different infrastructure providers. This could involve shifting responsibility for particular services and support between agencies and moving some areas of service to different scales, but might merely involve increasing the understanding amongst providers themselves about roles, responsibilities, capabilities and capacity. Thus even if the same range of agencies actually provide infrastructure support, this might at least give the *appearance* (to the outside world of voluntary organisations and community groups) of having reshaped and simplified provision.

ChangeUp resources could be therefore be used to bring infrastructure providers together to share experiences, better inform each other of who does what, or who has what skills to offer, and to develop plans for joint working. This is not to deny that this happens now, rather to suggest that it could be developed further, and in a less ad hoc fashion than now. Interviewees have raised the fact that existing collaboration typically follows good working relationships between individuals within different agencies, citing the example of the different relationships between Durham RCC and the CVSs as a case in point. The difficulties with this are that collaboration might break down when people move on, and that good relationships between individuals at a particular level might not necessarily cascade throughout their respective organisations.

The task instead would be to facilitate the development of *structured collaboration* between agencies. Arguably this is what the establishment of the One Voice Network, the County Durham CVS Network, and more recently networks of community workers in several districts has been designed to achieve. However, it is worth reflecting that whilst these

approaches may have made inter-organisational competition/conflict less intense than otherwise may have been the case, bringing organisations and workers together in such networks is a necessary but not sufficient condition for developing stronger collaborative working between infrastructure support providers. Something else needs to happen, and this option makes the suggestion that *ChangeUp* resources could be used to encourage that process.

One way of facilitating this is for organisations to go through a process of identifying where they see overlaps and gaps with each other. A start has been made on an individual basis in the semi-structured interviews with providers. Here respondents were asked to reflect in terms of specific forms of support who they might refer users to and in what circumstances, who their competitors are, and in general terms the interest in and barriers to collaboration. This process should continue as a collective discussion, or at least initially as a series of bilateral discussions between agencies to identify:

- who currently does what
- who aspires to do what
- who can do what effectively, and, most importantly
- who should do what.

The aim is to develop ways in which organisations can create some sense of ‘room’ for each other to develop particular services. A framework which might be of use in assisting such a process was developed as part of the feasibility study for the proposed County Durham Community Accountancy Service (Macmillan 2003). This involved an initial exploration of the potential relationships between CVs and the Rural Community Council. This is shown in the shaded boxes on pages 57-58. Potentially competing infrastructure agencies could attempt to use the framework to guide discussions about duplication, collaboration and joint working.

Two outcomes might follow from this process. Firstly, the process might lead to the development of a countywide ‘**PACT**’ **between infrastructure agencies**, to sit alongside the existing Compact between the statutory and voluntary and community sectors. This follows previous recommendations from research in County Durham for the One Voice Network SRB5 programme undertaken between January and June 2000 by Enterprise PLC (One Voice Network 2000).

Among other things, the research called for greater clarity of roles and responsibilities between organisations in the voluntary and community sectors. This could be achieved through enhanced collaboration between agencies, beyond that already achieved from participation in the One Voice Network. The report recommended the development of a ‘PACT’ or framework of understanding within the sector outlining roles and relationships between organisations, speaking of the need for *“real dialogue - an understanding of the positions of each player and the pressures they face. The bidding system unamended is the antithesis of this kind of dialogue of mutual understanding. Some other vehicle for having the players come together on a more trust-based agenda is essential”* (One Voice Network 2000: 34).

The suggestion was for the development of a *“framework setting out the rules of engagement that governs the way in which organisations do business with each other”* (p. 35) which *“will provide the ground rules for improved dialogue”* (ibid.). The framework, or ‘PACT’, was to be *“a quality framework..specifically designed to encourage and enforce certain patterns of behaviour that will add value to all concerned.....it would need to be more than well meaning words. It would require a level of commitment from all parties that gave it real teeth”* (One Voice Network 2000: 35).

‘Joining up the Infrastructure’ (Discussion framework, January 2002)

The framework involves potentially competing organisations to think through their position and operation in terms of two dimensions:

1. **Activities:** what do you do?
2. **Relationships:** how do you relate to other organisations?

At a simple level two kinds of relationship might be imaginable between infrastructure providers: **working in isolation** and **working together**. These are ends of a spectrum rather than hard and fast either/or categories.

Working in isolation implies:

- Not much communication between agencies
- Not much mutual support between organisations or individuals
- Not much co-ordination of support for groups
- Potential confusion for groups
- Potential for organisations to be ‘played off’ against each other
- Danger of duplication
- Growing mistrust and suspicion between individual workers and organisations

Working together implies:

- Open, regular and mutual communication links
- Information sharing
- Supporting each other, individually and organisationally
- Clearer roles for each organisation
- Potential development of expert niches
- No duplication of effort
- Increased credibility amongst key constituencies (groups, funders, statutory agencies)

A grid (as shown below) can be used to ask questions about who does what, with what relationship to other providers, in terms of:

- A) **the past and the present:** - about ‘how it is’
 what the activities and relationships have been up to now, and how they are now, and to make some judgements about why that might have been, or might be, the case

and/or

- B) **the present and the future:** - about ‘how it might be’
 what the activities and relationships could be or should be in the future, and to assess how to get there

Potential relationships between CVs and RCCs:

CVs-RCCs....	Doing (more or less) the same thing	Doing (more or less) different things
Working in isolation (Competition)	1. <i>‘Bumping into each other’</i>	3. <i>‘Loss of linkages’</i>
Working together (Collaboration)	2. <i>‘Adding capacity’</i>	4. <i>‘Building complementarity’</i>

Organisations: XXX and YYY
 Geographical areas:

	Doing (more or less) the same thing	Doing (more or less) different things
Working (mostly) in isolation	<p>1. 'Bumping into each other'</p> <p>Can you think of examples where you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> do more or less the same thing as YYY in your area, <i>but</i> you don't work together with them on it? 	<p>3. 'Loss of linkages'</p> <p>Can you think of examples where you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> do more or less different things as YYY in your area, <i>but</i> you don't work together with them on it?
Working (mostly) together	<p>2. 'Adding capacity'</p> <p>Can you think of examples where you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> do more or less the same thing as YYY in your area, <i>and</i> you work together with them on it? 	<p>4. 'Building complementarity'</p> <p>Can you think of examples where you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> do more or less different things as YYY in your area, <i>and</i> you work together with them on it?

Secondly, the process may lead to the development of some form of **model for 'brokering' services and support** between agencies. Finding out who does what, who claims to do what, who can do what etc. is a first step in this process. This could certainly be better communicated to the wider voluntary and community sector, as well as to statutory agencies. A regularly updated 'guide to external support' for the sector (available in different formats to be accessible to as many groups and organisations as possible, including newly forming groups) could also be worth considering. This could be followed by the establishment of joint working and referral agreements between agencies, and then better cross-referral mechanisms between agencies. This may be the start of a much wider process which will require continuing dialogue and debate.

Some of these options are 'safer' than others, some more challenging, both in terms of attempting to resolve intractable problems, and in terms of changing the ways infrastructure support is organised. There are certainly many risks for existing infrastructure providers in trying to rethink how (and even whether) they should operate and how they should relate to others. Fortunately there are (relatively) well established and well regarded mechanisms for dialogue, exchange and decision making which could be used to advance the development of infrastructure in County Durham.

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Appendix.

Methodology, data sources and research instruments

The research which underpins this report consisted of four elements:

- A. a large scale two-stage telephone **survey of voluntary organisations and community groups** across County Durham
- B. a series of seven **district-based consultation events** or 'agenda days'
- C. a **county-wide consultative conference**
- D. **in-depth interviews** with key infrastructure providers

It is estimated that representatives from over 600 different voluntary organisations and community groups have taken part in the process in different ways.

A. Survey of voluntary organisations and community groups

A large scale survey of voluntary organisations and community groups across County Durham was undertaken by **Research Solutions UK Ltd.** between May and July 2004. This method enabled a wide range of questions to be asked of a large representative cross-section of voluntary organisations and community groups in County Durham.

The survey was undertaken in two phases. Firstly a telephone 'screening' survey was undertaken involving contact with 1079 voluntary organisations and community groups in County Durham, from an original list of 2088 organisations.

This was followed by a more intensive second phase telephone survey of **433** voluntary organisations and community groups. The survey covered three different areas, ostensibly for different purposes:

- infrastructure requirements,
- workforce development (skills, training, recruitment and retention) and
- the economic impact of the sector.

The questions relating to infrastructure are copied in the shaded box below. Analysis of the survey questions relating to Workforce Development and Economic Impact are being reported separately.

For the purposes of the survey the notion of 'infrastructure' or 'external support' was broken down into 17 different categories or 'forms of support'. This is somewhat artificial, given that forms of support tend to cross-over and relate quite closely with each other. Moreover infrastructure providers may offer a relatively holistic or seamless service across a range of different forms of support. Nonetheless, it was thought worthwhile attempting to disaggregate the idea of infrastructure in order to help identify any clear themes or patterns in the resultant data. The 17 different areas of support are listed in table 1. The description in italics is the full description used in the survey, but the summary description in bold is used for convenience in the analysis.

SECTION ONE: INFRASTRUCTURE

There are a number of activities that are common to the successful running of most organisations. This survey is interested in finding out the kinds of support you have accessed in these areas in the past and any help you may like in the future.

1A) Has your organisation accessed any external support in the past with...

1B) Would you like to access any external support in the future with...

18. Are there any other areas of support you would like to access?

1C) And of the areas where you would like to access support, which would you say are the top three priorities? (Read back if required and Number 1,2,3 in order of importance)

1D) Thinking about the issues we have been talking about, where might you go for support in these areas?

And where would you go to for help on the priorities you identified (remind on priorities if necessary, insert service item against supplier as appropriate)

	CODE	ITEM
Council for Voluntary Service (If interviewee in Sedgefield please give this option as CAVOS; if in Teesdale or Wear Valley, 2D)	1	
One Voice Network	2	
Charity Commission	3	
BECON	4	
VONNE	5	
Durham Rural Community Council	6	
District Council	7	
County Council	8	
Business Link	9	
A regional or national office of your organisation	10	
DK	11	
NA - no priorities identified		NA
Other (Please specify)	12	

1E) IF ANY HELP RECEIVED IN THE PAST Thinking of the help you have received in the past, how useful would you say this has been using a scale of 1 to 4 with 1 being very useful and 4 being not very useful?
Why is that?

1F) What, if anything, has prevented or limited your organisation from accessing support in the past?

Nothing

no external support needed

Don't know where to go

No support available locally

Too expensive

Other (Please specify)

1G) Do you have any views on what are the biggest gaps or areas for improvement in support provided for groups like yours in County Durham?

If Yes please list ideas on what should be improved and how

2A) Does your organisation offer advice, training or support services to other voluntary and community organisations and/or other branches of your organisation?

2B) Do you offer support in (insert area)

2C) What does that involve

2D) Is this help provided to:

- internal branches/departments only
- specific types of voluntary organisation
- any voluntary organisation
- any organisation (public/private/voluntary)

2E) Does your organisation provide help or support in other areas not covered above? Please detail

Table 1: Different forms of external support

1 Forming your group <i>How to set up your group, including forming a committee and drawing up a constitution</i>
2 Business/strategic planning <i>Business or strategic planning - making a business plan, planning for the longer term</i>
3 Managing projects <i>How to manage a project effectively</i>
4 Being open and accountable <i>Being open and accountable e.g. running an annual general meeting, producing an annual report etc.</i>
5 Finding and keeping volunteers <i>Finding, keeping and training the right volunteers and committee</i>
6 Recruiting and retaining staff <i>Recruiting, training and keeping the right staff to meet the needs of your organisation</i>
7 Funding information and advice <i>Funding information, advice and guidance on writing good funding bids</i>
8 Office Administration <i>Office administration e.g. managing information and office services such as photocopying, laminating</i>
9 Managing money <i>Managing money such as bookkeeping, cash-flow forecasts, payroll, tax etc.</i>
10 Managing premises/equipment <i>Managing premises and equipment e.g. maintaining computers, building repairs, leasing and purchasing property</i>
11 Policies and procedures <i>Making sure you have the right policies and procedures, and quality standards</i>
12 Evaluating projects <i>Monitoring and evaluating projects and services</i>
13 Researching needs of users <i>Researching the needs of users and involving them in service design/improvement e.g. appraisals, surveys etc.</i>
14 Developing new projects <i>Developing and introducing new projects or services e.g. generating ideas, feasibility studies etc.</i>
15 Attracting new members/users <i>Attracting new members or users</i>
16 Having your say <i>Having your say through networks and partnerships on issues that affect you</i>
17 Networking with others <i>Networking with others e.g. sharing information and resources</i>

Several specific questions have been at the heart of the exploration of the statistical data:

- what forms of support out of the 17 (or any others) do 'ordinary' groups access?

This is the **pattern of access** to external support, which might provide us with an indication of which forms of support amongst the 17 are relatively more or less important overall.

- how many groups access each form of support?

This is the **extent of access** to external support, which might tell us by how much the categories are considered more or less important, and might provide us with an indication of likely demand for different forms of support.

- do groups tend to access a wide or narrow range of forms of support?

This is the **breadth of access** to external support. This focuses on the groups themselves rather than the specific forms of support, and provides an indication of what each individual group is looking for in terms of external support.

- what forms of support were thought to be most important?

These are the **priorities** for external support.

These four issues could be examined for:

- access to external support **in the past**
- indications of potential access to external support **in the future**, and
- for each responding organisation, the **connection between past access and potential future access**, i.e. would organisations who have accessed a particular form of support in the past also like to access it in the future?

And cutting across all of these dimensions, the analysis could cover:

- All organisations in **the survey as a whole**
- Organisations in each of the **districts** (irrespective of staffing)
- Organisations **with or without staff** (irrespective of district),

And, for some of the analysis, for:

- Organisations **with staff in each of the districts**, and those **without staff in each of the districts**

Analysing the results by district and by staffing offers a way of checking whether the overall pattern of access and priorities disguises some important variations between organisations in different situations. This is important for planning how to develop services and support across the County.

As noted in section 2, there are plans to examine whether there is a **rural dimension** to the results, as well as whether there are differences between organisations based in relatively **deprived areas** compared with those in relatively affluent areas.

B. District-based 'agenda days'

A series of seven district-based consultation events were held in May and June 2004, organised through and by the CVS in each district, and, with only minimal variation, structured according to a common format (see the table and box below). Four of the seven events were 'stand-alone' (Easington, Sedgefield, Teesdale and Wear Valley), whilst the other three were part of wider events already planned by the relevant CVS (Chester le Street - wider 'agenda day'; Derwentside - Meet the Funders event; Durham City - CVS AGM). Overall 133 people from voluntary organisations and community groups participated in the workshops.

Event	Date	Venue	Participants	Groups
Durham City	26 May 2004	County Hall, Durham City	19	2
Chester le Street	08 June 2004	Bullion Hall, Chester le Street	13	1
Derwentside	09 June 2004	Lamplight Arts Centre, Stanley	36	3
Easington	10 June 2004	Seaton Holme, Easington	10	1
Sedgefield	11 June 2004	Mainsforth Community Centre, Ferryhill Station	14	1
Wear Valley	16 June 2004	Tow Law Community Centre	24	3
Teesdale	18 June 2004	Mickleton Village Hall, Teesdale	17	2
		<i>Total</i>	133	13

District consultation events: agenda

1. 10 mins

Introductions; Housekeeping; Plan for the session

2. 30 mins

Why are we here? (presentation and questions for clarification)

Background and context (in two parts)

1. Infrastructure strategy and potential resources for infrastructure
2. A quick guide to infrastructure in County Durham

3. 45 mins

Workshop 1 (Group round table discussions)

- *What does your group or organisation need help, advice or support with the most?*
- *Where can or do you get it now?*
- *How could it be improved?*

4. 20 mins: Tea/coffee break

5. 45 mins

Workshop 2 (Group round table discussions)

- *How should support, advice and help best be provided in County Durham?*
- *How can disadvantaged groups (e.g. small groups, new groups, groups in rural areas) be prioritised?*
- *What are the main priorities for investing further resources in County Durham's voluntary and community sector infrastructure?*

6. 30 mins

Feedback session

Open discussion of points raised in the workshops; What happens next....

The intention was to gather together a number of representatives from voluntary organisations and community groups in each of the districts in order to stimulate discussion about what things they found most difficult and in what areas external support might help. Rather than present participants with a pre-prepared list of areas in which they might need assistance, the plan was to start with a 'blank page' (or flipchart) and ask participants to generate their own list of issues. Each participant was given five 'sticky dots', and asked to use these to indicate which of the areas they had so far discussed were the most significant, or for which help was most needed. This was then used to enquire from where they typically might seek help, and how it could be improved, followed by some general discussion questions about investing in infrastructure services generally. Each group was facilitated, either by someone associated with the CVS, the One Voice Network, or CRESR at Sheffield Hallam University. Comments were written up on flipchart sheets, but in addition each workshop group had a dedicated note taker to ensure that views and comments were recorded accurately.

On reflection, the earlier questions proved easier to engage with than the later ones. Because of the numbers of participants involved, and how the events were organised, there are no claims for the strict representativeness of the groups and organisations which took part. Rather the aim was to discuss collectively, and in some depth, the kinds of things which voluntary organisations and community groups struggle with, and what might help. Participants may, for example, cite 'funding advice' as an area with which they need support. The workshops were designed to probe this further (than may be possible in a survey) and explore what this means exactly and in practice.

Comparisons between the issues raised in different districts are not appropriate in the way they might be with the representative sample used in the telephone survey. However, it is worth noting that the main issues raised in the consultation events are not dissimilar to the main findings about priority issues and use of external support derived from the survey. This provides some reassurance that the consultation events and the telephone survey complement each other.

C. County-wide consultative conference

The 'Shaping the future' conference, held on 6th July 2004 at the Durham County Cricket Club in Chester-le-Street, was attended by 145 delegates, around half of whom had not attended one of the district events.

It was intended to use the conference to offer feedback from the district-based consultation events, and to ask some more focused questions about the main priorities for infrastructure 'main spend'. As it happens, the Home Office published '*ChangeUp*' two weeks before the conference, and so there was also an opportunity to outline its main proposals and implications. Discussions around infrastructure were sandwiched between a main speaker (outlining the plans for a Local Public Service Agreement between central government and Durham County Council) and an afternoon panel debate on the implications for the voluntary and community sector of local government reorganisation following a possible vote for a regional assembly in the North East.

Ten workshop sessions attended by participants representing voluntary organisations and community groups were run according to a structured format (see box). In addition a separate workshop was held for participants representing statutory agencies. Discussion was noted on flipcharts, and as with the district events detailed notes were taken to ensure that views and comments were recorded accurately. Initial feedback from each of the workshop groups is reported below.

Countywide conference: 'Shaping the future' 6th July 2004
Priorities for investment in voluntary & community infrastructure - workshop format

First part (whole group together, allow 5 minutes)

Introductions.

Second part (whole group together, allow 10-15 minutes)

Discuss the main findings from the district consultation events:

- *Are these the main priorities for investing further resources in County Durham's voluntary and community sector infrastructure?*
- *If not, what are? or what additional things should be prioritised?*
- *If yes, what should be done about it?*
- *Other comments and reflections from the experience of participants?*

Third part (split into 2 or 3 sub-groups, allow 15-20 minutes)

- *You have £500,000 to spend on developing Co. Durham's voluntary and community sector infrastructure for the next two-three years. How would you spend it?*
- *Why?*

Last part (whole group together, allow 15-20 minutes)

- *Feedback on the results from part three*
- *Any comments or reflections on what things have come out*
- *From this the group should be asked to agree one (or at most two) main points to feedback to the rest of the conference*
- *Who should be responsible for taking the consultation ideas forward?*
- *An infrastructure plan will be developed from the results of these consultations. What (if any) further consultation is needed around this?*

Workshop Feedback: Priorities for investment in voluntary & community infrastructure

Group/Facilitator	What one (or two) key messages would this group like to report back to the rest of the conference?
Group 1 Tina Parry Derwentside CVS	Staffing - Funding advice workers, co-ordinators, training for staff/volunteers and induction packs along with support, expenses. Need skilled staff. Encourage volunteers in to employment. IT - countywide Structure - sustainable Employed - IT workers - designated to districts Money to be divided by districts not by deprivation but a pot of money for each.
Group 2 Paula Murray Derwentside CVS	Mobile outreach services - use provision already in place i.e. police/library. Provide services such as photocopying, laptop, fax, etc. Opportunity for other organisations to provide services via outreach services. Fast track funding system: - Small grants - Crisis grants
Group 3 David Dorman-Smith Easington CVS	How inclusive the consultation process has been was raised as an issue - many organisations and groups need support and yet no one knows about them. Need a mapping process. CVS need to know who to include on consultation. More awareness required.

Group 4 Belinda Lewis Chester-le-Street CVS	ICT is a priority - supports networking, inter-communication across county. (needs support via training) Who should take consultation forward? Researchers need to take in to account that volunteers in community groups cannot be at their beck and call! Those contacted not always in a position to answer on behalf of the community organisation. Best placed to carry this forward is OVN with the cooperation of other agencies (i.e. DRCC)
Group 5 Mike Russell CAVOS	Long term, sustainable funding, raise awareness of support agencies, professional PR. Who takes it forward? CVS? OVN? An independent strong voluntary and community sector organisation which is professional with new mainstream funding.
Group 6 Jackie Graham Durham City CVS	We've got it - streamline and fine tune it. Communication - be pro-active - get out there to the grassroots. No more consultations - we want action.
Group 7 Julie Taylor Durham City CVS	One stop shop which is as comprehensive as possible offering more than advice, but actual assistance with key tasks. Acknowledge central importance of volunteers; their recruitment, recognition, training, support.
Group 8/9 (<i>Statutory</i>) Rob Macmillan CRESR	Problems in understanding what is already on the ground. Streamlining that provision and effort in making sure what is already there works together. Community and building sustainable support. Sharing information - coordinating workers local authorities to coordinate their workers with the sector. Biggest challenge is getting people together and agree the roles for the infrastructure for the county.
Group 10 Julia Bowles CAVOS	Funded by Government (direct) but locally accountable i.e. not local authority. More consultation around Government plans/strategies with an effective timescale.
Group 11 Gillian Fortune DRCC	Develop one-stop shops/community hubs in the communities Provide outreach services and support Mapping of resources Direction of resources and information OVN and CVS Network to take forward properly resourced.
Group 12 Michele Armstrong 2D	Networking - investment in OVN and how all groups/organisations are part of it. Link workers to coordinate advisors to network and work in localities. Central point to coordinate and update organisations on a range of issues to prevent duplication of services, identify gaps and prevent a disjointed service. Central access point and register.

D. Key infrastructure providers: in-depth interviews

The aim of this part of the study was not to provide a comprehensive map of infrastructure provision. Rather it was intended to obtain a better understanding of the *capacity* of provision than that available from the survey alone. Whilst the survey provided an indication of the numbers of organisations who claim to offer advice and support to others, it did not provide much of a sense of the capacity of each of these.

A sample of infrastructure providers was selected to reflect the different types of provision:

- core generic provision (including members of the CVS network and other agencies)
- specialist provision
- informal provision

Interviews were undertaken with a small selection of both specialist providers and informal providers in order to gain a better understanding of what this kind of provision typically involves, rather than aim to provide a comprehensive picture. These should be seen therefore as illustrative case studies, rather than necessarily representative cases. Twenty-five organisations were approached for interview, and a total of 21 were completed. The table below indicates those organisations which were interviewed in depth.

Exploring infrastructure provision in County Durham - in-depth interviews

1	Chester le Street & District CVS & VB	CVS Network
2	Derwentside Council for Voluntary Service	CVS Network
3	Durham City District Council for Voluntary Service	CVS Network
4	Easington District Council of Voluntary Service	CVS Network
5	CAVOS (Community and Voluntary Organisations Sedgefield)	CVS Network
6	2D (Support for the voluntary & community sector of Teesdale & Wear Valley)	CVS Network
7	Durham Rural Community Council	CVS Network
8	Churches Regional Commission in North East	Other potential core providers
9	County Durham Foundation	Other potential core providers
10	Workers Educational Association	Other potential core providers
11	Groundwork East Durham	Other potential core providers
12	Voluntary Sector Academy (DISC)	Other potential core providers
13	Teesdale Community Resources	Other potential core providers
14	Centrepoint	Specialist provision
15	Durham and Darlington Racial Equality Council	Specialist provision
16	Integrated Trust Ltd	Specialist provision
17	Teesdale Village Halls Consortium	Specialist provision
18	Wheatley Hill Social Welfare Centre	Informal provision
19	Delves Lane Community Association	Informal provision
20	Pelaw View Centre	Informal provision
21	Durham County Council Community Support Division	Tertiary provision

Interviews were guided by a semi-structured interview guide with questions under the following headings:

- A. Additional background information about the respondent/organisation
- B. Check screening survey responses are accurate
- C. Overall capacity
- D. Offering support to others
- E. Gaps and Duplication
- F. Collaboration
- G. Strengths and weaknesses of infrastructure