



Internal Evaluation of the impact of LVSC's Policy & Knowledge team's work 2011-12

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1. Introduction

At the end of 2010-11 London Voluntary Service Council (LVSC) commissioned two researchers to produce an independent evaluation of LVSC's Policy & Knowledge team's work. This identified a number of positive economic and social impacts:

"Without LVSC, dedicated policy and knowledge posts would need to be created, or individual organisations would need to devote more time to gathering and disseminating information, consulting on policy, contributing to policy consultations and coordinating responses. It is possible to ascribe an approximate financial value to this. The evaluators estimate the cost of this to be in the region of £1.5million per annum, compared with LVSC's 2009/10 expenditure on policy and knowledge work of £550,000 (including staff salaries, office costs and overheads). LVSC's policy and knowledge work represents substantial value for money."

"LVSC works at a strategic level, where the chains of impact may be very extended. By contributing to policy, securing representation to have influence, and getting more and better consultation, it has a central role in creating an environment in which [voluntary and community sector] VCS organisations at many levels are enabled to create and have greater impact on communities, organisations, families and individuals.

"The evaluation shows that LVSC has had some important impacts in terms of policy changes and improvements, enabling more direct consultation with the VCS, facilitating statutory bodies to consult with the VCS and gaining representation on a range of strategic bodies and partnerships. This has included enabling the voices of VCS service users to be better heard.

"These impacts have been felt in health inequalities, employment and skills, migration and children's services. LVSC has been and remains an important player in pan-London funding of the VCS. These impacts underline the value of LVSC's policy and knowledge work to member organisations and policy makers alike. This has led to a policy environment in London which is more responsive to the needs and views of Londoners the VCS serves."

The evaluation also made a number of recommendations to improve the positive impacts that the team could make and to ensure these were measured and recorded in the future.

Funding restrictions mean that there are insufficient resources to conduct another independent evaluation of the team's work in 2011-12. Instead the team has worked together to produce this internal evaluation of its work, as a record of the impacts of this work and to develop a new set of recommendations to improve work in the future,

2. Methodology

This report is based on the following analyses:

- Review and follow up of implementation of the recommendations of the independent evaluation of the Team's work in 2010 -11.
- An electronic survey on awareness of, and satisfaction with, the work of the Policy team in 2011-12, sent out to all LVSC's mailing lists.
- More detailed follow up questions on the impact of LVSC's health, Big Squeeze, London Employment & Skills Policy Network (LESPN)'s policy work in 2011-12 to VCS organisations and funders or policy makers.
- A detailed analysis of the Voluntary Sector Forum (VSF) campaign to campaign against cuts to the London Councils Borough Grants Scheme.
- Analysis of changes to policy documents and strategies as a result of LVSC's policy work in 2011-12.

3. Our response to previous external evaluation

The 2011-12 independent evaluation made the following recommendations to which LVSC has responded in the ways listed.

Social impacts: Undertake an annual survey across the VCS in London of the social impacts of LVSC's work, including the longer term outcomes and impacts of initiatives undertaken or supported by LVSC, drawing where practical on service user feedback. The results of this survey would be independently reviewed and subsequently published.

Our response: This report contains the results of this first annual survey. Financial constraints meant that it could not be independently evaluated.

Each year, the influence of one significant piece of LVSC work on policy should be tracked in detail and the results fed back to members and networks. This could be written up as a case study to demonstrate impact. More generally, LVSC should track its policy influence, as a continuous exercise, including through citations in public policy documents and the number of times downloads are made of LVSC work.

Our response: In 2011 LVSC conducted a piece of work to track in detail the influence of the VSF campaign against cuts to London Councils funding, which was made available on the LVSC website. This report contains further details of LVSC's policy influence over 2011-12.

Membership: Place much greater emphasis on building LVSC's membership, learning from the success of NCVO in building its membership.

Our response: LVSC has reviewed its membership offer as a result and is currently beginning a new membership drive for 2012-13.

National voluntary organisations: Engage national voluntary organisations active in London, particularly to strengthen the contribution they can make to the wellbeing and development of smaller VCS organisations, and the communities of place and interest they serve.

Our response: LVSC has joined the NCVO / British Red Cross policy group working on commissioning and public service delivery. Links with NCVO (climate change and LESP work), ACEVO (LESPN and health work) and NAVCA (Joint conference and AGM, LESPN and health work) have been strengthened.

Spotting gaps: Take on an explicit role in spotting gaps where more co-ordinated or networked approaches can enhance the contribution of the VCS by:

- **exploring the possibilities of establishing and securing necessary resources for a health inequalities network;**
- **considering a role for LVSC in responding to major changes in Government health policy, specifically the impact on the VCS of GP consortia replacing Primary Care Trusts.**

Our response: LVSC has received funding for health policy work through its work as part of Regional Voices, the Department of Health's Strategic Partners programme. This has involved responding to major changes in Government health policy, including the replacement of Primary Care Trusts with Clinical Commissioning Groups. LVSC is currently in discussion with the Greater London Authority (GLA) on the future of the Community Voices for Health network that was established to inform work on the Mayor of London's Health Inequalities Strategy.

Public policy priorities: To 'refresh' LVSC strategies and plans to take account of the implications of many changes in public policy instituted by the Coalition Government since May 2010 and affecting the VCS in London. It is recognised that LVSC will continue to need to make strategic choices between different policy areas. A set of criteria for making such choices is suggested at 5.2.4. Refreshed strategies and plans are likely to be based on more extensive and closer partnerships to influence public policy and practice.

Our response: LVSC will use the findings of this evaluation report and the criteria suggested to review the policy areas that it focuses on.

Networks: Rationalise the existing networks: LESP work has a continuing role; VSF has a critical role in working to protect pan-London VCS funding and ensuring effective transition arrangements for previously London Councils funded organisations; should there be a significant reduction in the number of voluntary and community organisations funded by London Councils, the longer term role of VSF should be reviewed towards the end of 2011. The evaluators understand there to be VCS support for a continuing role for VSF in these circumstances.

This role will need to be mapped; Third Sector Alliance (3SA), [the London VCs policy forum] should be superseded by a general LVSC Policy Forum, taking on a clearing house role for issues of wide concern in the sector; much of the work of this Forum should be conducted electronically. The funding for [London Regional consortium] LRC is coming to an end. Where there are infrastructure roles needing continuing attention, its role should be superseded by the general LVSC Forum (as above); Any future networks should proceed on the basis that they have dedicated funded resource within LVSC.

Our response: LESPN has continued; the role of VSF is currently being reviewed; 3SA has been replaced by a general policy forum, but this is currently virtual in form as there is no dedicated funding for such a network; LRC work has been stopped. We have recently been funded to develop a network of VCS organisations working with the criminal justice system. This will include a sub-set of the organisations that form part of the policy forum (those receiving the LVSC e-bulletin) but will be branded differently to distinguish its focus.

Equalities bodies: Develop closer partnership work with equalities organisations to facilitate their greater input into LVSC policy and knowledge work.

Our response: LVSC's Policy & Networks Development Officer continues to lead LVSC's equalities work and in 2011-12, LVSC hosted the London equalities and human rights network, HEAR, when its funding ended, to ensure a continued network with which we could work in partnership.

Research role: Strengthen the future research role of LVSC through identifying academic research partners with whom to bid for and undertake joint research on the sector in London. LVSC needs to position itself as a partner of choice when it comes to research, and a hub in linking researchers together.

Our response: Some links have been made with the Bartlett School of Planning at University College London, the University of East London and the London Marmot Health Inequalities Team. However, there is still considerable work to do to strengthen LVSC's research role.

NCVO: Reach agreement with NCVO on respective London and national roles about gathering data and information about the state of the sector, recognising that such roles often give access to decision making. NCVO is a natural strategic partner with whom there is scope for developing greater collaboration.

Our response: As a member of Regional Voices we have worked closely with NCVO on the crowd sourcing data on funding cuts to the VCS. However, the strategic relationship could be further strengthened with NCVO's research team.

Bulletins: Rationalise the range and frequency of bulletins being sent out by LVSC to assist frontline organisations and ensure clearer identification in the bulletins of the contribution, including outputs and softer outcomes that LVSC is making to the VCS. LVSC may wish to follow the pattern of shorter and more frequent bulletins adopted by a number of other VCS infrastructure bodies.

Our response: LVSC has replaced its policy e-bulletin with an LVSC e-bulletin and stopped producing 3SA and ChangeUp e-bulletins. However, it still continues to produce separate VSF, health and LESPN e-bulletins. Only VSF has looked at a model of more frequent shorter e-bulletins.

Governance: Commission or undertake itself a governance review of LVSC to ensure best fit of the Board with current and forthcoming policy work and selective engagement with and development of networks.

Our response: LVSC undertook a Governance Review in 2011. The Chair of the Board was involved in our policy work on the London Mayoral elections and chaired two of the four roundtable meetings with Mayoral election candidates.

Recommendations to take forward from review and follow up of 2010-11 independent evaluation

More work is required to take forward recommendations on:

- Developing a health inequalities or health and social care network
- Reviewing policy priority areas for the next year as a result of this evaluation, according to suggested criteria
- Developing the LVSC Policy Forum and securing funding for its work
- Reviewing the role of VSF
- Strengthening the future research role of LVSC
- Reviewing the change to an LVSC e-bulletin and reviewing the use, frequency and amount of information in all LVSC e-bulletins
- Developing greater Board engagement in LVSC's policy work

4. Results of internal evaluation of 2011-12 Policy & Knowledge team work

There were 55 respondents to the online survey. The majority of respondents were from the VCS (84%), with 7% from the public sector and 2% (one person) from the private sector.

22% of respondents stated that they worked for frontline organisations while 44% stated that they worked delivered support services (infrastructure organisations), suggesting that LVSC engages frontline organisations through its work with VCS support services.

Areas of work of respondents were:

- Policy 53%

- Campaigning 31%
- Research 36%

People were responding in the role of:

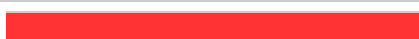


- Staff member of VCS organisation 52%
- Trustee of a VCS organisation 7%
- Volunteer at a VCS organisation 2%
- User of a VCS organisation 2%
- From equalities organisations 7%

18% stated that they responded as individuals, and 25% responded on behalf of an organisation.

- 9% of respondents worked for organisations covering the UK
- 18% covered England
- 47% were London-wide
- 16% a London borough
- 9% sub-regional or cross-borough
- 4% England & Wales
- 2% a neighbourhood smaller than a borough
- 2% an area outside London
- 2% London and the South..

The respondents to the survey were, therefore, skewed towards London-wide VCS organisations. Only 7% stated that they worked for or represented an equalities organisation.

4.1 The Big Squeeze

Have you heard of LVSC's 'Big Squeeze' survey or report, which looks at the impact of the recession and spending cuts on London's voluntary and community sector?			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		83.64%	46
2	No		14.55%	8
3	Don't know		1.82%	1
			answered	55
			skipped	-55

84% of respondents had heard of the Big Squeeze survey, indicating that it is well recognised within the sector and that marketing and publicity of the campaign have been successful. This is backed up by analysis showing the Big Squeeze was mentioned in 22 different publications (including Society Guardian, the Evening Standard, Third Sector and by False Economy) and LVSC's Big Squeeze webpage has been viewed 1603 times between August 2011 and January 2012.

Of these the majority (88%) had used it as a source of information.

36% had used it to share statistics with partners, member or service users, 26% to influence funders or commissioners, 26% to learn about what other organisations are doing and 24% to influence policy makers.

If yes, how have you used the Big Squeeze survey or report? (please tick all that apply)			
		Response Percent	Response Total
1	As a source of information	88.10%	37
2	To influence funders or commissioners	26.19%	11
3	To influence policy makers	23.81%	10
4	To lobby or campaign	14.29%	6
5	To learn about what other organisations are doing	26.19%	11
6	To rehaspond to a consultation	14.29%	6
7	To improve a funding application	21.43%	9
8	To improve partnership working	4.76%	2
9	To share statistics with partners, members or service users	35.71%	15
10	Other, please specify:	2.38%	1
		answered	42
		skipped	-42

Did the 'Big Squeeze' survey or report help to deliver a positive outcome for your organisation?			
		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes	18.60%	8
2	No	13.95%	6
3	Don't know	67.44%	29
		answered	43
		skipped	-43

19% of these respondents said that the report had helped to deliver a positive outcome for their organisation, but the vast majority (67%) said they did not know, indicating the difficulty in demonstrating the impact of policy work.

Of the seven people who provided more information, the following positive outcomes were identified:

- “Raised our profile.”
- “It supported arguments.”
- “Improved funder awareness of practical implications of cuts. Provided PR opportunities for us.”
- “When used for Transforming Local Infrastructure fund applications.”
- “Too early too tell.”
- “We used some of the statistics and report quotes as the basis for our own 'recession/cuts response' events, and to help us present a picture of the impact of the cuts to a couple of major stakeholders.”
- “Provided a wider context for some of our own work around cuts.”

These quotes illustrated a variety of different ways that respondents had used the Big Squeeze report.

Quotes from voluntary and community sector organisations about the Big Squeeze.

More detailed requests for information on the impact of the Big Squeeze were collected by e-mail or telephone interviews with voluntary and community sector groups with which LVSC had worked closely.

What have you found useful about LVSC’s work on the Big Squeeze last year?

Frontline organisations:

- “We're probably not a typical organisation, and I wasn't happy with the press coverage last year. I think I was misrepresented.”
- “We found Big Squeeze very useful as we were able to refer to this in various grant applications we made as well as in various consultations. For example, [London borough] Council has sought to not cover the 10% discretionary rate relief it offers to us as we own our own property. This comes to approx. £2000 per annum.”

An infrastructure organisation:

- “We found the survey extremely useful. It served us well as a lobbying tool. We also incorporated it in our Future report which has previously been sent to LVSC.”

Has working with LVSC changed anything about the way you’ve worked or made things easier for you?

Frontline organisations:

- “You would be better off talking to organisations that are more grant dependent, so I won't take part in the survey this year. So many community groups have lost their funding or huge chunks of it. We've just

had to reduce prices, and although it's been tough, we're doing reasonably ok.”

- “It made things easier for us in that it highlighted our name and service to the wider sector. Niche organisations such as [name of group] who deliver services for a specific BMER community are not often recognised and it’s good to be highlighted in such campaigns.

An infrastructure organisation:

- “The report has been things very much easier for us. We used it as a framework for local approaches and all our members understood its relevance. We have been keeping up with all 3 phases of the survey and campaign and it has really helped us in terms of formulating our information sharing and lobbying.”

Has any of your work on the Big Squeeze resulted in any long-term changes in policy, service delivery or commissioning? If so, can you describe this in more detail?

Frontline organisations:

- “While we are not sure of the impact of the Big Squeeze on specific grant applications, we were successful in various grant applications we made. Most notably a [Black, Minority Ethnic and Refugee] BMER partnership bid to deliver advisory services. This was for the next 3 1/2 years, which is great statutory funding potentially enabling us to leverage additional trust funding in the future. The BMER advice grant was commissioned by [a London borough] Council. First we had to convince the Grants Unit to allocate specific funding for BMER advice and subsequently develop a partnership to successively bid for this.”

An infrastructure organisation:

- “Yes. We presented facts and figures to the Head of Policy & Strategy at the council before we had access to the latest Big Squeeze figures. We were derided initially. After this, we used national figures and the stats from the Big Squeeze and we have been taken much more seriously and the stats are deemed very helpful for the council to see the wider picture of how cuts may impact on local communities.
- “The Big Squeeze guidance has been fantastic and politically, it has really helped us in terms of influencing local policy.”

These quotes illustrate that it may be more difficult for frontline organisations to identify any benefits of their involvement in the Big Squeeze survey than infrastructure organisations, although one frontline group is positive about the benefits the survey added to their funding applications and raising their profile. The infrastructure organisations were much better able to identify benefits, possibly because they work more directly with policymakers and funders.

Quotes from funders and policy makers on the Big Squeeze

More detailed requests for information on the impact of the Big Squeeze were collected by e-mail or telephone interviews with funders and policy makers that had worked with LVSC or been sent the report.

Has it been useful to work with LVSC on the Big Squeeze report /campaign last year and if so, why?

Political researcher:

- “The report was certainly useful to help us identify areas of the VCS that were being hit particularly hard, and to provide our Members with evidence when questioning the Mayor about the impact of cuts on his work on homelessness and youth violence. We'd hope to return to the report and its findings in the future, particularly if they are refreshed.”

Funder representative:

- “We were pleased to try to align funders’ concerns and information with the VCS’s in working on the Big Squeeze. We hope it might also have encouraged funders of all kinds to read and use the Big Squeeze report a little more readily.”

Funder:

- “Your report and evaluation are helpful in our understanding of the challenges that the voluntary and community organisations face in London as a result of the various austerity measures.”
- “I think we could benefit from some greater detail; our grants chair..... has said to LVSC and London Voluntary Sector Forum that it may be helpful to collaborate in the design and delivery of future services to improve our understanding of the grants process and the commissioning/contracting services as both present different challenges and opportunities; it may also be feasible to know a little more about the changes experienced in (say) housing, health or transport as well as the general messages; you may want to think about the respective roles of boroughs, local statutory funders and charities so there [is] perhaps an opportunity to work with London Funders.”

Has it made any difference to any work you have done or decisions you have taken? If so, please provide brief details.

Political researcher:

- “It's a bit hard for us to do very much more with the survey because our Members don't sit on the more relevant committees, and in the Planning & Housing Committee it didn't prove possible to do something on homelessness. The trick is always to identify some measures the Mayor could take to address the issues arising, so that Members have something to get stuck into.”

Funder representative:

- “It helped us to think about how to structure our events for funders this year. We started a series of meetings around the funding landscape and began these with the areas highlighted in the Big Squeeze report as most affected by cuts, i.e. services for children and young people, and then advice services. Following further data gathering by LVSC that has updated the 2011 Big Squeeze we have also brought funders together to look at the funding of infrastructure organisations.”

Are there any long-term outcomes from your work with LVCS or London's VCS regarding the Big Squeeze campaign/survey? If so, please briefly outline

Funder representative:

- “Too soon to say but if it goes ahead again in 2012 we would hope to be part of it.”

Funder representative:

- “The Big Squeeze findings have acted as a backdrop to all of our funding landscape meetings - it was how we identified the focus on children and young people at the first event and [LVSC’s Head of Policy] spoke directly about the state of the VCS at the support services meeting on 2 March.

These comments indicate that LVSC has been successful in involving funders and policymakers in the Big Squeeze work and publicising its findings. Benefits identified included increased awareness of the impact of the cuts, provision of evidence to support Assembly Members in their questions to the Mayor of London, and supporting the work of funders.




However, none of those quoted could cite specific changes to funding or particular policy measures that had emerged as a result of the Big Squeeze.

Impacts of the Big Squeeze in 2011-12 on policies, strategies and funding

- Informed three London Funders’ events to support funders in the capital to work together to address the issues of disproportionate cuts to advice, children & young people’s and infrastructure support services identified in the report.
- Policymakers informed us it had increased their understanding of the impact of the cuts on the voluntary and community sector (VCS) and its service users in London.
- VCS organisations have used the evidence provided to campaign and lobby and to provide evidence of need in funding applications
- London Assembly members used its evidence to inform their questions on the VCS to the Mayor of London.
- In one borough it is suggested that evidence from the Big Squeeze report may have influenced the council to take seriously the impact of spending cuts on the VCS, and this may have been linked to their decision to make cuts of only 6%(much less than in many other London boroughs) to their VCS funding.

- Contributed to a national policy document collated through Core Cities to show the differential impact of public spending cuts in England's major cities to national policymakers and funders.
- Informed the BBC of a need to change budgets set in 2007, for their involvement of London's VCS in the digital switchover campaign of 2010-12.

4.2 Voluntary Sector Forum (VSF)

Have you heard of LVSC's Voluntary Sector Forum (VSF) network?				
		Response Percent	Response Total	
1	Yes		85.45%	47
2	No		9.09%	5
3	Don't know		5.45%	3
		answered	55	
		skipped	-55	

85% of respondents had heard of Voluntary Sector Forum (VSF) indicating that it is well publicised and marketed.

Of the 41 respondents who answered the question of how VSF had helped them, the vast majority (78%) said that VSF provided them with information about London Councils. Over half (54%) found it was helpful to find out what other organisations were doing, and a third (34%) to respond to consultations and to improve partnership working.












Just under a third of respondents (29%) thought it was helpful in campaigning against London Councils funding cuts, while a quarter (24%) thought it was helpful in influencing policy makers, and 17% thought it was helpful in influencing funders.

One respondent said "We have been collaborating re messages to London Councils and encouraging responses to the current consultation", which also reflected the survey responses.




The answers to this question indicate that VSF is seen as extremely useful in terms of information giving, sharing good practice, and useful in responding to consultations and improving partnership working, and influencing policy makers or funders.

Of the 46 respondents who answered the question of whether they were a member of VSF 35% were and 46% were not. A relatively high percentage, almost a fifth, did not know whether they were a member or not. Therefore, although there is a high awareness of VSF, there is some confusion about its membership.

If yes, how has Voluntary Sector Forum (VSF) helped you? (please tick all that apply)

		Response Percent	Response Total
1	To get information about London Councils	 78.05%	32
2	To campaign against cuts to London Councils funding	 29.27%	12
3	To influence other funders or commissioners	 17.07%	7
4	To influence policy makers	 24.39%	10
5	To learn about what other organisations are doing	 53.66%	22
6	To campaign or lobby	 9.76%	4
7	To respond to a consultation	 34.15%	14
8	To improve a funding application	 4.88%	2
9	To improve partnership working	 34.15%	14
10	To improve service delivery to your users	 4.88%	2
11	Other, please specify:	 4.88%	2
		answered	41
		skipped	-41

Are you or your organisation a member of Voluntary Sector Forum?

		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes	 34.78%	16
2	No	 45.65%	21
3	Don't Know	 19.57%	9
		answered	46
		skipped	-46

Quotes from VCS organisations about VSF

From members:

- “It has revolutionised the way we work. Previously we were quite inward looking and very specialist. Being part of VSF has brought us into the voluntary sector community and we now feel part of that family. As a result

of their [the VSF Steering Group] encouragement we now also belong to the Housing Forum. This has benefited the community we serve tremendously. For example, we submitted evidence to the government on LGBT housing issues, case studies for LVSC's Big Squeeze, and worked in partnership with other groups to submit evidence to the Commons on the impact of housing benefit cuts on the homeless."

- "In common with many other organisations working with very vulnerable and marginalised people in London, the process of going through the London Councils funding review and associated consultations was a very difficult one for us. The support, information and encouragement given by VSF was invaluable in dealing with this, and in developing a sense of shared voice for the London Councils funded voluntary sector."
- "Thanks for the really useful info and resources you have up on your website"
- "So glad I contacted VSF - this is fantastically useful!" (Response to web resources and bulletin)
- "I thought I'd drop you a quick line to say how very useful your latest newsletter has been in keeping us up to date with these critical developments at London Councils. Thank you very much. We used/interpreted information relevant to us in a press release on children's health. Maybe you would like to use this as one indicator of impact the newsletter is making"
- "Thanks.... for your dedication and hard work on all our behalf. You have kept the show on the road and kept our momentum going."

Quotes from policymakers / funders

Solicitor involved in London Councils Judicial Review (JR) case:

- "VSF and WRC helped the JR case considerably by asking London Councils difficult questions and continually pressing for documents to find out what was going on. They helped to hold the public body to account and kept good records of how they did this as the consultation exercise unfolded. "

London Councils:

- "I think we could benefit from some greater detail; our grants chair, Sir Steve Bullock has said to LVSC and London Voluntary Sector Forum that it may be helpful to collaborate in the design and delivery of future services to improve our understanding of the grants process and the commissioning/contracting services as both present different challenges and opportunities; it may also be feasible to know a little more about the changes experienced in (say) housing, health or transport as well as the general messages; you may want to think about the respective roles of boroughs, local statutory funders and charities so there is perhaps an opportunity to work with London Funders."

Impact of VSF's campaign against London Councils funding cuts

LVSC conducted a separate evaluation of VSF's campaign against London Councils funding cuts in late 2011¹. This found that the campaign had achieved the following impacts:

- VSF brought groups together/speaking in solidarity to present a cohesive voice that was anti-protectionist.
- VSF submissions to both consultations provided evidence and argument to support regional commissioning.²
- VSF drew London Councils' attention to areas (such as equalities obligations) that they should have considered in order to ensure a lawful process of review and consultation. The Judge hearing the Judicial Review specifically cited VSF concerns that were raised in the formative stages of the initial process in 2010.
- VSF papers were included in Grants and Leaders committees bundles – elected members therefore had the opportunity to read and respond to the Forum's concerns.
- Sub-sectoral campaigns brought stronger sub-sectoral voices.
- No organisation had its funding cut on March 31st 2011, nor subsequently on June 30th 2011, as had originally been proposed.
- London Councils committed (at the VSF September 2010 conference) to transitional funding arrangements for groups whose services were to be de-commissioned and this commitment was honoured.
- Domestic violence and homelessness services were re-prioritised for funding, with an admission that they required pan-London commissioning to be effective, following an effective VSF campaign to provide supporting evidence for this view.
- VSF supported the claimants' solicitors during the Judicial Review of London Councils' initial decisions
- 28 commissions were re-classified as A* (and therefore would be funded to the end of current arrangements, rather than having funding terminated) following supplementary consultation after the Judicial Review.
- An additional £3million was put into the scheme increasing the budget for 2011-12 from £17.6m to £20.6m.
- Several boroughs (e.g. Bromley, Ealing, Islington, Lewisham and Wandsworth) have committed to spending any 'saving' (or part of 'saving') from 'repatriated' money from the London Councils Scheme on their local VCS, following VSF's campaign highlighting the importance of retaining overall funding levels in London's VCS..

¹ Available at

<http://www.lvsc.org.uk/media/51329/vsf%20campaign%20evaluation%20paper%20final%2028%206%2011.doc> [5th April, 2012]




² London Councils received 600 consultation responses (both online and written submissions) to the 2010 consultation. In 2011 to the supplementary consultation London Councils received 390 responses to the online survey with a further 100 submissions with detailed views on some 45 commissions

- VSF has laid firm foundations for arguments to come about protecting the grants scheme itself to ensure the needs of the most disadvantaged Londoners continue to be met.

Recommendations from the evaluation of the VSF campaign:

- VSF should build on the strong united voice it developed across member organisations to make its campaigning even more effective.
- LVSC should consider how it can further support VCS organisations to use equalities legislation and the London Councils judicial review findings to challenge decisions.
- LVSC should consider how it can better influence political decision-making and whether it should aim to influence more of London Councils policy
- LVSC should continue to monitor the impact of the cuts to the London Councils Grants Scheme.
- LVSC should work with London Councils to rebuild trust and working relationships with London's VCS following widespread opposition to the cuts to the Grants Scheme amongst the sector and the judicial review case.

4.3 London Employment & Skills Policy Network (LESPN)








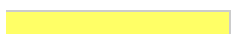

Have you heard of LVSC's London Employment & Skills Policy Network (LESPN)?			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		58.18%	32
2	No		38.18%	21
3	Don't know		3.64%	2
			answered	55
			skipped	-55




58% of respondents had heard of LESP. This is a good rate as LESP was only established in October 2009 (so is a much newer network than VSF) and works in a very specialist area, suggesting that its publicity and marketing is working well.

Only those who had heard of the network were asked how it had helped them.

Of the 27 who responded the majority, three quarters (74%) found it had helped them to get information about employment and skills policy and how it affected their organisation. Over half (56%) felt it had helped them to learn about what other organisations were doing and 44% to develop partnership working.

A quarter (26%) felt it helped to influence funders or commissioners and 22% felt it helped to influence policymakers.

If yes, how has it helped you? (please tick all that apply)			
		Response Percent	Response Total
1	To get information about employment and skills policy and how it affects your organisation		74.07% 20
2	To support campaigning or lobbying work		22.22% 6
3	To influence funders or commissioners		25.93% 7
4	To influence policy makers		22.22% 6
5	To learn about what other organisations are doing		55.56% 15
6	To respond to a consultation		11.11% 3
7	To improve bid writing		11.11% 3
8	To develop partnership working		44.44% 12
9	To improve service delivery for your users		14.81% 4
10	Other, please specify:		0.00% 0
		answered	27
		skipped	-27

Are you a member of the London Employment & Skills Policy Network (LESPN)?			
		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		35.48% 11
2	No		48.39% 15
3	Don't know		16.13% 5
		answered	31
		skipped	-31

Only 35% of respondents were members of LESP, but it is a specialist network specifically set up to work with employment and skills groups only. A relatively high proportion of respondents (16%) did not know if they were a member of the Network.

Quotes on LESP

From VCS organisations:

- “LVSC has to be commended for an excellent service that was provided in effectively bringing together the voluntary sector in London in a variety of

arenas including the difficult period of the Welfare to Work commissioning process through great networking and cascading down useful, user-friendly and effective information in terms of presentations, minutes or network contact details. Through LVSC we have been able to successfully apply for funding, found like-minded partner organisations and effectively lobby decision makers and power brokers. [I] always look forward to the mail outs. [Our organisation's] project details were put on the regular news bulletins and there was always a huge response in terms of enquiries and identifying the young people on to our projects. At this stage it is too early to look at long-term changes but certainly in the short- and medium-term LVSC were very effective."

- [LVSC has been useful through:] "Being able to be part of a wider network of VCS groups delivering employment and skills. Receiving the regular bulletins. More ready access to the media. We feel more connected to other organisations and have been able to generate more placements for our clients as a result. We have taken what we have learnt from supporting unemployed clients and applied it more widely to our work, including increasing the number of small group workshops and sessions and increasing the level of 1-2-1 support available to potential volunteers. We have also moved more towards a model of tailoring the placement more specifically to the client's needs as well as meeting the requirements of the organisation."

Quotes from policymakers / funders on LESPN work:

- "Thanks for coming along to the Economy, Culture and Sport Committee meeting..... I hope you found it a useful session. It was important to hear about some of the problems in delivering the Work Programme so far in London - your contribution really informed that discussion."
- "LVSC have provided strong representation of the sector and have been a valued source of information with regard to the views and perspectives of the VCS in London. Yes [it has made a difference to our work] with particular regard to the work the GLA has done with the [Department for Work and Pensions] DWP Work Programme prime contractors. LVSC have ensured a strong focus on provider accountability – and directly influenced the development of [a] series of Mayoral Asks of DWP and the Work Programme prime contractors. [In the long-term LVSC's employment and skills work has had an impact in]: ensuring London's VCS are represented in future ESF discussions; [and in] ensuring London's VCS have a strong voice in GLA relationship[s] with DWP Work Programme primes."

Impacts of LESPN work on policies, strategies and funders:




- LESPN successfully influenced the LSEB strategy 2010-11 to include a reference: "We will want to see how successful the new prime contractor models are in involving the voluntary sector and improving results for Londoners." The strategy also acknowledges the role of the VCS in

engaging disadvantaged Londoners who do not access mainstream statutory services.









- LESPAN was credited with persuading the LSEB to fund research work on the impact of new commissioning models on London, in particular VCS providers and disadvantaged groups. It also influenced the LSEB to include targets on closing gaps in employment and skills outcomes for disadvantaged groups in its legacy report.
- LESPAN has also successfully gained VCS representation on strategic bodies, including the London Strategic Migration Partnership and London Child Poverty Delivery Group sub-group on BME disadvantage.
- LESPAN has ensured VCS representation at DWP closed consultation sessions on welfare reform, the Work Programme, and migration of claimants from Incapacity Benefit to Employment & Support Allowance. The DWP has stated that it would like the VCS to play an increased role in the delivery of welfare to work programmes to better serve diverse customer groups. This is a message that LESPAN, among others, has been communicating.
- LESPAN facilitated events bringing together all potential primes, VCS providers, and the GLA, to discuss the Work Programme and to network with one another. Subsequently many VCS providers have established relationships and subcontracts with Work Programme prime contractors, and identified LESPAN as a positive facilitator in this process
- LESPAN has gathered evidence of the initial experiences of VCS providers delivering the Work Programme, and used this to inform discussions with DWP officials, and gain media coverage of VCS concerns (in The Observer, The Times, The Guardian, and VCS media).
- LESPAN members also met with Labour's shadow Employment Minister to discuss concerns, and its Work Programme research has been cited in Parliamentary debates. In response, the Government was prompted to publish preliminary figures on levels of VCS participation in Work Programme.
- LESPAN successfully lobbied for London's VCS to be included as stakeholders in the new London Enterprise Panel and for VCS representation on the Skills & Employment sub-group of the panel.
- The London Assembly report on the Olympics and Employment programme included recommendations directly developed from and attributed to LESPAN's evidence.

4.4 Climate Change policy work

Only 22% of organisations had heard of LVSC's climate change work, but this is understandable as the project is relatively new (begun in January 2011) and has had a number of changes in delivery and lead staff members as a result of LVSC's restructure in 2011.

Have you heard of LVSC's climate change work?			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		21.82%	12
2	No		76.36%	42
3	Don't know		1.82%	1
			answered	55
			skipped	-55

Only 12 respondents were therefore asked what was helpful about the climate change work.

If yes, how has it helped you? (please tick all that apply)			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Provides information on climate change policy and how it affects your organisation		50.00%	5
2	Helps your organisation to save money		10.00%	1
3	Supports lobbying and campaigning work		10.00%	1
4	Helps to influence funders or commissioners		0.00%	0
5	Helps to influence policymakers		10.00%	1
6	Provides information on what other organisations are doing		40.00%	4
7	Helped to respond to a consultation		0.00%	0
8	Supported a funding application		10.00%	1
9	Supported partnership working		30.00%	3
10	Improved service delivery for users		0.00%	0
11	Other, please specify:		10.00%	1
			answered	10
			skipped	-10

Half (50%) said that it was helpful in providing information on climate change policy and how it affected their organisation. 40% said it provided information on what other organisation are doing and 30% said it supported their partnership working. Only one respondent indicated that it helped the

organisation to save money, suggesting that this work will take time to deliver impacts on organisations' energy use or carbon footprint.

One respondent stated: "Not connected with this area of work - unaware what is done", indicating that the project is one of the least publicised of the LVSC Policy team's work areas.




No one answered the question about what other support LVSC could provide to help improve their organisation's environmental sustainability. This could indicate that those who knew of this work were happy with the service LVSC is currently providing or that there was little interest amongst respondents in improving their organisation's environmental sustainability.

As this is a relatively new project, no further methods were used to evaluate its impact on VCS organisations or policy makers or funders.

Impacts of LVSC's climate change work on policies, strategies and funders








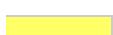


- Increased engagement with City Bridge Trust has resulted in Voluntary Action Islington being signed up to undergo a free eco-audit.

4.5 Health policy work

Have you heard of LVSC's health and/or social care policy work?				
			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		63.64%	35
2	No		30.91%	17
3	Don't know		5.45%	3
			answered	55
			skipped	-55

Only 64% of respondents had heard of LVSC's health policy work. This is disappointing, as this has been a major area of the team's policy work for the past four years and is a cross-cutting organisational theme for LVSC.

35 respondents were asked what they had found helpful about the health policy work. The majority (68%) had found the work helpful in getting information about health and social care policy and how it affected their organisation. 29% found it helpful to learn about what other organisations were doing and 25% to influence policy makers. 22% found it helpful to influence funders and commissioners.




If yes, how has it helped you? (please tick all that apply)			
		Response Percent	Response Total
1	To get information about health and social care policy and how it affects your organisation		67.86% 19
2	To influence funders or commissioners		21.43% 6
3	To influence policy makers		25.00% 7
4	To learn about what other organisations are doing		28.57% 8
5	To campaign or lobby		14.29% 4
6	To respond to a consultation		17.86% 5
7	To improve a funding application		10.71% 3
8	To improve partnership working		21.43% 6
9	To improve service delivery to your users		3.57% 1
10	Other, please specify:		7.14% 2
		answered	28
		skipped	-28

The health policy work had a slightly wider spread of answers as to what respondents found helpful, indicating that it may fulfil more needs or that LVSC's health policy work was currently attempting to do too many things and should focus on a few more specific aims.

Other uses included 'personal interest', and one respondent stated that: "I spoke at an event, I haven't used it myself" suggesting that LVSC may need to better promote its health policy work at the events that it holds, with both attendees and speakers.

Only 3% of respondents had signed up with LVSC's On the Radar database, 51% were not registered, while 46% didn't know if they were registered or not. This is again disappointing as the database has been publicised widely to London's VCS recently, but if we assume that there are 60,000 VCS organisations in London a 3% registration figure is higher than the 0.3% sign up indicated by the number of organisations currently registered.

On a more positive note no respondents stated that they had tried to sign up to the database but had not been able to complete all questions asked, although this may also reflect negatively on the level of interest in the project.

Has your organisation registered with LVSC's 'On the Radar' database?			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		2.86%	1
2	No		51.43%	18
3	Don't know		45.71%	16
4	Tried to sign up but couldn't complete all questions asked (if so, please let us know what support we can provide you with to help with this, in the comment box below)		0.00%	0
			answered	35
			skipped	-35

One respondent stated that they were not a service provider, so had not registered on the database, and responses from other non-service providers may, therefore, have underestimated the extent to which those eligible have registered.

Quotes on LVSC's health policy work

From VCS organisations:

- "I'm really impressed with the evidence you've submitted to "Caring for our Future" [a Government consultation] - it reads well and tells it like it is - and the references to studies throughout makes it un-ignorable!"
- "I also wanted to let you know that I had a quick read of your response to this consultation and it was probably the best one I read.....Really well structured, researched and you'd made some really good sector-specific and London-specific points."
- "Many thanks for sharing this very comprehensive submission. We were pleased to have the opportunity to take part in the event. I feel you have captured our concerns."
- "Thanks to you we have at least done our response and it remains to be seen what Lansley, et al, mean by the word 'listening'!"
- "Think you have done an amazing job pulling something sensible and coherent together to submit!" "Brilliant. Thanks for all your hard work."
- "[LVSC has] useful info on website, [is a] one-stop-shop for info about NHS changes, [held a] very useful high-level policy event – felt I was able

to really influence. As a result of our health work over the last few years, we now have:

- a community health consortium
 - a health & well-being forum for local voluntary organisations
 - a trading arm of [] to bid for contracts and sub-contract delivery to VCOs
 - excellent relationships with the PCT, public health and new CCG
 - increased NHS funding for specific projects, including being commissioned to manage a grant process for public health
 - a tri-borough sexual health provider forum (which we service and coordinate)
 - good joint working with the Local Involvement Network”
- “In relation to health, LVSC has provided a link with us to work on the Mayor of London’s Health Inequalities Strategy. We have recorded changes in local and regional policy linked to health, mostly around the impact of gangs on women and girls and as a result of relationships we have brokered between BAME community representations and local statutory sector workers.”
 - “I attended a LVSC event last year which was looking at the role of the 3rd sector in the new commissioning landscape and I particularly found [LVSC]’s presentation useful on different models of participation by the third sector on the Health and Well Being Boards. Since the event I contacted [LVSC] and [they] came and spoke to the Tower Hamlets Health and Well Being Forum Steering group again about how best to involve ourselves as third sector providers in the new Health and Well Being [H & WB] Boards and Clinical Commissioning Groups [CCG]. The steering group found this information very helpful. Some of the members of the Tower Hamlets H&WB Steering group met with the Clinical Commissioning Group recently to discuss how honest and useful communication can best be channelled between the CCG and H&WB Forum. There was genuine interest in better dialogue with the third sector and a GP CCG rep will hope fully be attending the next H&WB Forum. The H&WB Forum is also looking to establish representation with other relevant health and social care groups such as the CCG Public and Patient Engagement Steering Group from membership of the forum.”
 - “This [the report of LVSC’s ‘Prevention is Better than Cure’ event] will help us to work with local organisations to prepare for the new commissioning environment, and I’ll make sure our local commissioners receive this too.”

Quotes from funders and policymakers:

- [In relation to Public Health Transition:] “Thank you so much for your response to this. This information will help us further consider the needs of Londoners protected by Equality legislation when developing the policy in this field.”

- “The voluntary and community sector is fundamental to improving health and well-being, both in respect to ensuring that services and interventions reflect community needs and also as involvement of community and voluntary sector organisations are vital to reducing health inequalities. Consequently, as the primary umbrella group for London’s voluntary and community sector, LVSC is an invaluable partner in representing the views and issues of the sector and engaging the sector on health and well-being. LVSC has been a valued partner in ensuring that our work takes into account and engages the voluntary and community sector. For example, LVSC was arguably one of the few partners with the existing linkages to enable development of the third sector provider database. The third sector health and well-being provider database is an on-going project that it would be hoped would continue to be developed by the LVSC to improve the levels of commissioning of third sector providers by health commissioners.”
- “London Voluntary Service Council has been very helpful in several ways including:
 - Providing third sector input, views and expertise to projects
 - Cascading updates and invitations to the London voluntary and community sector
 - Working as a strategic partner to support joining up initiatives happening across London
 - Helping to identify opportunities to engage with the sector and identifying individuals and organisations to involve.
 It’s really helped the stakeholder engagement and outreach work for the myhealthlondon project [a website to better engage patients and the public with GP surgeries in London]. LVSC’s involvement in the myhealthlondon project has helped generate ideas for the noticeboard feature and encouraged voluntary and community groups to engage with the project. We’ll continue to engage and work with London’s VCS on the myhealthlondon project and use LVSC’s support to refine the product to benefit the widest range of Londoners.”

Impacts of LVSC’s health policy work on policies, strategies and funders

- Engagement of the VCS through Regional Voices and the Department of Health’s VCS Strategic partners in the NHS Listening Exercise was praised by Minister Paul Burstow. He sent a letter to the DH Strategic Partners thanking them for their work feeding into the Future Forum. He said that their input particularly contributed to some key changes including: plans to fundamentally strengthen public and patient involvement; improving the transparency and accountability of the new decision makers; and moving towards working more collaboratively throughout the system.
- Policymakers reported that LVSC’s response had informed considerations of the needs of Londoners protected by equality legislation in engaging with the London Health Improvement Board

- VCS organisations reported that LVSC’s support had enabled them to respond to the Future Forum consultation, which they would not have been able to do without such support
- LVSC successfully lobbied for VCS representation on the Alcohol and Obesity sub-groups of the London Health Improvement Board
- LVSC successfully lobbied NHS London and London Councils to hold a joint event bringing together local authority, VCS and NHS staff to discuss VCS engagement in health and social care following the huge reforms to the system currently being implemented.

Although survey results show that awareness of LVSC’s health policy work is low, the qualitative feedback and policy impacts demonstrate that its work in this area has been highly effective. This suggests more should be done to raise awareness of the good work being done in this area.”

4.6 General policy work

Is there any other LVSC policy work in which you have been involved in 2011-12? (our work this year has included: - engagement in the Mayor of London elections - campaigning against child poverty - campaigning against welfare benefit reform (including housing benefit changes) that disproportionately affect Londoners - work on children & young people's policy issues - providing regular updates on funding cuts to London's voluntary and community sector organisations - producing a general policy e-bulletin)

		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes	50.91%	28
2	No	43.64%	24
3	Don't know	5.45%	3
		answered	55
		skipped	-55

51% of respondents had been involved in other LVSC policy work in 2011-12 indicating the wide range of work that LVSC’s policy team has been engaged in over the year. Only 5% of respondents didn’t know if they had been involved in other LVSC policy work, indicating that the marketing and branding of LVSC’s general policy work is relatively well presented and understood.

All 24 of those who responded “Yes” to the previous question provided more information about this work and how it had helped them. Areas covered included:

Mayor of London Elections

- “Mayor of London elections - helped me to know more about their policies”
- “Very much by enabling us to have good engagement with the mayoral candidates, in particular Brian Paddick and to a lesser extent Boris Johnson”
- “Some engagement in Mayor of Ldn work. Didn't find very useful to our organisation so stopped.”

- “Engagement in Mayor of London elections. Partnership working, enabling delivery of joint working, networking, influencing policy-makers and commissioners.”
- “Gained access to Mayoral candidates”
- “I have attended the roundtable discussions with mayoral candidates. These discussions have been extremely helpful in allowing me to gain insight into how policy and politics interact in London.”
- “Engagement in Mayor of London Elections”
- “Mayoral Elections and campaigning”

The number who mentioned this was 8 (33%). Six comments were positive and one negative as to how helpful this was.

Policy e-bulletin

- “Find the general policy e-bulletin very useful”
- “The general policy e-bulletin has been really useful to find out what's going on in the sector and the regular funding cut updates has also been useful from an information perspective”
- “e-bulletin. the pifle update is v helpful”
- “E-Bulletin is good for policy updates.”
- “Updates - useful one stop shop for pan-London info”
- “Policy e -bulletin is very informative”
- “The updates have been a really useful source of information, both in terms of equipping me as a (generalist development) worker and in terms of providing me with useful links and summaries of policy issues to pass on to organisations in my borough.”
- “e-bulletin very helpful”

The number who mentioned this was 8 (33%). Eight comments were positive as to how helpful the policy e-bulletin was.

Welfare reform

- “Campaigning against child poverty and welfare reform”
- “WELFARE BENEFIT REFORMS - INFO HAS HELPED WITH BID APPLICATIONS & INFORMED BOARD OF IMPACTS.”
- “Welfare reform, employment, keeping abreast of other London sector issues”

The number mentioning welfare reform was 3 (13%). Two comments were specifically positive about how helpful this work is.

Funding cuts

- “funding cuts”
- “The general policy e-bulletin has been really useful to find out what's going on in the sector and the regular funding cut updates has also been useful from an information perspective”
- “Funding cuts information has helped [our organisation] to keep the sector and our trustees informed of developments.”

The number mentioning the funding cuts work was 3 (13%). Two comments were positive about helpful this work was.

Additional quote on funding cuts work:

- “This is a fantastic report. I am passing it on to [] who is sorting out a cuts survey as we speak to try and work out how we get this type of info from members. I think he will want to have a chat about this and how we can work together on cuts info (and try to get other regions involved to improve national info).”

London’s economy

- “Listening event on London's economy”

NHS reform

- “Work on the NHS reforms - specifically relating to London”

Child poverty

- “Campaigning against child poverty and welfare reform”

Other

- “It has made us well equipped to respond to the new political landscape and provide us with knowledge and tools to take action.”
- “Keeps us informed strategically”
- “Welfare reform, employment, keeping abreast of other London sector issues”

The general policy e-bulletin and the work on the London Mayoral elections were mentioned most often (33% respondents) as other pieces of LVSC’s policy work that respondents had been involved with. All comments about the policy e-bulletin were positive. Six respondents were positive about the help provided by the Mayoral election campaign, but one had not found this work helpful and so had ceased engagement. Welfare reform and the funding cuts report were the next most mentioned areas of policy work by respondents (13% each).

Quotes from London’s local Councils for Voluntary Service (CVSs) on LVSC’s work:

- “[Our organisation] values LVSC’s work in a number of ways:-
 - Key advocate between local infrastructure and London wide bodies eg GLA and London Councils without which there would be no coordinated response view from the sector London wide
 - Provision of policy and data analysis on London wide issues which allows us to advocate locally
 - Provision of HR support (PEACe) without which most of our local groups would not have access to professional HR support
 - Development of London wide philanthropy initiative (United Way London) a desperately needed solution to bring in additional funds to the sector which cannot be done at a local level “

- “LVSC provides an important strategic support role to CVSs in London as the organisation recognises and understands the specific problems associated with working in a huge metropolitan area that is so central to life in the UK. The organisation is able to provide centrally organised events, training and seminars which enable busy [Chief Executive Officers] CEOs and other CVS staff to keep up to date with policy changes which affect the VCS groups they support at local level; and to share ideas and methods of problem solving. I hope that London Councils will have the wisdom to continue to support LVSC in the knowledge that the organisation is beneficial, through CVSs and other specialist infrastructure bodies, to all the communities that the elected members on the London Councils Grants Panel represent.”
- “Please include us in your list of supporters – we greatly value LVSC.”
- "As both Chief Executive of [a London borough] CVS and the elected Chair of [a London borough] Community Network (bringing together around 500 local VCS groups) we find the role LVSC plays invaluable - linking London-wide to local and sub-regional VCS work, keeping us informed, engaged and actively involved in national and regional developments, providing comprehensive and needs based advocacy on behalf of the sector and offering a range of practical and high quality support services which really assist us as a CVS and through us grassroots groups in [the borough].”

4.7 Improving LVSC’s policy work

Is there any additional work LVSC should be doing or improvements we can make to support you more?			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		10.91%	6
2	No		34.55%	19
3	Don't know		54.55%	30
			answered	55
			skipped	-55

11% of respondents (6 people) thought that LVSC’s policy work could be improved. However, interpretation of answers to this question is difficult because of the large number of respondents (55%) who answered “Don’t know”. Six people provided more detail about improvements that could be made:

More work on poverty / welfare reform (2 = 33%)

- “Develop a platform to share innovation and idea development for tackling poverty and minimising the impact of welfare reform in London”

- “Continuing to campaign for support for people/ organisations supporting people outside mainstream programmes such as The Work Programme including lone parents and families.”

Work on philanthropy / Big Society / private sector engagement (2 = 33%)

- “Very interested to see how the United Way approach will tackle the Big Society agenda and bring in more philanthropic money as well as greater private sector engagement with the voluntary and community sector.”
- “More opportunities to network as this has been lost with CVS networks through Change Up. More help with understanding the position of private sector/social enterprise and partnership working at the local level. Knowledge on this from the local VCS point of view is lacking. Plus through having discussions with local housing associations and larger charities that are locally grounded revealed that they are keen to ensure joint working between themselves and local groups rather than them being sub contractors to bigger national providers where values may differ. There is a feeling of more shared values with local organisations. This needs further exploration.”

More work with CVSs / local groups and networking beyond VSF groups (2 = 33%)

- “We are keen for LVSC to provide a general policy function for the sector, helping us to keep up with relevant policy developments. this is needed for CVSs - ie stuff relevant to grassroots local level. A network like 3SA also helps give the sector as a whole a clear voice - at the moment the clearest voice is that of the VSF and we'd like to see that widened.”
- “More opportunities to network as this has been lost with CVS networks through Change Up. More help with understanding the position of private sector/social enterprise and partnership working at the local level. Knowledge on this from the local VCS point of view is lacking. Plus through having discussions with local housing associations and larger charities that are locally grounded revealed that they are keen to ensure joint working between themselves and local groups rather than them being sub contractors to bigger national providers where values may differ. There is a feeling of more shared values with local organisations. This needs further exploration.”

Work on London’s political structures (1 = 17%)

- “More about the London political structures generally.”

One respondent stated:

- “Sorry, have answered a couple of "don't knows" but really because we aren't an organisation that should be trying to define your role re VCS!”

One respondent stated:

- “Keep up with the good service.”

5. Conclusions and recommendations

Overall

1. The team should continue to work towards achieving still-relevant recommendations of the previous independent evaluation, particularly:
 - Developing a health inequalities or health and social care network.
 - Reviewing policy priority areas for the next year as a result of this evaluation, according to suggested criteria.
 - Developing the LVSC Policy Forum and securing funding for its work.
 - Reviewing the role of VSF
 - Strengthening the future research role of LVSC.
 - Reviewing the change to an LVSC e-bulletin and reviewing the use, frequency and amount of information in all LVSC e-bulletins.
 - Developing greater Board engagement in LVSC policy work.
 - Continuing to evaluate the impact of the team's work annually.
2. Each member of the team should look at individual survey responses for the projects they work on to determine if there are differences in the responses of particular types of organisation responding i.e. infrastructure versus frontline.

Big Squeeze

3. The Big Squeeze brand recognition was high and respondents had found the report useful. Most (88%) had used it as a source of information but 36% had also used it to share statistics with partners, members or service users, 26% to influence funders or commissioners, 26% to learn about what other organisations are doing and 24% to influence policy makers. LVSC should build on this recognition and cite the stated benefits to ensure more people complete the survey in 2012.
4. A large number of survey respondents reported that they didn't know what impact the Big Squeeze survey and report had had for their organisation. LVSC should therefore consider how to better measure and demonstrate the impacts of the Big Squeeze work in 2012, particularly for frontline organisations. It should also review its work to ensure press coverage does not misrepresent groups.
5. However, there was a clearly identified impact on more successfully influencing local policymakers for two local infrastructure organisations, which needs to be highlighted as a success in future marketing.
6. LVSC has been successful in involving funders and policymakers in the Big Squeeze work and publicising its findings. Benefits identified included increased awareness of the impact of the cuts, provision of evidence to support Assembly Members in their questions to the Mayor of London, and supporting the work of funders. Despite this, no funder or policymaker could

cite changes to specific policy measures that had emerged as a result of the Big Squeeze. LVSC should consider how it can work more closely with funders and policymakers to use the Big Squeeze work to have a greater influence on their decisions.

VSF

7. There was good awareness of VSF and the majority of respondents stated that they found it useful. The majority (78%) said that VSF provided them with information about London Councils. Over half (54%) found it was helpful to find out what other organisations were doing, and a third (34%) to respond to consultations and to improve partnership working. Just under a third of respondents (29%) thought it was helpful in campaigning against London Councils funding cuts, while a quarter (24%) thought it was helpful in influencing policy makers, and 17% thought it was helpful in influencing funders.

8. VSF is seen as extremely useful in terms of information giving, sharing good practice, and useful in responding to consultations and improving partnership working, and influencing policy makers or funders. LVSC's Policy team should support a review of the aims of VSF. If one aim is to support groups to influence funders and policymakers they should consider how this type of work could be better targeted and so benefit more VCS organisations. LVSC may want to consider how VSF provides benefits to a larger number of London's VCS organisations, particularly as fewer organisations are now funded under the London Councils Scheme.

9. Although there was a high awareness of VSF, almost a fifth of respondents didn't know if they were members. This indicates that LVSC should review and better market VSF membership and the benefits it brings.

10. There were evidenced impacts of VSF's work on the judicial review of London Councils' original funding decisions and on London Councils' final funding decisions in 2011-12. However, London Councils themselves have identified that VSF could work more closely with them to influence policy, particularly on specific policy areas that are important to London. They also identified the importance of providing a strategic overview of VCS funding in London, suggesting that VSF should work more closely with London Funders.

LESPN

11. 58% of respondents had heard of LESPN. LESPN was only established in October 2009 (so is a much newer network than VSF) and works in a specialist area, suggesting that its publicity and marketing is working well.

12. The majority of respondents who had heard of the network (74%) found it had helped them to get information about employment and skills policy and how it affected their organisation. Over half (56%) felt it had helped them to learn about what other organisations were doing and 44% to develop partnership working. A quarter (26%) felt it helped to influence funders or

commissioners and 22% felt it helped to influence policymakers. LVSC should consider how it can improve the help it provides VCS organisations involved in employment and skills work to better influence policymakers and funders.

13. Only 35% of respondents were members of LESPN, but it is a specialist network specifically set up to work with employment and skills groups only, so this is to be expected. A relatively high proportion of respondents (16%) did not know if they were a member of the Network. LVSC needs to provide more clarity about membership of LESPN so that groups are clear whether they are members or not.

14. VCS organisations identified a number of impacts that they directly attributed to their involvement with LESPN. These included:

- supporting successful funding applications,
- finding partner organisations to work with,
- successfully lobbying decision makers,
- increased enquiries about the organisation's projects,
- more access to the media, and
- greater connections with other organisations that has resulted in more placements for service users – implying improved outcomes for them

This suggests that LESPN is successfully fulfilling a number of different functions for its users.

15. Policymakers identified two main areas of impact that they directly attributed to LESPN's work: identifying problems of Work Programme delivery to London Assembly members; and influencing the Mayoral asks of DWP and Work Programme prime contractors working in London.

16. LESPN has also successfully monitored and recorded the impacts of its work over the last year and can clearly demonstrate some significant achievements. These have included directly attributable changes to policies, strategies, research and reports, increased VCS representation on strategic partnerships in London and improving the relationships and contracting opportunities for VCS organisations with private sector prime contractors involved in the Work Programme.

Climate Change policy work

17. Only 22% of organisations had heard of LVSC's climate change work, but this is understandable as the project is relatively new (begun in January 2011) and has had a number of changes in delivery and lead staff members as a result of LVSC's restructure in 2011). LVSC should consider how it could better market and publicise the climate change work, to ensure levels of awareness match those of its most widely known projects. It will need to review how its climate change work can push environmental sustainability up the agenda of VCS organisations at a time when most are concerned about their funding and future existence.

18. Only 10 respondents could then answer the question about how the project had helped them. Half of these said that it was helpful in providing information on climate change policy and how it affected their organisation. 40% said it provided information on what other organisations are doing and 30% said it supported their partnership working. Only one respondent indicated that it helped the organisation to save money, suggesting that this work will take time to deliver impacts on organisations' energy use or carbon footprint.

19. In future surveys, LVSC should ask whether the climate change project had reduced an organisation's carbon footprint, energy usage or changed its practices in any way. LVSC should also consider how it monitors data on those taking part in the climate change project to show how they have reduced their carbon footprint or saved money as a result of changes in practice.

20. The Climate Change project should build on the successful monitoring of impacts developed for other LVSC Policy team projects to ensure that it can record and publicise its impacts.

Health policy work

21. Only 64% of respondents had heard of LVSC's health policy work. This is disappointing as this has been a major area of the team's policy work for the past four years and is a cross-cutting organisational theme for LVSC. The team should consider how it can increase publicity and marketing of its health policy work to ensure that people are as aware of it as they are of its most well recognised projects. LVSC should also examine how it can better support VCS organisations to influence health and social care policymakers and funders.

22. The health policy work had a slightly wider spread of answers as to what respondents found helpful, indicating that it may fulfil more needs or that LVSC's health policy work was currently attempting to do too many things and should focus on a few more specific aims. LVSC should review and focus the aims of its health policy work.

23. Only 3% of respondents had signed up with LVSC's On the Radar database, 51% were not registered, while 46% didn't know if they were registered or not. On a more positive note no respondents stated that they had tried to sign up to the database but had not been able to complete all questions asked, although this may also reflect negatively on the level of interest in the project. LVSC should review the need and use of the On the Radar database and develop a plan to better address VCS organisations needs through, and support greater use of the database. LVSC should analyse individual responses to this question to see the percentage of service providing VCS organisations responding that had registered with the database.

24. Quotes from VCS organisations in London indicated that many appreciated their engagement in developing consultation responses on health policy. Several significant impacts were identified as a result of the health policy work including support to write a consultation response, changes in working practices, engagement in developing and implementing the London Health Inequalities Strategy and support on VCS representation on health partnerships. This suggests that the health policy work is having significant positive impacts but is not being publicised well enough. LVSC should review future marketing and communication of health policy work to ensure that its successes are more widely known.

25. Funders and policymakers were also positive about LVSC's health policy work and identified its support in engaging the VCS with the GLA and the myhealthlondon project. Evidence has also been collected and recorded showing how changes to policies and VCS engagement with cross-sector health and care partnerships could be directly attributed to the work.

General policy work

26. Over half (51%) of respondents had been involved in other LVSC policy work in 2011-12 indicating the wide range of work LVSC's policy team has been engaged in over the year. Only 5% of respondents didn't know if they had been involved in other LVSC policy work, indicating that the marketing and branding of LVSC's general policy work is relatively well presented and understood.

27. The most mentioned areas that respondents stated that they had been engaged with were:

- Receiving the LVSC policy e-bulletin (33% of those answering - all of whom provided positive feedback)
- Work on the 20102 London elections (33% of those answering – although one respondent did not find this work useful)
- Welfare reform (13% of those answering)
- Funding cuts (13% of those answering)

LVSC needs to ensure that the new LVSC e-bulletin that replaces the policy e-bulletin continues to provide policy information that is valued as positively. It should also review evaluations of the Mayor of London roundtable events to see if they provide additional learning to improve engagement.

28. This analysis reveals that the wide variety of general policy work that LVSC provides is found useful but suggests that the team should review its priorities and possibly focus on fewer areas in the current year in order to promote clarity and have greater impact.

29. Five local borough Councils for Voluntary Service (CVSs) provided quotes that were strongly supportive of LVSC's general policy work. They identified its importance in linking the local and sub-regional with London-wide work and engaging the local VCS in regional and national policy issues with particular relevance to London. This is an area of work that should LVSC should plan to

develop further in light of current disproportionate funding cuts to VCS infrastructure support services.

Improving LVSC's policy work

30. Only 11% of respondents (6 people) thought that LVSC's policy work could be improved. However, interpretation of answers to the question on whether LVSC's policy work could be improved is difficult because of the large number of respondents (55%) who answered "Don't know".

31. Six people provided more detail about improvements that could be made:

- More work on poverty / welfare reform (2 = 33%)
- Work on philanthropy / Big Society / private sector engagement (2 = 33%)
- More work with CVSs / local groups and networking beyond VSF groups (2 = 33%)
- Work on London's political structures (1 = 17%)

32. LVSC should review its policy priorities in light of these suggestions and give consideration to conducting more work on welfare reform and poverty, engagement with the private sector, networking with local groups and CVSs and more engagement with London's politics (although as a charity LVSC cannot support a political party, only a particular policy position).

6. Summary of impacts of team's work

Big Squeeze

- Informed three London Funders events to support funders in the capital to work together to address the issues of disproportionate cuts to advice, children & young people's and infrastructure support services identified in the report.
- Policymakers and funders informed us it had increased their understanding of the impact of the cuts on the VCS and its service users in London.
- VCS organisations have used the evidence provided to campaign and lobby and to provide evidence of need in funding applications.
- London Assembly members used its evidence to inform their questions on the VCS to the Mayor of London.
- In Kensington & Chelsea it is suggested that evidence from the Big Squeeze report may have influenced the council to take seriously the impact of spending cuts on the VCS, and this may have been linked to their decision to make cuts of only 6% to their VCS funding.
- Contributed to a national policy document collated through Core Cities to show the differential impact of public spending cuts in England's major cities to national policymakers and funders, although it is unclear what influence this has had.

There are no evidenced examples of where funding decisions or specific policy measures have changed as a direct result of the Big Squeeze work.

VSF

LVSC conducted a separate evaluation of VSF's campaign against London Councils funding cuts in late 2011³. This found that the campaign had achieved the following impacts:

- VSF brought groups together/speaking in solidarity to present a cohesive voice that was anti-protectionist.
- VSF submissions to both consultations provided evidence and argument to support regional commissioning.⁴
- VSF drew London Councils' attention to areas (such as equalities obligations) that they should have considered in order to ensure a lawful process of review and consultation. The Judge hearing the Judicial Review specifically cited VSF concerns that were raised in the formative stages of the initial process in 2010.
- VSF papers were included in Grants and Leaders committees bundles – elected members therefore had the opportunity to read and respond to our concerns.
- Sub-sectoral campaigns brought stronger sub-sectoral voices.
- No organisation had its funding cut on March 31st 2011 nor subsequently on June 30th 2011.
- London Councils committed (at the VSF September 2010 conference) to transitional funding arrangements for groups whose services were to be de-commissioned.
- Domestic violence and homelessness services were re-prioritised for funding with an admission that they required pan-London commissioning to be effective.
- VSF supported the claimants' solicitors during the Judicial Review.
- 28 commissions were re-classified as A* (and therefore would be funded to the end of current arrangements) following supplementary consultation
- An additional £3million was put into the scheme increasing the budget for 2011-12 from £17.6m to £20.6m.
- Several boroughs (e.g. Bromley, Ealing, Islington, Lewisham and Wandsworth) have committed to spending any 'saving' (or part of 'saving') from 'repatriated' money on their local VCS.
- VSF has laid firm foundations for arguments to come about protecting the grants scheme itself to ensure the needs of the most disadvantaged Londoners continue to be met.

³ Available at

<http://www.lvsc.org.uk/media/51329/vsf%20campaign%20evaluation%20paper%20final%2028%206%2011.doc> [5th April, 2012]

⁴ London Councils received 600 consultation responses (both online and written submissions) to the 2010 consultation. In 2011 to the supplementary consultation London Councils received 390 responses to the online survey with a further 100 submissions with detailed views on some 45 commissions

LESPN

- LESPN successfully influenced the LSEB strategy 2010-11 to include a reference: "We will want to see how successful the new prime contractor models are in involving the voluntary sector and improving results for Londoners." The strategy also acknowledges the role of the VCS in engaging disadvantaged Londoners who do not access mainstream statutory services.
- LESPN was credited with persuading the LSEB to fund research work on the impact of new commissioning models on London, in particular VCS providers and disadvantaged groups. It also influenced the LSEB to include targets on closing gaps in employment and skills outcomes for disadvantaged groups in its legacy report.
- LESPN has also successfully gained VCS representation on strategic bodies, including the London Strategic Migration Partnership and London Child Poverty Delivery Group subgroup on BME disadvantage.
- LESPN has ensured VCS representation at DWP closed consultation sessions on welfare reform, Work Programme, and migration of claimants off Incapacity Benefit. The DWP has stated that it would like the VCS to play an increased role in the delivery of welfare to work programmes to better serve diverse customer groups. This is a message that LESPN, among others, has been communicating.
- LESPN facilitated events bringing together all potential primes, VCS providers, and the GLA, to discuss the Work Programme and to network with one another. Subsequently many VCS providers have established relationships and subcontracts with Work Programme prime contractors. LESPN's work has influenced Mayoral asks of DWP and Work Programme prime contractors in London.
- LESPN has gathered evidence of the initial experiences of VCS providers delivering the Work Programme, and used this to inform discussions with DWP officials, and gain media coverage of VCS concerns (in The Observer, The Times, The Guardian, and VCS media).
- LESPN members also met with Labour's shadow Employment Minister to discuss concerns, and its Work Programme research has been cited in Parliamentary debates. In response, the Government was prompted to publish preliminary figures on levels of VCS participation in Work Programme.
- LESPN successfully lobbied for London's VCS to be included as stakeholders in the new London Enterprise Panel and for VCS representation on the Skills & Employment sub-group of the panel.
- The London Assembly report on the Olympics and Employment programme included recommendations directly developed from and attributed to LESPN's evidence.

Climate change policy work

- Increased engagement with City Bridge Trust through the climate change project has resulted in LVSC supporting Voluntary Action Islington's involvement in a free eco-audit.

Health policy work

- Engagement of the VCS through Regional Voices and the Department of Health's VCS Strategic partners in the NHS Listening Exercise was praised by Minister Paul Burstow. He sent a letter to the DH Strategic Partners thanking them for their work feeding into the Future Forum. He said that their input particularly contributed to some key changes including: plans to fundamentally strengthen public and patient involvement; improving the transparency and accountability of the new decision makers; and moving towards working more collaboratively throughout the system.
- Policymakers reported that LVSC's response had informed considerations of the needs of Londoners protected by Equality legislation in engaging with the London Health Improvement Board.
- VCS organisations reported that LVSC's support had enabled them to respond to the Future Forum consultation, which they would not have been able to do without such support.
- LVSC successfully lobbied for VCS representation on the Alcohol and Obesity sub-groups of the London Health Improvement Board.
- LVSC successfully lobbied NHS London and London Councils to hold a joint event bringing together local authority, VCS and NHS staff to discuss VCS engagement in health and social care following the huge reforms to the system currently being implemented.
- LVSC's successful engagement of the VCS with the myhealthlondon project directly influenced the development of the noticeboard feature on the site.

LVSC's general policy work

- Five local borough Councils for Voluntary Service provided quotes that were strongly supportive of LVSC's work. They identified the importance of LVSC in linking the local and sub-regional with London-wide work and, in particular of its policy work in engaging the local VCS in regional and national policy issues with particular relevance to London.

7. Summary of recommendations for policy team

Overall

1. The team should continue to work towards achieving the recommendations of the previous independent evaluation and evaluate its work annually.
2. Each member of the team should look at individual survey responses for the projects they work on to determine if there are differences in the responses of particular types of organisation.
3. Overall the team needs to improve the support it provides to better influence policy and funding and ensure that it records any resulting changes.

4. The team needs to review its policy priorities in light of this evaluation and re-focus the areas that it works on in line with the findings and LVSC's strategic plan.

5. The team needs to regularly monitor readership and links clicked in the new LVSC e-bulletin to ensure that it is as widely read and engaged with as the previous LVSC policy e-bulletin. At the end of 2012-13 questions on the usefulness of the new bulletin should also be included in the team's annual evaluation.

6. The team should consider greater engagement with the Mayor of London and London Assembly and their policy work, particularly in light of the new powers of the Mayor and new structures for engagement with different policy areas.

Big Squeeze

7. LVSC should build on the high brand recognition and stated benefits Big Squeeze work brought to organisations to ensure more surveys are completed in 2012.

8. The team should consider how LVSC can better market, measure and demonstrate the impact of Big Squeeze work in 2012, particularly for frontline organisations.

9. Safeguards need to be put in place to ensure that press coverage does not misrepresent organisations

10. The policy team should work more closely with policymakers and funders to ensure that the 2012 Big Squeeze report influences their decisions and that any changes that result are recorded.

VSF

11. The changes to London Councils and the London Borough Grants Scheme over the last year suggest that the aims of VSF should be reviewed. If one aim is to support groups to influence funders and policymakers this type of work could be better targeted to the stated needs of funders and policymakers recorded in this report.

12. VSF should work more closely with London Councils to influence policy areas of importance to London.

13. A review is needed of how VSF provides benefits, and articulates and markets these benefits, to a larger number of London's VCS organisations, particularly as fewer organisations are now funded under the London Councils Borough Grants Scheme.

11. VSF membership and membership criteria should be reviewed and a marketing and communications strategy developed to promote and increase knowledge about membership and its benefits.

12. VSF should work more closely with London Funders and provide a more strategic overview of funding to London's VCS.

13. LVSC should consider how it can further support VCS organisations to use equalities legislation and the London Councils judicial review findings to challenge policy and funding decisions.

14. VSF should continue to monitor the impact of the cuts to the London Councils Grants Scheme.

LESPN

15. LVSC's policy team should review the support that LESPAN provides to VCS organisations involved in employment and skills work to better influence policymakers and funders and ensure that these organisations are aware of any changes brought about by the work of LESPAN.

16. More clarity and publicity is needed about membership of LESPAN, so that groups are clear whether they are members or not, the benefits of membership and the impacts of the Network's work.

17. LESPAN impact measurement should continue to build on the good practice recording and measurement of the impacts of the work of the Network and review these to ensure they are appropriate to measure and report on longer-term changes.

Climate change policy work

18. A marketing and communications plan should be developed to better publicise the climate change project, to ensure levels of awareness match those of the LVSC Policy team's more widely known projects, building on learning from these other policy team projects.

19. In future surveys a question should be included asking whether the climate change project had contributed to reducing an organisation's carbon footprint, energy usage or changed its environmental practices in any way.

20. Data collection methodology and monitoring data collected should be reviewed by the Steering Group of the climate change project to ensure that it can measure its impacts and is effectively recording these.

Health policy work

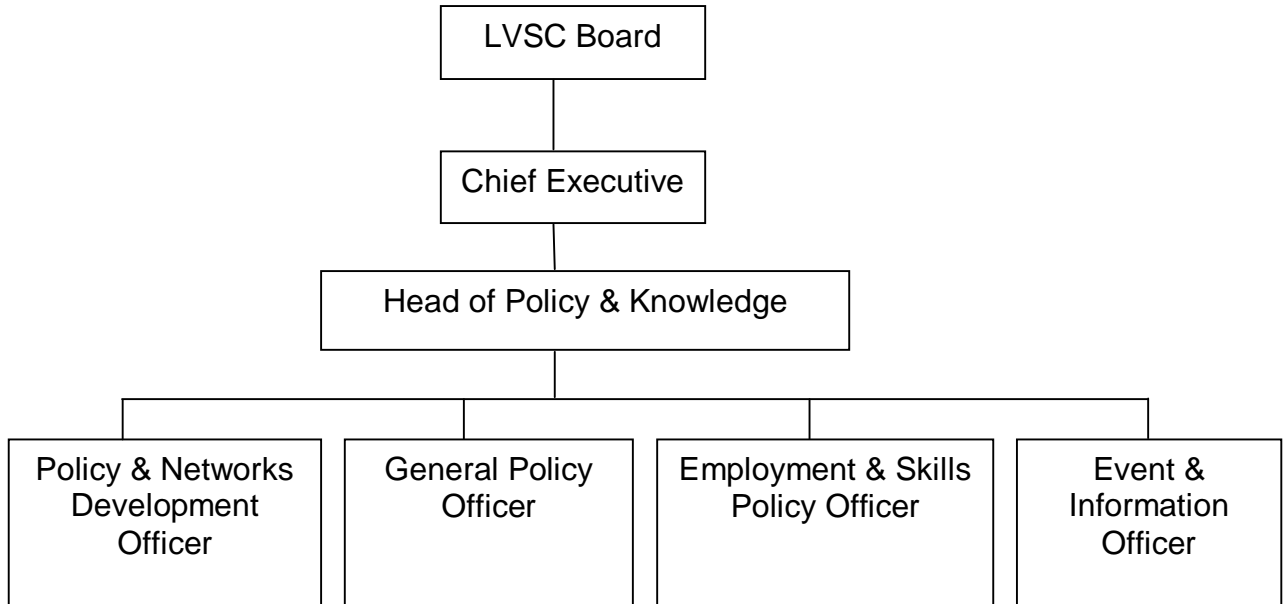
21. The LVSC policy team should review and, if necessary, re-focus the aims of LVSC's health policy work.

22. A new marketing and communications plan should be developed for LVSC's health policy work to ensure that its successes are more widely publicised.

23. The use of, and need for, the 'On the Radar' database, should be further reviewed before launching any more publicity campaigns, or applying for additional funding for the project [it is currently unfunded].

8. Overview of LVSC Policy & Knowledge team and its work in 2011-12

Team structure



Team work in 2011-12

Funder	Policy project	Work
Trust for London	Big Squeeze	Annual survey and report on the effects of economy on London's VCS and its users
Trust for London	Funding cuts updates	Updates on funding cuts to VCS in London
London Councils	VSF	Network of London Councils funded groups
London Councils	General Policy work	Mayor of London elections; welfare benefit reform; child poverty; inequality, general policy / LVSC e-bulletin
Trust for London	LESPN	Employment & skills policy
City Bridge Trust	Low Carbon	Climate change
Department of Health	Health policy	Health, social care and health inequalities

9. Thank you

We are very grateful to everyone who took the time to complete our online survey or to send us quotes by e-mail or through telephone interviews. We hope that this analysis will mean that they will contribute to improving the support we can provide both London's VCS organisations and their service users and the work we do with funders, commissioners and policymakers in other sectors.

We would also like to thank Hilary Barnard and Irene MacWilliam for the huge amount of work they put into our previous evaluation and to Claire Coullier of the Social Impact Analysts Association who is working with LVSC to improve our own impact measurement systems, as well as those of the organisations we support.

Many thanks to all.

Alison Blackwood
Head of Policy & Knowledge
LVSC