

VS6 – Working together to build a stronger Liverpool City Region

Children and Young People (C&YP) VCFSE Sector Assembly: 27th May 2020

Build Back Better: Recommendations for a Six Point C&YP Recovery Plan

- 1. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE RECOVER**
Assess and address impact of crisis on children and young people
- 2. CLOSING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE**
Assess and address the impact of digital exclusion on children and young people
- 3. DELIVERING THE DAY JOB**
Support VCFSE children and young people organisations to recover
- 4. RESILIENCE REVIEW**
Review what's worked and what's not for C&YP VCFSE delivery organisations in wave 1 of COVID-19
- 5. YOUNG PEOPLE'S PRESS**
Promote good news stories about YP and youth work
- 6. INVESTMENT AND FLEXIBILITY**
LCR review of investment in children and young people's services

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Foreword

“While Covid-19 may have had less direct impact on children and young people, the indirect impacts have been deep and substantial. Out of necessity, as a society, we have largely parked our children and young people over the last few months but that can’t continue and we need to recognise the costs of this. VCFSE agencies and partners have been there, firefighting, and we now need to make sure what limited resources we have in the city region are protected, maintained and given the backing they need.

May’s VS6 Assembly brought together the City Region’s leading C&YP VCFSE leaders who have helped to set out a six-point plan for moving forward. We now need to make this plan happen.”

**Gill Bainbridge, Chief Executive of Merseyside Youth Association,
Member of VS6, and Chair of the C&YP Assembly Event**

The VS6 Children and Young People's VCFSE Assembly was held via Zoom on 27th May 2020. Gill Bainbridge, MYA, chaired the event and 44 participants from 39 organisations attended.

Key speakers were:

- Matt Mason from the Combined Authority presented data on the Impact of Covid on the LCR
- Gill Bainbridge outlined thoughts around how to safely return to direct work with children and young people (workshop 1)
- Monique Collier considered the impact of the pandemic on the needs of children and young people (workshop 2)
- Stuart McGrory asked people to think about the needs of their organisations and how we "build back better" (workshop 3)
- Phil Prescott launched the LCR Metro Mayor Youth Advisory Group

During three workshops, participants discussed the key themes in terms of their own organisation's experience, concerns and ideas. These were collated by the facilitators and form the basis of this report. Notes from the workshops are on pages 4 to 6.

The ideas, concerns and requests have been drawn together by VS6 into a set of recommendations (see page 3) for building back C&YP VCFSE activity. Participants and registered organisations were asked to respond, input and help finalise these recommendations.

Key recommendations are on the following page.

Six Point Plan for LCR VCFSE Children and Young People Organisations

Recommendation 1: Children and young people recover

1. **Assess and address impact of crisis on children and young people**, including:
 - 1.1. Address increased mental wellbeing support needs of young people (alongside statutory services)
 - 1.2. Review scale of increase in cases of domestic violence and the support needs of young people across LCR; better understand what services are available and the routes to accessing these for young people
 - 1.3. Understand the impact this crisis will have on food, finances, and housing (eviction) for young people over the next 12 months and how the sector can address this
 - 1.4. Address employment/training issues facing school leavers

Recommendation 2: Closing the digital divide

2. **Assess and address the impact of digital exclusion on children and young people**, including:
 - 2.1. Access to IT equipment for home learning and to reduce social isolation - especially disabled young people
 - 2.2. Ability to connect to support services; peers; learning & education; training & access to work

Recommendation 3: Delivering the day job

3. **Support VCFSE children and young people organisations to recover**, including:
 - 3.1. LCR support and guidance for children and young people organisations to return to work, e.g. risk assessments, access to PPE
 - 3.2. Guidance about adapting delivery models – especially face to face and in community venues/settings
 - 3.3. Collective procurement of PPE supplies at LCR or Council level
 - 3.4. Better collective and multi-agency working, e.g. understanding/awareness about signposting referral points within VCFSE and public sectors; develop a triage system for VCFSE organisations and level of need that different agencies are best placed to deliver
 - 3.5. Call for more volunteers to support children and young people
 - 3.6. Assess potential for LCR Cares to shift call to larger pots for delivery organisations in financial danger

Recommendation 4: Resilience review

4. **Review what's worked and what's not for children and young people VCFSE delivery organisations in wave 1 of COVID-19 – what can we do to improve resilience planning**, in particular:
 - 4.1. Find ways to identify and share best practice in digital delivery and blend with face to face delivery to improve ways of working
 - 4.2. Support from commissioners and flexibility of contracted delivery during COVID-19, e.g. monitoring requirements

Recommendation 5: Young people's press

5. **Promote good news**, including:
 - 5.1. Positive stories of young people adhering to lockdown, showing that young people care and are responsible
 - 5.2. Promoting the value of youth work as part of our communities and the response to date

Recommendation 6: Investment and flexibility

6. **LCR review of investment in children and young people's services**, covering:
 - 6.1. Children and young people's consortium development support
 - 6.2. Longer term funding
 - 6.3. The impact of lost income on VCFSE children and young people's delivery organisations
 - 6.4. Potential public sector funds for non-COVID-19 delivery over next 2 years

Workshop A: Practical steps for a safe return

Have you begun planning your return to face to face work? What are the major issues and concerns?

- Some but not all organisations have begun planning a return to face-to-face work
- Lack of availability and clarity in advice and for children YP and families
- Lack of PPE and the need for training of all users in its effective use
- Timing – conflicting worries over a lack of services reintroduced by the start of the school holidays and about the public health ramifications of returning to face-to-face too soon
- The need for robust risk assessments and better advice on these
- Implementation social distancing and enhanced cleaning measures
- Reduced capacity because of a need to socially distant – a shift from open access to targeted youth work
- Existing spaces inappropriate for delivery under social distancing e.g. too small a counselling rooms, lack of outside space, building occupied by multiple organisations with different policies/practices
- New difficulties working in schools since they don't want outside providers coming in
- Ensuring that YP are able to travel to face-to-face services in a socially distant way
- Backlash from making mistakes
- Lack of adequately rapid volunteer deployment
- Strategies for facilitating group work with YP with complex needs in a socially distant way
- Possible reluctance of parents/carers to allow YP to begin attending sessions again
- Concerns that a detached youth work approach might encourage more young people to gather in groups
- Some important activities seemingly not viable for a while e.g. home visits
- Reconfiguring services to come with increased demands for mental health support
- Potential liability and damage to organisation's reputation in the event of a breakout
- COVID-19 transmission and the public health and human life consequences of a second peak

What does a good and safe return look like?

- Safety of all parties – staff, volunteers, young people, parents, carers, etc.
- Behavioural change from all stakeholders to a safety/social distancing first mind-set
- Creation of social distancing appropriate environments and increased use of outdoor space e.g. forest schools
- Smaller group sizes where necessary to maintain distancing, alternative service provision for others
- Effective cleaning and hygiene systems - cleaning rotas, additional handwashing stations, etc.
- Effective use of PPE including innovative ways of encouraging YP to wear it
- Continuing to building on the successful aspects of digital engagement
- YP still getting a high quality of support
- Greater visibility of services so those accessing them for the first time can find them easily

What do you need to build back better for a safe return? And from whom?

- City Region wide guidance on risk assessments (including templates), workplace safety, PPE, lone working, safeguarding, liability in the case of an outbreak, pathways for referrals in light of recent disruptions etc.
- City Region wide communications system for localised COVID-19 updates and to avoid duplication of work
- Top-down provision and distribution of PPE
- Regular COVID-19 testing and an effective track and trace system
- Access to larger spaces
- More funding and flexibility in funding terms
- More and better partnership working
- Recognition of youth workers' crucial work including a defined status from Central Government
- Support from LCRCA, local authorities, National Youth Agency and VS6 with all of the above

Workshop B: What issues has COVID-19 and the lockdown raised for the children and young people you work with?

What are the emerging issues and concerns for your cohort?

- Digital exclusion – particularly amongst disabled/learning disabled YP
- Mental health – anxiety, OCD, depression, sense of self-worth, sense of hopelessness about future prospects
- Loss/change in access to their existing support networks – friends, extended family, therapists, youth workers
- Material precarity – food insecurity, financial worry, possibility of eviction
- Bereavement
- Social isolation – particularly its effects on already at risk groups
- Increased caring responsibilities for YP
- Impact of crisis on YP's education
- Heightened rates of and intensified impact of domestic violence including child on parent violence
- Lack of access to outdoor space
- Boredom and loneliness
- 0-11 year olds experiencing food poverty or who lack access to outdoor spaces are particularly affected
- Increased concerns over lack of contact from young people and parents/carers
- Increased pressures on parents/carers especially those of disabled/learning disabled YP

What changes could you make to respond to these issues and new needs?

- Develop clear transition plans addressing the above issues
- More and better collaborative partnerships to address YP's needs holistically including anti-poverty work
- Improve referral pathways and staff's understanding of them
- Increase parental engagement while avoiding paternalism e.g. online bingo sessions have been popular
- Ensure everyone has access to the internet and an internet enabled device
- Work collaboratively with schools to ensure those who've flourished under lockdown continue to do so beyond it and review the sometimes unconstructive pressures of statutory services
- Send out activity packs to families including arts, crafts, outdoor activity and self-care equipment/resources
- Increase targeted youth work and refer lower risk groups to larger organisations with more capacity
- Address the knowledge gap of part-time/less qualified on issue based approaches resulting from the de-professionalisation of youth work
- Deliver more services via Zoom as appropriate and develop staff's digital facilitation skills

What do you need to build back better to meet these needs? And from whom?

- Centralised mapping exercise and communications to avoid duplication of labour and improve referral pathways
- A cultural shift to viewing YP as part of the solution, starting with more positive communications about YP
- Promotion of volunteering schemes to YP e.g. bike delivery mutual aid schemes
- Free/cheap internet and internet connected devices to families and YP who need it
- More funding and greater flexibility eligibility criteria age/demographic eligibility
- More and better partnership working
- Training for staff on issue based and trauma informed youth work practices
- Widely accessible resource toolkit for staff on how to respond to different issues and needs
- Support from LCRCA, local authorities, National Youth Agency and VS6 with all of the above

Workshop C: How has lockdown impacted on your ability to sustain your organisation?

What have been the impacts or concerns?

- Impaired organisational ability to fulfil existing contractual commitments
- Homeworking has been a challenge for some staff members
- Long-term financial security – non-COVID-19 emergency funding pots are scarce and writing long term bids is challenging with this much uncertainty
- Short-term funding – loss of income generation streams, funding being offered too many too small pots with tight deadlines at a time of already stretched capacity
- Loss of the organic conversations that occur at physical events and can lead to new innovations and partnerships
- Loss of non-grant income generation e.g. charity shops, fundraising events, etc.
- Suspension of delivery – some can be moved online but other bits rely on face-to-face e.g. in school projects, difficulties in maintaining delivery of usual services in addition to emergency response
- Loss of conventional volunteer recruitment strategy via contact with communities

What would a sustainable future look like for your organisation? Can you build back better?

- More and broader multi-agency partnerships and collaboration –on bids, in working practices; through larger organisations providing support to smaller ones with admin, policy, etc.; and through the establishing of fewer, larger, multi-activity, multi-organisation centres to replace smaller single purpose sites.
- Longer term funding
- Development of sustainable food based community projects
- Increase in trading and other non-grant income
- Creating clear contingency plans
- Continuing to build on skills and capacity for digital delivery

What do you need to build back better? And from whom?

- More commissioning rather than procurement and competition
- More and longer term funding and a re-opening of non-COVID-19 funding
- A relaxation of funding processes with more accessible systems, less scrutiny and a faster turnaround on decisions
- A broadened scope for COVID-19 funding – less focus on the emergency response and more about responding to the existing issues which the crisis has exacerbated
- A raising of the profile for youth work, YP's services and volunteering both locally and nationally – for it to be viewed as an essential service akin to the NHS
- Support for the sector in building and working in partnerships
- City Region wide support with volunteer recruitment
- City Region wide guidance on the path forward
- Clear, detailed City Region wide contingency plans for response to a second wave of the crisis
- Investment in staff and volunteer training across the sector
- Support from LCRCA, local authorities, National Youth Agency and VS6 with all of the above

Assembly Agenda

Time	Item
2:00pm	Welcome, introduction, housekeeping <i>Chair: Gill Bainbridge (Merseyside Youth Association)</i>
2:10pm	LCR impact of COVID-19 on young people <i>Matt Mason (Liverpool City Region Combined Authority)</i>
2:20pm	Workshop: Practical steps for a safe return <i>Gill Bainbridge (Merseyside Youth Association)</i>
2:40pm	Workshop: What issues has COVID-19 and the lockdown raised for the children and young people you work with? <i>Monique Collier (Young Person's Advisory Service)</i>
3:00pm	Workshop: How has lockdown impacted on your ability to sustain your organisation? <i>Stuart McGrory (VOLA)</i>
3:20pm	Overview and launch of the LCR Metro Mayor Youth Advisory Group <i>Phil Prescott (Liverpool City Region Combined Authority)</i>
3:25pm	Plenary <i>Gill Bainbridge (Merseyside Youth Association)</i>
3:30pm	Close

List of Organisations Represented

1. ADDvanced Solutions Community Network
2. Altvalley Community Trust
3. Blackburne House
4. Break The Mould Education
5. Carrbridge Centre Ltd
6. Centre 63
7. Children Social Care
8. Clair's Parents Meeting Parents ADHD Support
9. Community Action Wirral
10. Crea8ing Careers
11. Diocese of Liverpool
12. Edsential
13. Everton in the Community
14. ForHousing
15. Greenbank
16. Heswall Disabled Children's Holiday Fund
17. Home-Start Knowsley
18. HYPE Merseyside
19. KFCA
20. Knowsley Disability Concern
21. Knowsley Youth Mutual
22. Koala North West
23. LFC Foundation
24. Litherland Youth and Community Centre
25. Liverpool City Council
26. Liverpool City Region Combined Authority
27. Meadow Park Community Orchard
28. Merseyside Violence Reduction Partnership
29. Merseyside Youth Association
30. MFRS
31. MPH Training
32. MSP
33. Natural Beginnings Montessori Nursery
34. Neo Community
35. Nugent
36. Our House - Walton Community Hub
37. Positive Futures
38. Power in Partnership Ltd (PIP)
39. Safe Families
40. Sefton CVS
41. SHAP
42. St George's Church, Huyton
43. St Helens Chamber
44. St Helens Safeguarding Children Partnership
45. The Open Door Centre / Bloom Building
46. Torus Foundation
47. UC Crew
48. Vauxhall Neighbourhood Council
49. VOLA
50. VSNW
51. Wellbeing Enterprises CIC
52. Wirral Unplugged
53. Wirral Youth Matters
54. Young Person's Advisory Service
55. Youth Focus NW
56. YouthFed

VS6 is a partnership of support organisations working with the 8,600 voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) groups operating across our Liverpool City Region

VCFSE in Liverpool City Region

- Over 8,600 VCFSE groups supporting communities across the City Region including 5,500 community groups
- 24,000 plus FTE employees working in the sector
- £918m GVA contribution to the City Region
- 180,000 volunteers contributing over 500,000 hours per week¹

What do we do?

VS6 work together to champion the vital role our sector does and could play in the future of the City Region, while seeking to shape local policy and implementation for the benefit of our communities.

How do we do this?

VCFSE support organisations have collectively engaged with public and private sector partners on a City Region level since 2004. In 2015, we formally launched the VS6 partnership in order to provide a voice, platform and action model for VCFSE participation.

We're focused on driving positive change by connecting the VCFSE sector with our developing city region. Together, we have links to 8,600 organisations across the six boroughs, and aim to support these groups – many integral to our communities - to collectively influence decision making:

- Offering solutions to some of the most challenging economic issues facing our City Region
- Driving community-centred approaches to transforming health and well-being
- Providing a single point of contact for the city's VCFSE sector

Contact

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¹ Source: Measuring the size and scope of the VCS in Liverpool City Region (Liverpool John Moores University: 2015)