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**IMPROVING REGIONAL LEADERSHIP AND THE RELATIONSHIPS  
BETWEEN LOCAL AND NATIONAL ORGANISATIONS WITHIN THE  
THIRD SECTOR IN WALES**

Report

for the Alliance of Alliances and the Wales Council for Voluntary Action

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Welsh Institute for Health and Social Care · University of South Wales

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## FOREWORD

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WCVA works strategically with the health and social care third sector, including the Health and Social Care Alliance of Alliances, which brings together a number of key networks. The Alliance of Alliances provides a platform for agreeing common policy messages, and strategies to promote and implement third sector service delivery models.

This Alliance has successfully enabled strong, joined-up working informing and shaping the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act and its Regulations and Code of Practice for the benefit of the people and communities the third sector works with across Wales.

The third sector is recognised as a key delivery partner by the Act, and it is important to ensure that the sector works in the best way to address a number of contextual demands:

- The ageing demographic and increase in older people living with complex conditions
- The impact of welfare reform on people across Wales
- The third sector's vital role in supporting people within their communities, and the prevention and early intervention agenda
- The breadth and diversity of the third sector in Wales: there are over 33,000 third sector organisations; 931,000 volunteers; and the value of the sector is equivalent to 8 per cent of Wales' GDP (WCVA, 2014)
- The importance of collaboration and integration, that is joining up (across both the public and third sector services) outcomes for the people who use services
- Operating in an increasingly challenging environment due to reductions in Welsh Government and local government funding, alongside increasing demand due to cuts to public sector services
- The third sector's role in informing better policy: particularly being able to facilitate citizen and community voice; and putting people at the centre through engagement and co-production, that is people and communities taking part in planning, designing and delivering services.

Earlier in 2015 the Alliance of Alliances, with funding from Social Services Welsh Government, commissioned research and a report on the sector's readiness for the implementation of the Social Service and Well-being (Wales) Act. It also supports the wider agenda including prudent healthcare; primary healthcare; and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act.

This work focused in particular on the new aspect of regional leadership and how this dimension needed to enable strong links between the local and national third sector. The third sector infrastructure has been one traditionally of national and local (local authority footprint) organisation. The seven Local Health Boards with regional footprints, the integration of health and social care with regional collaboratives and the development of GP locality clusters is tasking the third sector with developing efficient multi-dimensional (national/regional/local/locality) working. At the same time, the sector has to ensure and maintain effective working within communities where importantly citizen engagement and service design and delivery take place.

WCVA and the Alliance of Alliances are pleased therefore to share this report, and would like to thank everyone that took part in the online survey and interviews.

The following report usefully identifies effective multi-dimensional third sector ways of working, specifically for each region, linking nationally and locally. It aims to share good practice in order to positively address gaps and improve both our collaborative and transformational working.

The report suggests next steps with four areas for consideration and action to build on and improve:

- understanding of the third sector's role and contribution
- internal and external partnership arrangements, with the capacity to maintain them
- financial sustainability and making best use of resources
- clear governance and accountability for working at local, regional and national levels.

This work has already begun in many areas and the Alliance of Alliances, including WCVA and the Wales Association of County Voluntary Councils, is committed to considering this report, and agreeing and delivering an action plan with the third sector in 2016. We look forward to working with all of you in this.

**Ruth Marks, Chief Executive, WCVA**  
**Chair of the Third Sector Health and Social Care Alliance of Alliances**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

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The Welsh Institute for Health and Social Care (WIHSC) based at the University of South Wales were commissioned to undertake a research study on improving regional leadership and the links between local and national third sector organisations all of whom are working in the field of health and social care.

The work was commissioned by the Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) on behalf of the third sector health and social care Alliance of Alliances.

### PROJECT SPECIFICATION

The work was specified by WCVA as follows – further detail can be found in an excerpt from the specification in Appendix 1:

- Scoping to identify what infrastructure is in place; good practice; opportunities and gaps.
- The aim is to achieve readiness and capacity to engage with national policy development, and collaborative working both with external partners including ADSS Cymru and the Welsh NHS Confederation, and within the third sector itself, importantly improving working between the local and national organisations with the added regional dimension.

The study had to be completed during March and April 2015, and was funded by the Welsh Government's 'Delivering Transformation Grant', designed to support the implementation of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act.

### METHODOLOGY

In order to respond to the specification, three methods were chosen.

1. A focused literature review was undertaken in order to identify the experience of others within the third sector from outside of Wales. This was essentially a review of several 'grey' literature documents, and was drawn from within the UK;
2. An online questionnaire was developed in order to ascertain participants' views on a series of functions that define key activities for the third sector, and the current state of relationships within and without the sector. The survey was available for completion in both English and Welsh, and a copy of the English version is contained within Appendix 2. The survey was distributed using WCVA's networks, but was independently analysed by researchers in WIHSC;
3. The WIHSC team undertook 18 interviews with key stakeholders drawn from four 'constituencies': local voluntary sector groups, the County Voluntary Councils (CVCs), national charities and/or Alliance members, and the statutory sector. Potential interviewees were identified and approached by WIHSC, and due to the short timescale for the study, telephone interviews were undertaken. These discussions typically took between 30 minutes and one hour to complete.

**It is important to note that throughout the study, the researchers focused their time on better understanding the key 'functions' and relationships that the third sector needs given the context of more work being undertaken across regions. The team strongly felt that the 'form' or arrangements within the third sector could only be discussed once clarity about the functions was established, and as such this report stops short of talking in any depth about the infrastructure that will be needed in Wales in order to ensure that these functions are effectively delivered.**

**We are also acutely aware that the 'region' is not yet a fixed concept within health and social care in Wales as of yet. There are many different regions of different sizes, and for different services and policy areas. Further, we also recognise that no formal decisions have yet been taken about the shape of local government reorganisations, and it is hard therefore to talk with certainty of any 'region'. Indeed we recognise that talk of the 'region' is somewhat premature. That said, we do of course acknowledge that health boards have been working on a 'regional' footprint for a number of years, and that local government reorganisation is likely to bring greater coherence between the administrative boundaries of health and social care delivery. It is in this context that the study was undertaken.**

This report is structured into three substantive sections which mirror the methodology described above. The first provides the findings from the literature review, the second presents finding from survey, with the third discussing the views of interviewees. These chapters contain some quantitative data, but mainly draw upon qualitative sources to inform the key themes that were reported. The report concludes with a summary of the findings.

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## 2. RESEARCH FINDINGS – LITERATURE REVIEW

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A search of the literature was conducted to find reports/publications relating to voluntary and community services and regional structure and functioning at local, national and regional levels. Key search words such as ‘voluntary sector’; ‘third sector’; ‘regional’; ‘structure’; ‘function’ were used to guide the literature search. Websites of similar organisations to WCVA were searched for any relevant information, including Voluntary Action Scotland, National Association for Voluntary and Community Action, National Council for Voluntary Organisations, Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action, and Regional Voices. Several reports were identified which are relevant to the brief – relating to developing efficient multi-dimensional (national/regional/local) working in the third sector. The findings from the literature are summarised in the following pages and examples of how regional leadership has been developed in other areas in the UK are provided. No examples of models of direct relevance to the questions for this study working outside the UK could be identified.

### FINDINGS

#### 1. DEVELOPING THE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THIRD SECTOR ORGANISATIONS AND REGIONAL BODIES: STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN FOR THE NORTHWEST REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY (NWDA, 2009)<sup>1</sup>

This report was commissioned to recommend how to develop relationships between regional public sector organisations and the third sector in North West England in 2009. The authors undertook a literature search, interviews with 100 individuals representing the public sector, third sector and third sector infrastructure organisations, and two stakeholder workshops. These strands were synthesised into recommendations to take forward. Findings and key recommendations are provided in Table 1.

#### 2. THE IMPLICATIONS OF LIVERPOOL CITY REGION’S COMBINED AUTHORITY FOR THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR (VOLUNTARY SECTOR NORTH WEST (VSNW), 2014)<sup>2</sup>

This report, commissioned by Liverpool CVS, intended to inform local VCS infrastructure agencies’ discussions and to better understand what Combined Authority status means for the sector in the Liverpool City Region (LCR). Recommendations were drawn from an in-depth review of the new structures, constitution and protocols of LCR, the experience of what happened in Greater Manchester, which was the only Combined Authority between April 2011 and April 2014, interviews with local VCS infrastructure leads in the other new Combined Authority areas. The findings and key recommendations from this report are provided in Table 2.

#### 3. IMPACT REPORT ON SCOTLAND’S 32 THIRD SECTOR INTERFACES (TSIs) (VOLUNTARY ACTION SCOTLAND, 2014)<sup>3</sup>

There are currently 32 TSIs in Scotland – each operating within a specific local authority area and they

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<sup>1</sup> *Developing the partnership between third sector organisations and regional bodies: Strategy and action plan for the Northwest Regional Development Agency*. SQW Consulting; September 2009.

<http://www.vsnw.org.uk/files/NWDA%20SQW%20report%20final%281%29.pdf>. We acknowledge the difference in the population size of the North West when compared to the regions of Wales, but have included it here as the infrastructure of a collaborative model short of a national approach and more than a local one – the region – is the important thing in the context of this report.

<sup>2</sup> *The Implications of Liverpool City Region’s Combined Authority for the Voluntary and Community Sector*. Voluntary Sector Northwest; September 2014. [http://www.vsnw.org.uk/files/Liverpool\\_CRCA\\_and\\_VCS\\_5.pdf](http://www.vsnw.org.uk/files/Liverpool_CRCA_and_VCS_5.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> *Building Better Communities: About Scotland’s Third Sector Interfaces*. Voluntary Action Scotland.

[http://www.vasotland.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/building\\_better\\_communities.pdf](http://www.vasotland.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/building_better_communities.pdf); and *Supporting a stronger third sector: The second report on the impact of Scotland’s 32 Third Sector Interfaces* (2013/14). Voluntary Action Scotland. <http://www.vasotland.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/TSI-Impact-Report-2013-14.pdf>

**Table 2.1** · Findings and recommendations from the NWDA report (2009)

FINDINGS	RECOMMENDATIONS
<p><b>Barriers</b> preventing benefits from partnership with the third sector at regional level being fully realised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited resources and capacity of third sector to engage in policymaking at the regional level, or in the complex procurement systems needed to participate in service delivery</li> <li>• Lack of clear and effective representation of the third sector at regional level, exacerbated by tensions between the different levels of interface between third and public sectors – national, regional, subregional and local</li> <li>• Some views within regional public sector bodies of poorer credibility of the third sector and limited understanding of what the sector can offer</li> </ul> <p><b>Areas for improvement</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Co-ordination, communication and relationships – a role for regional infrastructure in clarifying the existing networks and providing a joined-up route for communication within the third sector and between the third and public sector</li> <li>2. Consultation, networks and groups – a need for wider participation in the regional policy agenda by a wider range of third sector groups and organisations</li> <li>3. The capacity of the third sector – a need for capacity building to improve the offer and expand the potential role in contributing to service delivery</li> <li>4. Commissioning and procurement processes – a need for regional public sector bodies to introduce exemplary commissioning processes to encourage third sector bidding, and for the third sector to form consortia and strengthen its offer</li> <li>5. Leadership and capacity building within regional public sector bodies.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To be clear at what can happen at/be driven from the regional level</li> <li>• To look closely at the functional roles required, rather than the existing status of partners: who really needs to be where, and doing what</li> <li>• To be clear that the need for culture change is considered</li> <li>• To pinpoint possible regional infrastructure and strategy development – how can it happen and where – and if there is investment to support it.</li> <li>• To clarify what changes need to be made within either the third or public sector, or where changes need to be made at the interface between the third and public sector at regional level.</li> </ul> <p><b>Recommendation 1: NWDA and Government Office of the North West (GONW) develop a collaborative approach, defining their proposition for working within the regional third sector.</b> The principles for partnership working are set down in the forthcoming Regional Compact.</p> <p><b>Recommendation 2: NWDA uses its strategic position to influence other public sector funders at regional level to support the Regional Ask and adopt good practice.</b> NWDA develops an investment plan based on exemplifying good practice in engaging and supporting the regional third sector</p> <p><b>Recommendation 3: NWDA and GONW commission a regional lead from the third sector to play a representational and brokering role on behalf of the sector. It will review or develop new architecture as appropriate, operating with a service level agreement(SLA).</b> A SLA sets out the outputs and outcomes to be delivered by regional infrastructure, including engaging with a wide range of organisations and acting as a broker between the third sector and public sector at a regional level.</p> <p><b>Recommendation 4: NWDA, GONW, and other regional bodies work together to promote procurement and commissioning opportunities for the third sector through training, good practice development and the encouragement of consortium bidding.</b> Regional public sector bodies work to exemplify sustainable procurement and signpost third sector organisations to sources of capacity building resource.</p> <p><b>Recommendation 5: Existing infrastructure organisations work together to map the sector and better demonstrate its capacity and offer to deliver services.</b> Regional third sector infrastructure bodies work together to develop a map of the third sector offer and communicate this to the regional public sector.</p>

**Table 2.2** · Findings and recommendations from the Liverpool report (VSNW, 2014)

FINDINGS	RECOMMENDATIONS
<p><b>In Combined Authorities, fundamental decisions, that will affect the sector locally, will increasingly be made at a City Region level.</b> Local authorities (given their new parallel role as a Combined Authority) will need to be consistent with their Combined Authority and the Combined Authority consistent with its local authorities. There will be two significant lines of development that will affect how the VCS influences and engages with their local authority and local authority partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• local authorities, and partners, will further develop centralised strategic plans and planning processes for the City Region. Consultation processes, effective engagement and challenges will increasingly operate at this geography.</li> <li>• local authorities, and partners, will increasingly move towards sharing centralised delivery of other back-office public service delivery functions (in order to support frontline services). Central Government is encouraging this with small pots of investment designed to support rationalisation (e.g. phase 2 of the Troubled Families programme will support cross-authority delivery in London’s Tri-boroughs and in Greater Manchester). These footprints offer the possibility of rationalisation.</li> </ul> <p>It is likely that there will be more bureaucracy. It will therefore be increasingly difficult for local VCS infrastructure organisations to effectively dip in and out of a broadening City Region economic and welfare agenda. Without effective VCS infrastructure support, it is unlikely that no more than a few larger VCS providers will be able to engage.</p> <p><b>There are more reasons than the Combined Authority status for VCS infrastructure agencies to work together beyond their patch.</b> Combined Authority structures are not the only structures operating across local authority geographies in the Liverpool City Region. There are other policy agenda, and public sector agencies, for which strategic VCS collaboration would benefit the sector. Of particular relevance are the police and crime commissioner and the new health structures. However, the City Region will increasingly become the natural sub-national footprint for other agencies and for programme delivery more widely. There is, therefore, a growing need for regular, formalised and consistent VCS strategic activity on a larger footprint.</p>	<p>In order to do this, local lead VCS infrastructure agencies should consider how they establish clear communication channels (with each other, the sector, and City Region partners) and demonstrate collective working. This could include:</p> <p><b>Recommendation 1 - Establish a partnership to develop the sector’s capacity to engage with and influence the Combined Authority</b></p> <p><b>Recommendation 2 –Engage with the Employment and Skills Board (ESB)</b> Priorities should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• seeking VCS representation on the Board and</li> <li>• developing evidence of the sector’s ability to tackle worklessness</li> </ul> <p><b>Recommendation 3 – Start discussions with members of the Combined Authority, and lead officers, about a VCS offer around broader sector engagement.</b> This should begin an ambitious conversation about the role of the voluntary and community sector in economic growth and within a “whole-system” approach to economic growth. This should also be linked to the EU SIF strategy in order to ensure broad understanding about the role of an accountable, sector representative (connected to the work of a formalised VCS infrastructure partnership) involved in the governance of social inclusion delivery and funding.</p> <p><b>Recommendation 4 - Develop a coordinated programme of evidence-building to demonstrate the economic and social impact of the sector across the Liverpool City Region.</b> This should be linked to influencing the single evidence base, influencing the Employment and Skills Board (see Recommendation 2, above), and the delivery of social inclusion activities. As the Combined Authority develops, it is likely that a ‘common language’ around evidencing and demonstrating impact will emerge. It will be important to influence that model, so that it is sector-friendly, and identify resources to help develop VCS groups skills in effectively demonstrating impact.</p> <p><b>Recommendation 5 - Develop strategic relationships with other local agencies operating at a City-Region level.</b> A broad partnership model with other private, social and public sector partners could be developed through a “Partners’ Council” and provide a cost-effective mechanism for VCS representation and networking. Work should also include exploratory discussions with local health and social care leads about their potential plans for influencing Combined Authority structures and agenda.</p> <p><b>Recommendation 6 – Develop a fuller plan of collective engagement with the Combined Authority structures and policy agenda, with a clear understanding about individual organisation’s responsibilities.</b> This plan should also seek to understand which VCS agencies are already plugged into the new City Region structures and policy agenda, and establish clear connections and relationships. The recommended aim is to develop an agreed engagement strategy, with a clear understanding about who is managing which relationships and how accountability mechanisms for the voluntary and community sector will work. In time, this should result in a transparent programme of activity that can be broadly shared.</p>

are responsible for supporting and developing local third sector activity in all its forms (see Figure 1).

The interfaces were set up to provide a single point of contact for voluntary, community and social enterprise activity and also offer an effective mechanism through which the third sector can connect to Community Planning.

The new Interface arrangements bring together four key, local infrastructure functions:

- Support to and promotion of volunteering;
- Support and development of social enterprise;
- Support to voluntary organisations operating in the area, both local and those national organisations that deliver services at the local level; and
- Connection between the Community Planning Partnership and the third sector.

An Interface is an independent, community-managed support organisation, accountable to the third sector in its area, and responsible for engaging effectively with CPP and SG to represent the best interests of the sector, and the communities they serve.

These form the basis for the TSI Common Values and Services which were agreed with Scottish Government. Each TSI has adopted its own approach to delivering these core aims, in accordance with the specific needs, challenges and opportunities of the local authority area which it serves. For instance, while some operate as single agencies others have set up formal partnership arrangements of two or more organisations, each with a responsibility for a different key function or a different geographical remit. Voluntary Action Scotland (VAS) is the national network organisation which supports, co-ordinates and advocates for all of Scotland's TSIs. It gives a national voice to the TSIs' local impact.

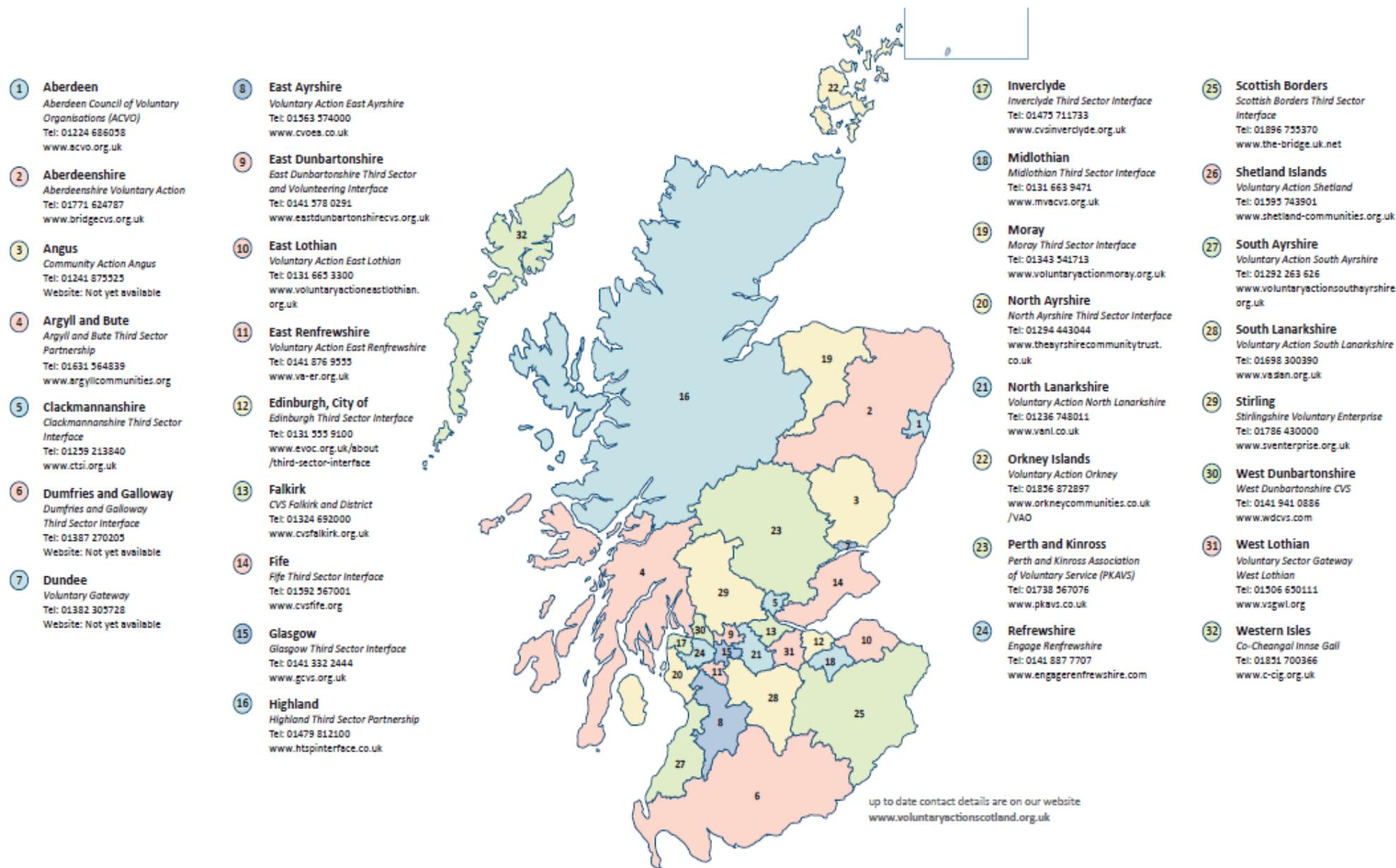
Some of the successes of the TSIs included:

- **Partnerships and new ways of working** – Throughout each of the four core areas of activity the TSIs evidenced a range of new partnerships between TSIs, wider third sector organisations and public sector bodies. They reported that this had helped to strengthen relationships between the third sector and public sector as well as improving connections amongst third sector organisations;
- **Adaptability** – In some instances TSIs reported that approaches they had adopted had not worked as well as anticipated. For example, a few felt that the structure of their thematic networks were not effective in facilitating the level of engagement anticipated from the wider third sector. In these instances the interfaces examined the activity and developed an alternative mechanism to achieve the intended outcome;
- **Shared learning** – There was evidence of shared learning across the TSI network with a number of surveys referring to site visits to other interfaces, for instance. This was highlighted as being beneficial as it promoted sharing practice and peer-learning across the interfaces;
- **Raising their profile** – Many of the TSIs noted that raising their profile was important in order to extend the reach of their services and to further support and develop their core areas of work. The majority had pro-actively sought to do this in 2013/14 and have highlighted it as a continuing priority.

Some of the challenges which were identified included:

- **Limited resources** – Many of the TSIs reported an increase in the level of demand being placed on them both from third sector organisations, many of whom were struggling as a result of the

**Figure 2.1** · Map of Third Sector Interfaces (TSIs) in Scotland (from [www.voluntaryactionscotland.org.uk](http://www.voluntaryactionscotland.org.uk))



- current economic climate, and public sector agencies. The latter was largely attributed to an expectation that the third sector would be able to fill the gaps left in statutory services by cuts in funding. In addition to this a number of interfaces felt that the activities which they undertook with regards to Community Planning and the implementation of other national initiatives required an increased level of resources. This was due to the creation of new partnerships and attendance at an array of networks and strategic meetings. It was not felt that this increased demand was met with an increase in resources, however, and so TSIs were required to think innovatively about how they resourced their activities;
- **Monitoring and evaluation** – A number of the interfaces referred to challenges in their ability to effectively monitor and evaluate their work. For some it was due to general questions of how to attribute the impact the TSI has, and how to gather the information they needed to support this.
- **Managing relations with external support agencies** – A few of the TSIs reported an increase in the number of external agencies and individuals who offered support to third sector organisations, both locally and nationally. They felt that this created the possibility for duplication of activities as well as potential tensions emerging between the organisations and competing remits. With this in mind, some interfaces identified local solutions including collaboration with other agencies and a formal referral pathway;
- **Organisational changes** – In their monitoring returns some of the TSIs referred to ongoing organisational changes as one of the immediate challenges to their activities. Although the interfaces have emerged from a long tradition of third sector infrastructure they are still relatively new in their current form. During the reporting period some experienced significant shifts in their governance, for example moving from a formal partnership to a single agency. As the majority have now identified a structure for their area it is not anticipated that this will continue to be a long-term challenge.

#### 4. WORKING WITH THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR: A GUIDE FOR HEALTH AND WELL-BEING BOARDS (REGIONAL VOICES, 2013)<sup>4</sup>

This guide highlights how the voluntary and community sector (VCS) can support commissioners and policy makers to improve the health and wellbeing of their community and reduce health inequalities—both through commissioning support and the provision of services. It explores the structure of the voluntary sector, the rationale for effective engagement mechanisms and different models for engagement in health and wellbeing boards, both of which have read across into Wales (see Figure 2 and Table 3).

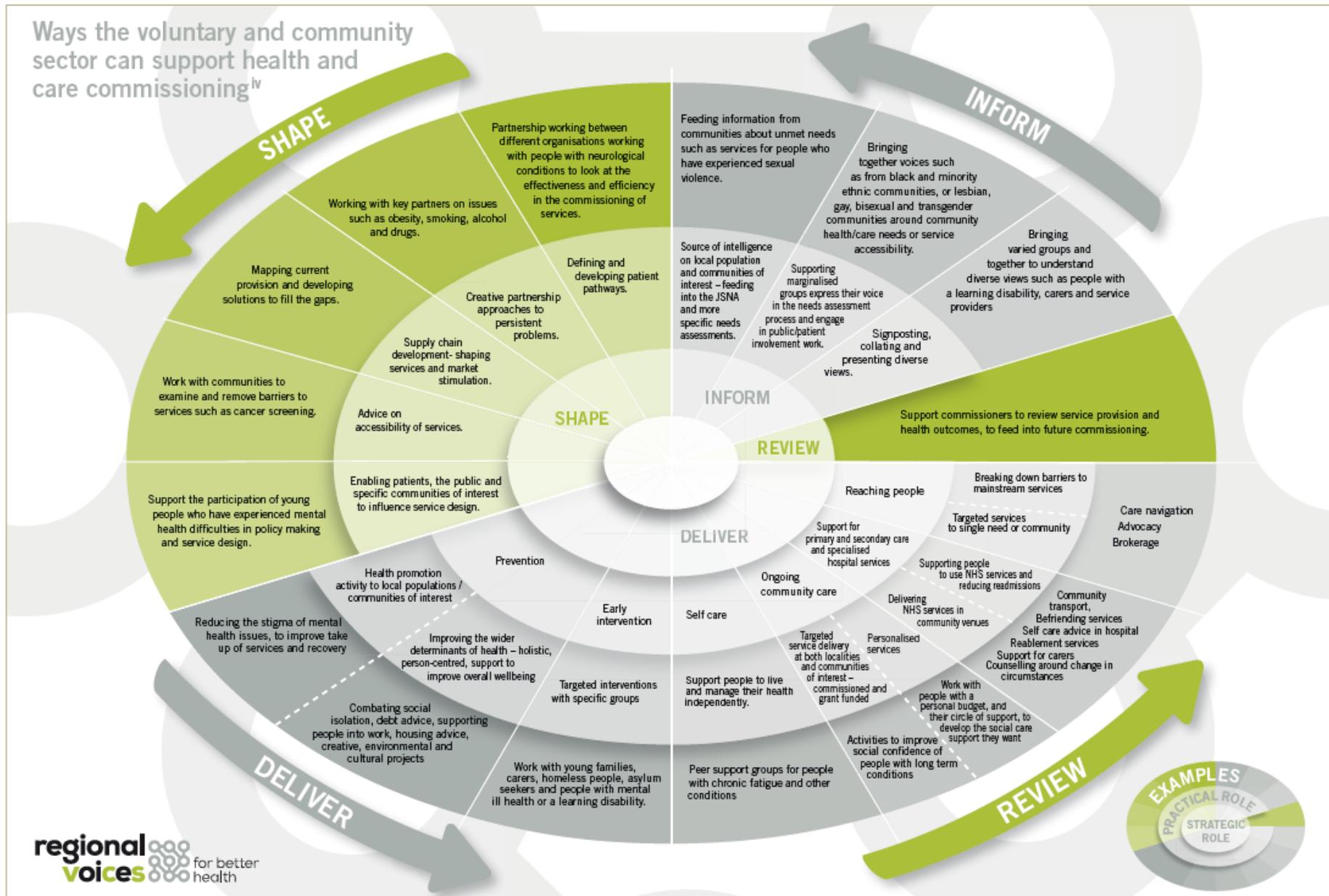
VCS roles in supporting commissioning for health and wellbeing outcomes include:

- provide intelligence about community needs and assets, and asset-based development approaches;
- input knowledge and insight into factors affecting the wider determinants of health in the area;

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<sup>4</sup> *Working with the voluntary and community sector: A guide for health and well-being boards*. Regional Voices; 2013: [http://www.regionalvoices.org/sites/default/files/library/Briefing\\_on\\_VCS\\_for\\_healthwellbeingboards.pdf](http://www.regionalvoices.org/sites/default/files/library/Briefing_on_VCS_for_healthwellbeingboards.pdf); and *Influencing Local Commissioning for Health and Care - Guidance for the Voluntary and Community Sector*. Regional Voices; February 2013. <http://www.regionalvoices.org/sites/default/files/library/Influencing-local-health-and-care-commissioning-RV-briefing.pdf>

**Figure 2.2** · Regional Voices: ways in which the VCS can support health and care commissioning  
 (from [http://www.regionalvoices.org/sites/default/files/library/Briefing\\_on\\_VCS\\_for\\_healthwelbeingboards.pdf](http://www.regionalvoices.org/sites/default/files/library/Briefing_on_VCS_for_healthwelbeingboards.pdf))



**Table 2.3** · Models for engagement in health and wellbeing boards

MODEL	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
<p><b>Single voice</b></p> <p>Elected or appointed single representative supported by a wider network (minimum involvement)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easiest to support</li> <li>• Develop continuity of relationship</li> <li>• Obvious single point of contact for sector</li> <li>• Sector ‘champion’ role</li> <li>• Can give a broad view of the sector</li> <li>• Keeps board membership slim</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not a specialist</li> <li>• Requires development of an extensive open and transparent recruitment process</li> <li>• Least responsive or dynamic to emerging agenda items</li> <li>• Risk of continuity through illness, change in personnel etc - requires a deputy</li> </ul>
<p><b>Multiple voice</b></p> <p>Appointment of 2 or more static representatives supported by a wider network</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relatively easy to support and maintain</li> <li>• Develop continuity of relationships</li> <li>• Obvious points of contact for sector</li> <li>• Wider breadth of experience</li> <li>• Greater continuity than a single voice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restricted ability to adequately represent diverse views</li> <li>• May still lack specialist expertise in many areas</li> <li>• Less responsive or dynamic to emerging agenda items</li> <li>• Complexity to develop an open and transparent recruitment process</li> <li>• Increases board size, where a small board is preferred</li> </ul>
<p><b>Flexible voice</b></p> <p>2 or more places with 1 being available for flexible use by the underlying network based on specialist knowledge of current issues.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some continuity of relationships</li> <li>• Dynamic and responsive to emerging agenda items</li> <li>• Provides potential access to a wider network of expertise</li> <li>• Opportunity to develop an approach to harness benefits of static places or subgroup models</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Needs organisation to takes responsibility for the maintenance and access to the network</li> <li>• Requires early knowledge of agenda issues</li> <li>• Complex nomination process required</li> <li>• Greater support required for individuals</li> <li>• Increases board size, where a small board is preferred</li> </ul>
<p><b>Subgroup model</b></p> <p>VCS actively involved in working groups such as on themes (ideally in conjunction with one of the above models)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses the intelligence, expertise and networks of the VCS to influence understanding of an area and commissioning for that area</li> <li>• Builds working links between sectors (at operational level)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If not directly linked with the board, then VCS issues may not be flagged up in timely fashion - will miss opportunities for partnership working</li> <li>• Strategic communication between the board and the VCS will need to be done by members of the board</li> </ul>

- support engagement between health and wellbeing boards and the community, especially seldom heard and vulnerable groups;
- help marginalised groups input their voice into the development of health and care services;
- assist local Healthwatch organisations to feed more diverse patient, service user and public voice into health and wellbeing board processes;

- be involved in prioritisation of Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategies (JHWSs) activities and support community participation;
- input community voice and provider expertise into care pathway redesign and service reconfiguration;
- provide high quality and innovative services; and
- review and challenge commissioning plans and success of JHWSs

Regional Voices also examines how the voluntary sector can influence joint local commissioning (see Figure 3).

## 5. ANALYSIS OF TRANSFORMING LOCAL INFRASTRUCTURE (NACVA, 2014)<sup>5</sup>

Funded by the Big Fund, ‘transforming local infrastructure’ (TLI) allowed organisations to test new ways of working, to develop new products and services to increase their own sustainability, and to better support local charities and community groups. Some of these ways of working were very successful, others were more limited, and for others impact and returns on investment may be seen in years to come. This report highlights successful practice, but also discusses barriers and difficulties that partnerships face. Case studies can be found in the report online.<sup>6</sup>

### SUMMARY

Key findings from the analysis of the literature are as follows:

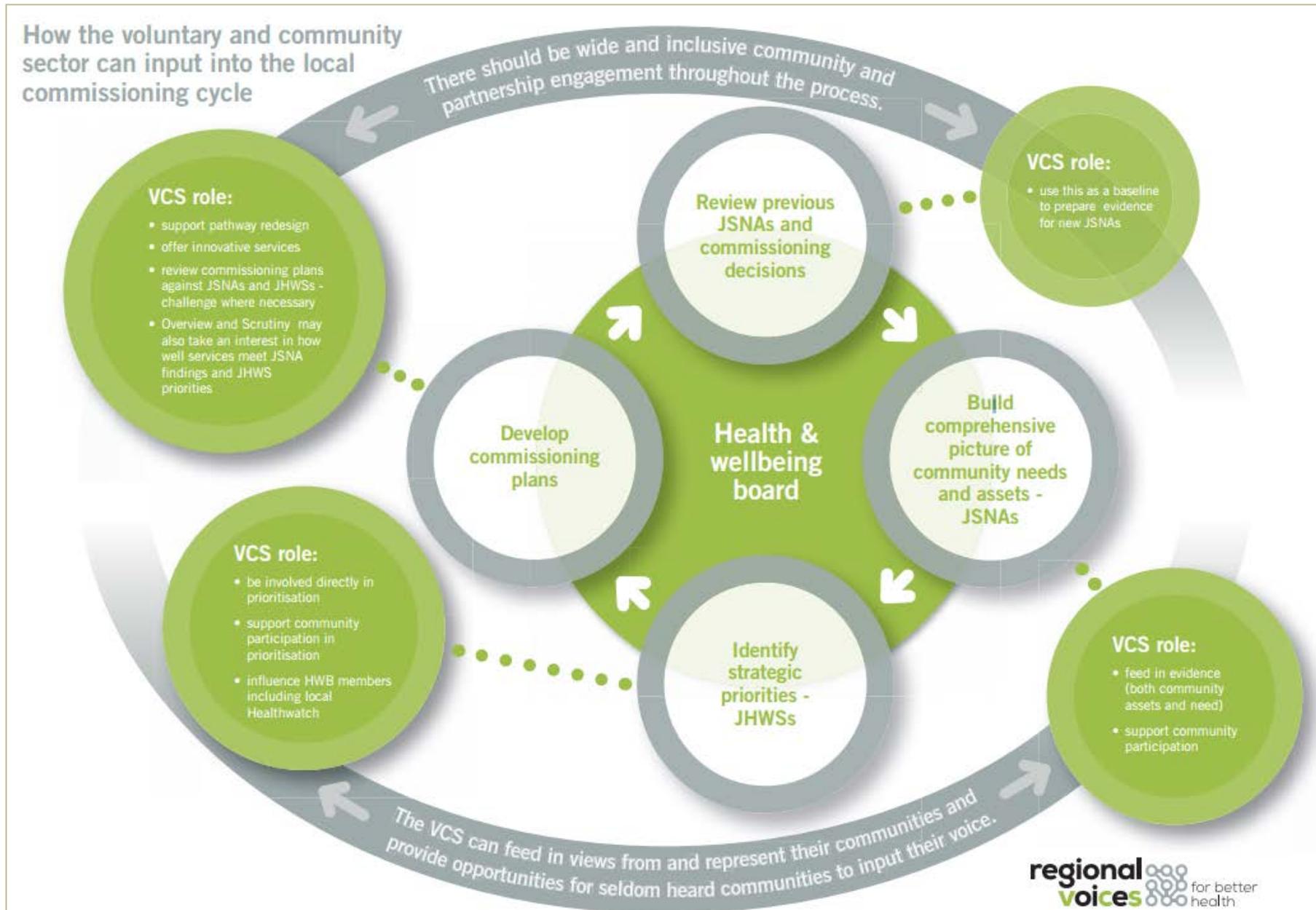
- There is no one perfect ‘blueprint’ for Wales, but there are approaches and models that are worth exploring and considering;
- The value of the third sector in these discussions is acknowledged, as is the contribution that the third sector can make in influencing strategic decisions for statutory sector partners;
- Where progress has been made, it has been made in partnership, with third sector organisations working effectively within and without the sector; and
- The issues facing Wales are by no means unique – others have had to deal with the same sorts of challenges. There is much to be learned from the experience of others, although this short section does not provide any formal critique of what has worked well elsewhere and what has not. As such, further interrogation of these approaches is needed.

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<sup>5</sup> *Analysis of transforming local infrastructure*. The National Association of Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA); September 2014: <http://www.navca.org.uk/downloads/generate/3820>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.navca.org.uk/transforming-local-infrastructure-analysis>

**Figure 2.3** · Regional Voices: ways in which the VCS can input into local health and care commissioning  
 (from <http://www.regionalvoices.org/sites/default/files/library/Influencing-local-health-and-care-commissioning-RV-briefing.pdf>)



### 3. RESEARCH FINDINGS – SURVEY

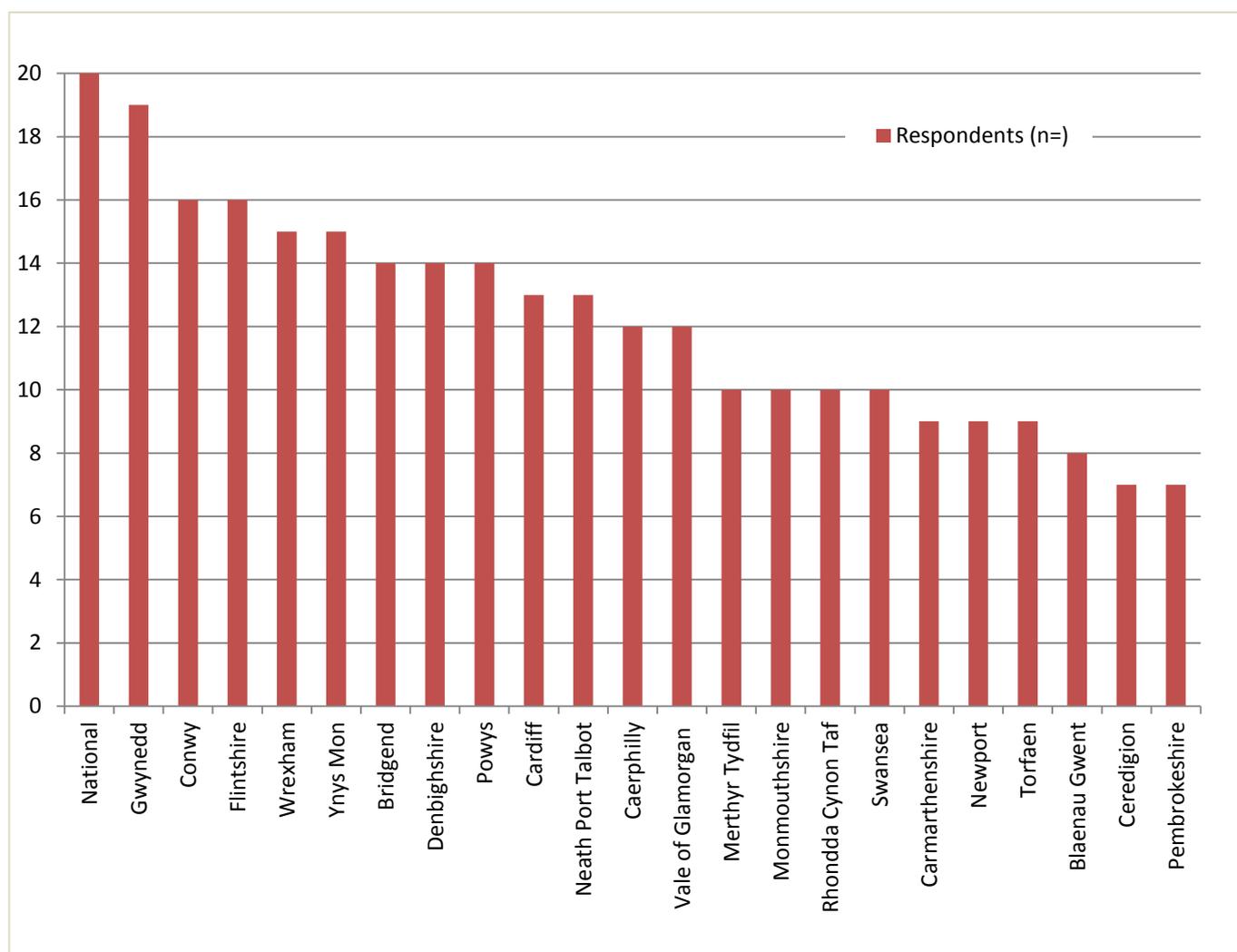
In order to reach out to a broad cross-section of respondents, an online survey was developed – the questions which were asked can be seen in Appendix 2.

The online questionnaire was developed in order to ascertain participants' views on a series of functions that define key activities for the third sector, and the current state of relationships within and without the sector. The survey was available for completion in both English and Welsh. The survey was distributed using WCVA's networks, but was independently analysed by researchers in WIHSC. 91 people responded to the survey – 84 through the medium of English and 7 in Welsh. The findings from the 91 respondents are presented below.

#### QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

Responses were received from across the whole of Wales and from a variety of types of respondents. National organisations provided the largest number of responses (n=20, 7%), closely followed by participants from Gwynedd (n=19, 7%). The fewest number of responses were received from Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire (n=7, 2%).

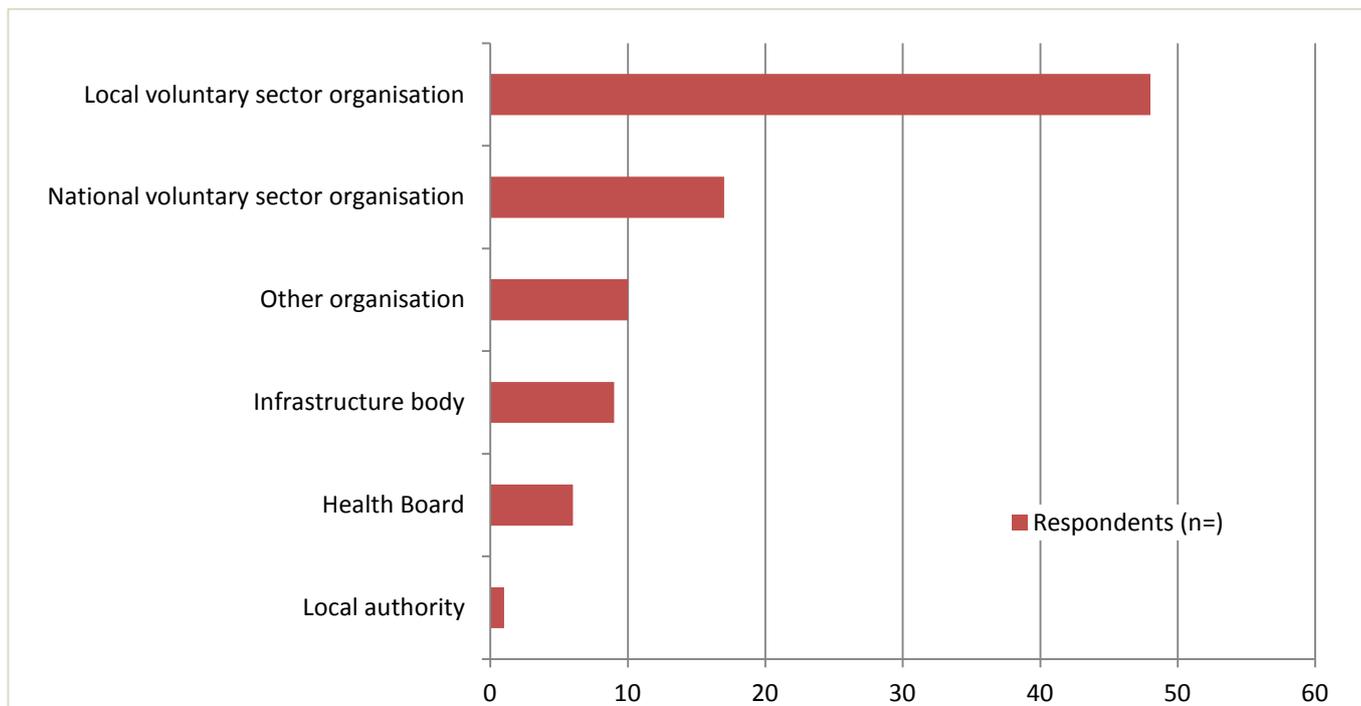
**Figure 3.1** · Distribution and frequency of respondents – by area of Wales (n=282)<sup>7</sup>



<sup>7</sup> The reason that there were 282 responses to this question, when there were only 91 respondents in total, is that some organisations operate in more than one area of Wales, hence the larger number.

There was an equivalent spread of responses from different types of organisations in Wales who offered their perspectives via the online survey. Around 80% of responses were from within the third sector (either from local third sector organisations, 53%; national third sector organisations, 19%; or infrastructure bodies, 10%) and 20% were from outside (either from health boards, 7%; other organisations, 11%; or local authorities, 1%).

**Figure 3.2** · Distribution and frequency of respondents – by type of organisation (n=91)



Survey respondents were then asked three structured questions, all of which focused on a need to understand the functions that the third sector needs as regional work becomes more and more prominent. Thirteen functions were identified – in part from the literature and in part in discussion with the WCVA:

- Campaigning and setting the agenda;
- Delivering services;
- Developing capacity that doesn't currently exist;
- Engaging in service innovation, planning and redesign;
- Evidencing the impact of activities undertaken;
- Formally representing the sector;
- Helping identify/set priorities and spend;
- Helping marginalised voices be heard;
- Providing intelligence, knowledge and insight;
- Providing perspectives from the sector;
- Reviewing and challenging commissioning plans;
- Safeguarding; and
- Supporting and facilitating engagement.

Respondents were asked three questions about them: what are the functions that are needed at the

regional scale?; how well are these functions operating currently?; and will more work being done regionally help or hinder these functions?

Figure 3.3 presents the findings that relate to the first of these three. The results are ranked from left to right in a series of proportional bars – with those on the furthest left being the functions that the greatest number of respondents reported that were needed, and conversely those on the right where the fewest people felt they were needed. That said, there was a considerable amount of unanimity in the replies, with consistently high numbers of respondents (between 77% and 93%) identifying indeed that the stated functions were needed. The only two outliers, if indeed any could be described as such, were ‘Campaigning and setting the agenda’ and ‘Reviewing and challenging commissioning plans’, where 19% and 23% of respondents respectively suggested that these were not needed.

Respondents were then asked to reflect upon how effective these functions are operating currently (Figure 3.4). There was a much greater split in opinion when it came to this question. Grouping the positive (‘Effective’ and ‘Very effective’) and negative (‘Ineffective’ and ‘Very ineffective’) comments together allows analysis of this to be clearly demonstrated. It is interesting that there is a much greater sense of negativity than positivity about the current arrangements – only four of the 13 functions have more than or equal to 50% of the respondents reporting that they are currently effective: ‘Safeguarding’, ‘Providing perspectives from sector’, ‘Delivering services’ and ‘Formally representing the sector’.

Further, there is an interesting pattern in the kinds of functions that are broadly felt to be working well as opposed to those that are not. It is a caricature in part, but the functions that are currently felt to be positive tend to be more operational, and tend to be those that organisations within the third sector are able to deliver with too much reliance upon others – these include: ‘Safeguarding’, ‘Providing perspectives from sector’, ‘Delivering services’, ‘Formally representing the sector’, ‘Supporting and facilitating engagement’, ‘Providing intelligence, knowledge and insight’, and ‘Helping marginalised voices be heard’. Conversely those that are much more negatively viewed – ‘Campaigning and setting the agenda’, ‘Evidencing impact of activities undertaken’, ‘Helping identify/set priorities and spend’, ‘Engaging in service innovation, planning and redesign’, ‘Reviewing and challenging commissioning plans’ and ‘Developing capacity that doesn’t currently exist’ – can be characterised as more strategic functions which are much more reliant upon relationships with partners to deliver effectively.

Finally, respondents offered their views about whether more regional working would be an enabler for the identified functions, or whether it would operate as an impediment (Figure 3.5). As with Figure 3.3, there was a broad consensus that more regional working would indeed be a help, with between 79% and 92% of respondents recording this view. The function for which this was thought to be most helpful was in respect of ‘Providing perspectives from the sector’ whilst it was felt that ‘Helping marginalised voices be heard’ would be most hindered by a move towards regional working.

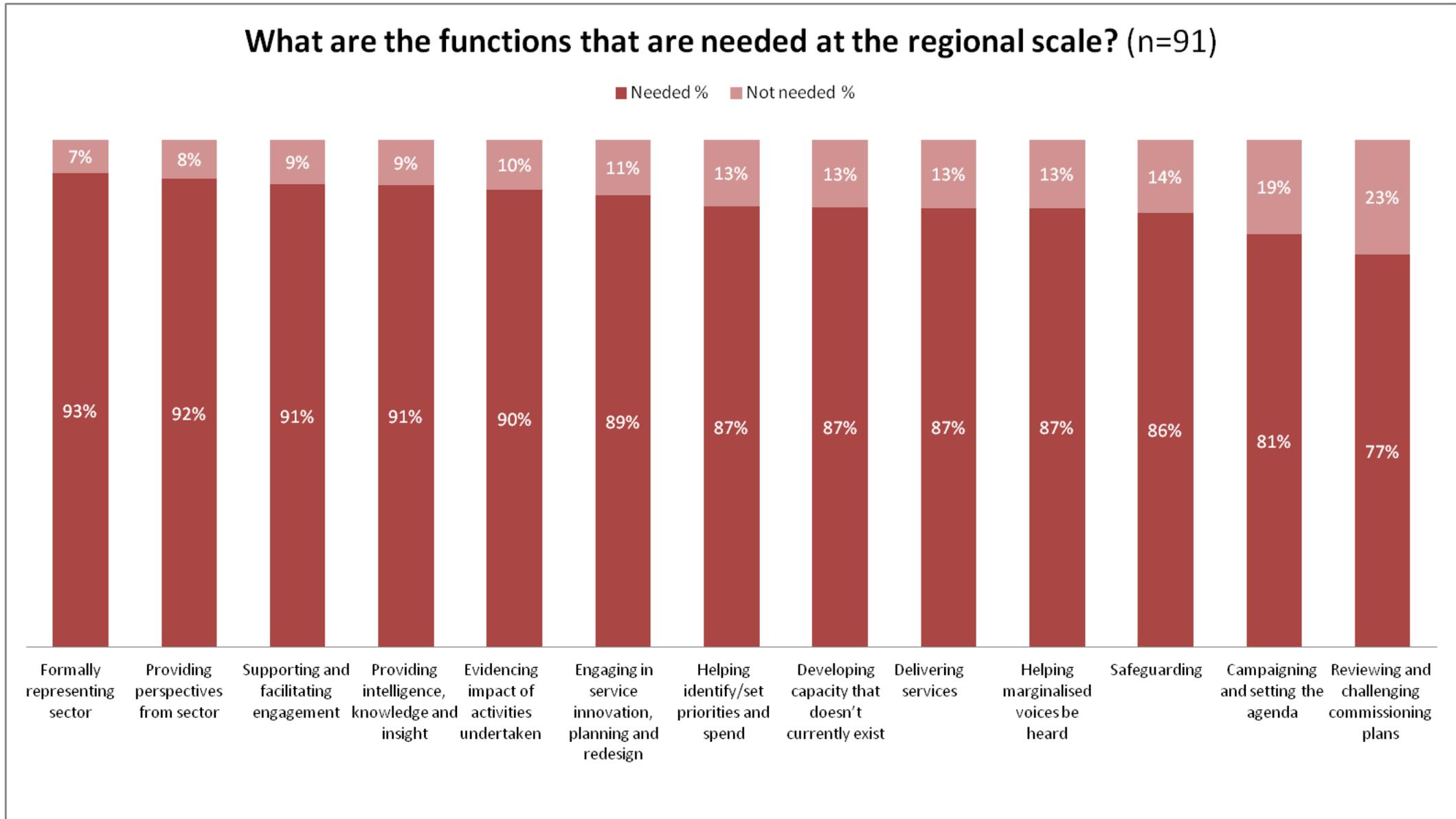
## QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

In addition to the closed questions, respondents were asked four free text questions:

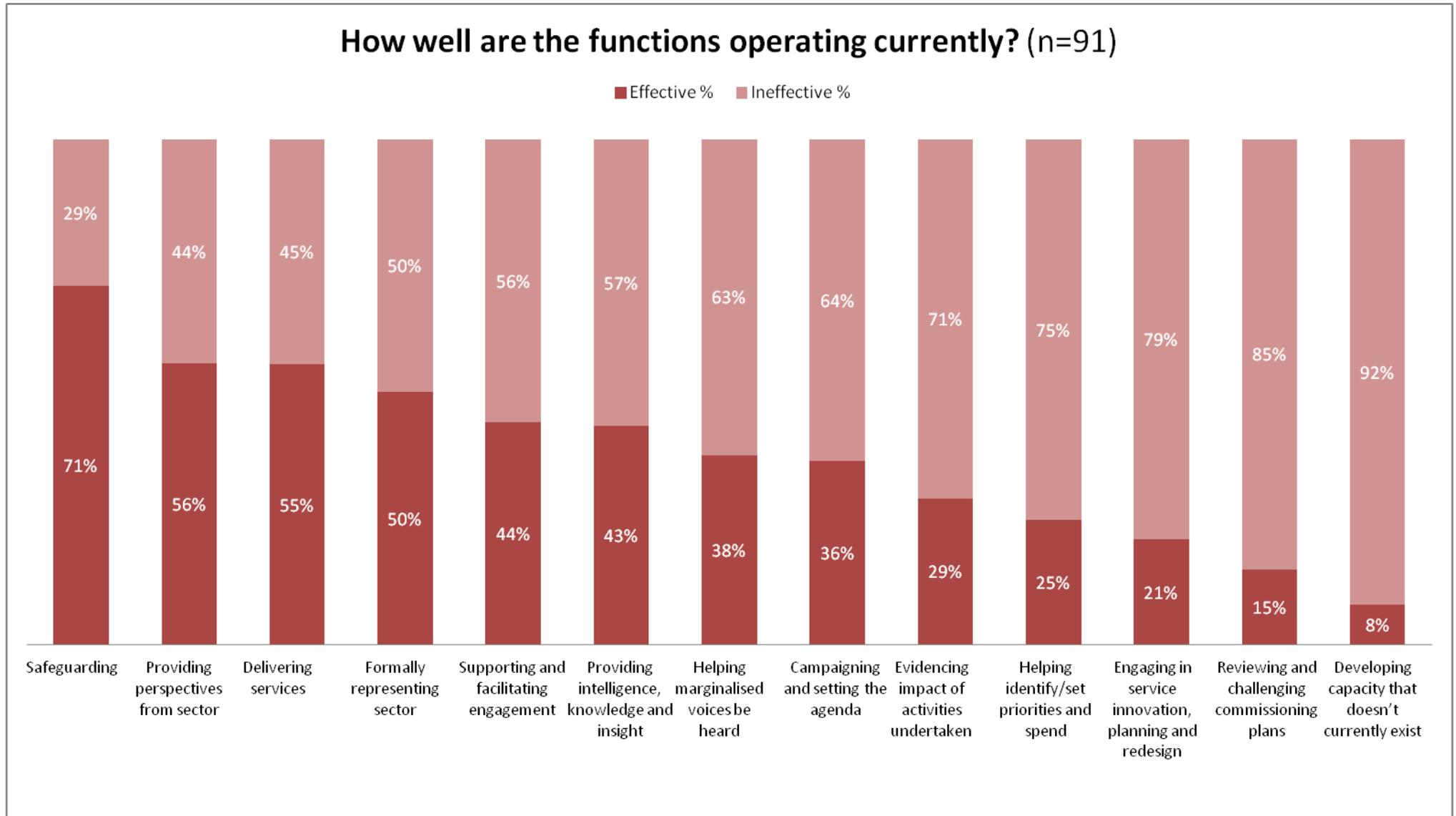
- What functions will be needed that are not in the list above?
- How do you think we might get the most productive relationships, between the local organisations and national organisations within the third sector?
- How do you think we might get the most productive relationships, between the third sector and the regional statutory sector (i.e. NHS and local government organisations)?
- Is there anything else that you’d like to say about improving regional leadership and the links between local and national third sector organisations?

This section of the chapter will consider the responses received.

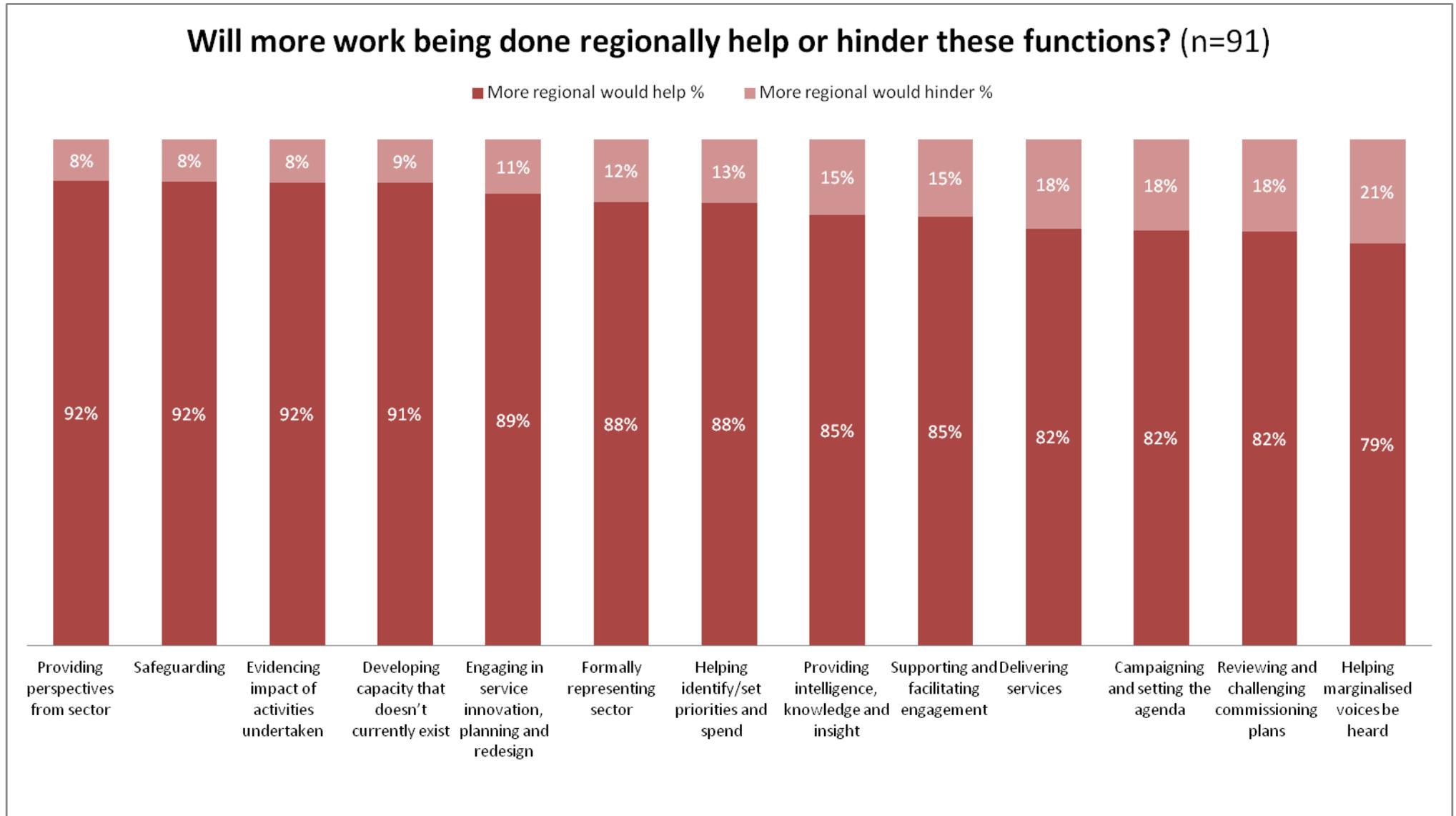
**Figure 3.3** · Proportional bars to demonstrate balance of opinion on which functions are needed at the regional scale



**Figure 3.4** • Proportional bars to demonstrate balance of opinion on how well functions are operating currently at the regional scale



**Figure 3.5** · Proportional bars to demonstrate balance of opinion on whether more regional working will help or hinder the functions



## ADDITIONAL FUNCTIONS

Firstly, respondents were asked to indicate whether there were any functions, other than the thirteen listed, which they felt were needed at the regional level. In some cases, people identified additional functions which to a great extent were different interpretations of those listed rather than something completely new. For example, an identification of the need to 'Engage diverse communities and work across cultures' could be interpreted as an extension of the function listed as "Helping marginalised voices to be heard" or "Supporting and facilitating engagement." Similarly, it could be argued that achieving a "Better understanding of the third sector and a willingness to work across LA boundaries" which arose in the survey responses could be seen as a qualification of the listed function's needs of "Providing perspectives from the sector" and "Formally representing the sector."

The contributions provide an opportunity to revisit the functions and expand and/or qualify some of them. There were some responses which identified different functions that are also worthy of further consideration. These could be summarised as:

- Workforce development – including leadership and improving joint working skills;
- Sharing information – including improving information systems ;
- Communication;
- Improving funding opportunities and funding systems;
- Advocacy;
- Training and Support for service users; and
- Ensuring legislative compliance.

## IMPROVING RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN THE SECTOR

The free text answers to the question seeking suggestions for getting the most productive relationships between local and national organisations within the third sector produced some thoughtful and interesting responses. In most cases responses described what needed to happen rather than how that objective could be realised but there were also some practical suggestions for action amongst the responses. The issues most frequently referred to were:

- Pleas not to lose the benefits of working locally and to avoid being overpowered by national organisations. As one respondent stated, "Local organisations are more connected to local communities. National organisations are too busy with their strategic plans." Another commented, "Large national delivery organisations with large resources are mostly viewed as competitors to local organisations" whilst a further comment suggested the need to accept that "local organisations actually have more knowledge than the national 'big named' organisations";
- The need to create better understanding of the sector as a whole through discussions, forums, conferences, webinars, briefings etc. The notion of face to face interaction such as visits by "officials" to local voluntary activities to proactively seek views was highlighted plus attendance by national organisations at local events. One respondent referred to the need to talk together stating "the best working relationships are made when officers and people involved can communicate well and are comfortable with each other," whilst another suggested a better understanding of how each organisation works would enable "help and advice as to how the organisations that have similar aims or work practices are able to collaborate and work together";

- The need to create formal collaboration and partnership agreements between local and national organisations including cross local authority area agreements and third sector networks. One suggestion was for national organisations to sign up to a “Localism” code of practice whilst others referred more generally to the need for “supportive mechanisms” for collaboration;
- Improving communication and linkages. Respondents identified sharing knowledge and best practice in this context and facilitating the identification of training needs;
- Achieving better funding/grant systems including changing competitive funding systems. The challenge here was articulated by one respondent who stated, “If competition for funding could be removed then I think you would see greater collaboration between national and local but the downside of awarding block grants to both national and local organisations will be removing the competitive element stifle the creativity and efficiency that is delivered through competitive bidding”;
- Developing a map of current connectivity and communication and services. This was linked in some cases to the need to achieve improved communication and a better mutual understanding;
- The need to follow through actions and create genuine collaborative intent. In this context some respondents used expressions about openness and honesty, no tokenism and no territorialism, inferring or sometimes stating clearly that these factors were positively evident in circumstances;
- Pooling resources. This was referred to in the context of financial and human resources to improve sustainability and collaboration;
- The need to create a new infrastructure was referred to by some with references being made to the roles of CVCs and the WCVA. One suggestion referred to the WCVA being able to manage regional networks with engagement lines through CVCs whilst other referred to the need for a “brokerage” role; and
- Employing a coordinator or at least identifying contact points to make the necessary links. The example of the Health and Social Care Facilitator was mentioned.

Other interesting responses to this question referred to:

- Ensuring a common agenda. One respondent stated, “We get productive relationships where we are working on a common agenda with strong policy direction from WG on engagement and support of the Sector;
- Increasing volunteer involvement in influencing and engagement;
- The need for Welsh Government to adopt relationships with the sector additional to that with WCVA;
- Engaging the private sector more;
- Preventing duplication of services;
- Adopting a place based approach to need and response – c.25000 populations;
- The need for stronger leadership; and
- Better engagement with, and involvement of, service users.

## IMPROVING RELATIONSHIPS WITHOUT THE SECTOR

The free text answers to the question seeking suggestions for getting the most productive relationships between the third sector and regional statutory sector also produced some thoughtful and interesting responses. Again, in most cases responses described what needed to happen rather than how that objective could be realised but there were some practical suggestions here too amongst the responses. In many cases, the comments reflected the comments made in responses to the previous question. Some spoke positively about relationships in one case referring to a “transformation in relations with the local authority” but in the main, respondents sought improvements. The issues most frequently referred to were:

- The need to be more valued and obtain different attitudes and trust. One respondent referred to the need for the statutory sector to “treat us as inferior to them.” Another talked about the third sector being the “poor relation” in partnerships with the local authority viewing the third sector as a “threat” or even a “predator looking to procure more services to deliver at the expense of local authority staff.” Reference was made to the “huge gap” between the third sector and health;
- Better communication and more meaningful engagement including face to face interactions and consultation events. One person stated that “a proper chain of communication needs to be set up”;
- Better understanding and awareness of the third sector contribution. A respondent pleaded for “real recognition” of the sector and for “Public bodies to realise that involving an organisation in the design of a service does not preclude that organisation from being able to tender for that service”;
- Named contacts and facilitators, formal networks and structures. Reference was made to one joint project being successful partly because of there being a “single person accepting responsibility”. One suggestion was to constitute a “liaison board” involving representatives of both sectors whilst another mentioned a “structured arrangement works best along the lines of a Compact”;
- Mandatory duty to use third sector services and third sector involvement plus formal representation on boards. One respondent stated that “it needs to be made the responsibility of the Health Board to ensure they are linked to the third sector rather than putting the onus on facilitators”;
- Better LA commissioning and procurement ensuring fair access where “all third sector organisations should be given the opportunity to submit tenders either independently or in a consortium arrangement”;
- Integrated and more coordinated LA/NHS organisations. This was summed up by the claim that “the days of an all purpose authority of health and local government is long overdue” and working across a number of authority areas creating “disagreements, confusion and duplication for VCS organisations.” One respondent referred to “turf wars” between the local authority and Health being “in danger of impeding progress and the third sector may be sidelined as a result of this”;
- More long term funding and more flexible. The Intermediate Care Fund was cited as an example where a funding stream had led to “a positive demonstration of how all the partners working together has greater effect and impact”; and

- Mapping service provision and identifying needs and service gaps. This reflected the reference to mapping in answers to the previous question.

Some notable other suggestions were:

- The need to share information;
- Identifying shared values and expectations;
- Better coordination within the third sector;
- Equality of treatment for commissioned and non commissioned service providers;
- Use user voices more effectively;
- The need for political commitment and leadership – national and local;
- Facilitating small organisations to joint bid for larger contracts;
- Separate social enterprise from the voluntary sector and include both in local, regional and national strategy development;
- Create formal agreements;
- Adopt a place based approach – c25000 populations;
- Establish provider forums;
- Sharing resources;
- Governance arrangements which allow the third sector to lead; and
- Statutory authorities should not just work with CVCs.

## ANYTHING ELSE

Finally people were asked whether there was anything else they would like to say about improving regional leadership and the links between local and national third sector organisations. Most responded with reiterations of comments already made, for example many talked about the need for leadership, on not losing the local dimension and on the need to bring all the levels together. A number of comments referred specifically to the role of CVCs. For example, a suggestion to increase membership of CVCs and make sure they are the spokespeople for the third sector; a comment that some CVCs compete with social enterprises rather than facilitating them; another that CVCs should support third sector organisations not be providers.

## SUMMARY

Key findings from the analysis of these project data are as follows:

- High proportions of respondents felt that the identified functions were needed (between 77 and 93%), and that more regional working would help in the functions being delivered (between 79 and 92%);
- There were stark differences of opinion with those that responded to the survey in respect of how well they thought the identified functions are currently operating. The more operational and internal to the third sector the function is, the more people felt that it was currently effective. On the other had the more strategic and ‘external’, the more likely it was to be thought to be ineffective;
- Many people took great time and trouble to provide thoughtful responses to the more open text questions ;
- The qualitative analysis of the findings demonstrates that a number of consistently emerging

themes are present – regardless of which perspective people come from. These are complex but centre on the way in which the sector works internally (around communication, governance, accountability, for example) or externally with partners (around influencing and service delivery, representation, trust, for example); and

- There is clear and palpable enthusiasm and commitment for what people within this sample do – they care passionately about their work. They also, on the whole, recognise that there are improvements that can be made in the way that the third sector operates, and there is an appetite for change.

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## 4. RESEARCH FINDINGS – INTERVIEWS

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In addition to the survey, in-depth interviews were carried out with a cross-section of stakeholders in order to engage in deliberation about the issues at hand. The following section summarises the findings from the discussions.

Eighteen interviews were undertaken in the first three weeks of April with participants who represented one of four key ‘constituencies’:

- **LOCAL GROUPS** – leaders and representatives from local third sector groups;
- **CVCs** – Chief Officers and Health and Social Care Facilitators from the County Voluntary Councils;
- **NATIONAL CHARITIES / ALLIANCES** – senior officers from national charities, who may also have been members or leaders within the third sector health and social care Alliances; and
- **STATUTORY SECTOR** – whether senior figures within social services in local government, national policy makers, senior health board commissioners and partners, or other bodies.

Potential interviewees were identified and approached by WIHSC, and due to the short timescale for the study, telephone interviews were undertaken. These discussions typically took between 30 minutes and one hour to complete.

What follows is a summary of the complexity that was present in the interviews. Interestingly, when analysing the content of the discussions, five key issues emerged with consistency:

1. Relationships, leadership and developing partnerships within the third sector;
2. Developing strategic and operational relationships and partnerships between the third sector and commissioners;
3. Role of CVCs;
4. Role of the Alliances; and
5. Role of WCVA

In order to make sense of the different perspectives that were offered, the following five pages – one for each of the substantive themes described above – provide two sources of information.

The first is a list of the comments and questions that were raised in the interviews about, for example, the nature of relationships, leadership and partnerships within the third sector. These comments have been mapped against which of the four constituencies described above made these kinds of remarks. This allows for an interpretation of “who said what” in a relatively concise manner.

The second channels all of the questions and comments into a “voice” for each of the four constituencies. These voices provide a typical perspective from the people interviewed within each of the four stakeholder groups. It is important to note that these are not direct quotations from any one interviewee – rather these are an attempt to synthesise a number of similar perspectives into one concise comment.

Whilst these are not direct quotations, they use some of the phraseology and vocabulary of the interview participants. Similarly, these do not account for all of the nuances that hours of interviews provide, but the benefit of being able to get an understanding of the “consensus” view within each of the four key stakeholder groups would be sufficiently useful to offset any shortcomings.

## RELATIONSHIPS, LEADERSHIP AND DEVELOPING PARTNERSHIPS WITHIN THE THIRD SECTOR

Key questions and comments behind this issue	Who made these comments			
	Local groups	CVCs	National charities / Alliances	Statutory sector
– How well does the sector deliver services, especially in context of needing to bring marginalised voices to the fore?	✓		✓	
– It is important to ensure the voice of the many small grass-roots organisations in the locality is protected		✓		
– How are all voices represented (including the dissemination of information from key meetings, bringing specialist input meetings)?			✓	✓
– How do we balance hearing from specialist but focused (typically national) organisations and generic but wide (typically umbrella) organisations equally?		✓		✓
– Can umbrella organisations truly ‘represent’, especially if they are also delivering services?	✓		✓	✓
– Commissioners intend to manage contracts differently to those of handing out grants				✓
– Gap between the rhetoric of valuing the third sector and the reality of contracts increasingly going out of the third sector and to independent providers		✓	✓	

What these people might have said about relationships, leadership and developing partnerships within the third sector			
Local groups	CVCs	National charities / Alliances	Statutory sector
<p><i>“I’m most concerned about my locality and what’s going on within our communities. I’m happy to try and develop relationships but it’s hard when there are big third sector organisations picking up lots of contracts.</i></p> <p><i>We attend the forums and networks, but I’m not sure that translates into action.”</i></p>	<p><i>“I want to ensure that all of the small grass-roots organisations are nurtured. The bigger organisations don’t need us as much, but they have to be brought together.</i></p> <p><i>Our forums and networks provide an opportunity for the sector to come together which is fit for purpose as we go forward.”</i></p>	<p><i>“I’ve some concerns that all the voices from the sector are not heard from. We’re open to working with others, although we know that we’ve got some way to go to improve relationships. We don’t know much about what is going on locally.</i></p> <p><i>I’m worried that there are some relationships within the sector that aren’t as open as others.”</i></p>	<p><i>“More and more work within the sector will be managed through contracts. These will not be issued if there are duplicate services so the sector has got to get its house in order.</i></p> <p><i>I want to be reassured that the sector is ready to work in this way, and know that they have the links to localities that we are looking for.”</i></p>

## DEVELOPING STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS AND PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN THE THIRD SECTOR AND COMMISSIONERS

Key questions and comments behind this issue	Who made these comments			
	Local groups	CVCs	National charities / Alliances	Statutory sector
– Immaturity of some commissioners, and the role of WCVA in moving this agenda forward		✓	✓	
– How well does the third sector influence commissioning priorities, develop capacity in the sector?			✓	✓
– Are the third sector ready for this? If commissioners wanted to invest heavily, would the sector be ready to respond?				✓
– Reducing workload and rationalising the number of relationships			✓	
– Are we ready to pool our collective resources?		✓		
– The third sector needs to reduce duplication in its 'offer' – services can't be provided twice	✓	✓	✓	✓
– Maintaining a local base with the increasing needs of 'professional' commissioning functions at the regional level	✓	✓		
– How can the role of the Welsh language be safeguarded in these discussions?	✓	✓		
– Difficulties in both finding and trusting a partner organisation, and getting to a stage where you can trust people that might be your competitors to work together to produce menus of services for commissioners, for example			✓	
– Need to share information and intelligence, both within and without the sector		✓	✓	✓

### What people might say about developing strategic and operational relationships and partnerships between the third sector and commissioners

Local groups	CVCs	National charities / Alliances	Statutory sector
<p><i>"Commissioners aren't interested in hearing directly from us – we have to put our messages in via the CVC, and I'm not sure they know enough about us.</i></p> <p><i>I know that there are others doing what we do in different places and I'm worried that we might be overlooked in future."</i></p>	<p><i>"We've worked hard to develop relationships with commissioners and there is a mixed picture as to how these are working - good in places and not so good elsewhere.</i></p> <p><i>We've got the role as broker in these relationships which is difficult as we need to balance all of the different interests. We've not been as successful as we should have been in shaping the agenda."</i></p>	<p><i>"I'm worried that for the CVCs that provide services, they are not being honest brokers when in meetings with commissioners. This will only get worse as contracts get larger. Having fewer commissioners to engage with as we move to regions will help though.</i></p> <p><i>There's a gap between the rhetoric of politicians and policy makers, and the reality of contracts going more and more to the independent sector."</i></p>	<p><i>"We need two things from the sector. An effective challenge to help set priorities in the right way at a strategic level, but I don't think this is happening as well as it could at the moment.</i></p> <p><i>The other thing is to be reassured that the sector is sufficiently professional – whether big or small, local or national – to work across regions. I'm not sure we're there yet."</i></p>

## ROLE OF CVCs

Key questions and comments behind this issue	Who made these comments			
	Local groups	CVCs	National charities / Alliances	Statutory sector
– Are these fit for purpose going forward? Do they need federated or other models?	✓		✓	✓
– How do they balance the needs of local and national organisations, both of whom may be members?	✓	✓	✓	
– How sustainable is the position where some CVCs are providing services in competition with members? Should they deliver their core functions only given the potential for conflict of interest?	✓	✓	✓	✓
– How do they work more effectively at the strategic level with commissioners? How do they bring in specialist knowledge across the third sector?			✓	✓

What people might say about the role of CVCs			
Local groups	CVCs	National charities / Alliances	Statutory sector
<p><i>“I’m aware of what the CVC can do, but do they represent us as well as they should? I’ve got questions about how they’ll work when we have regions.</i></p> <p><i>I’m really concerned that they are providing services in competition with us – it hardly seems fair. And how do they balance our needs with those of the larger national organisations.”</i></p>	<p><i>“There are real challenges posed to us by regional working – not least a change in our numbers and structure. We’ve got real financial challenges too and in part this explains why some CVCs have decided to provide services beyond core functions.</i></p> <p><i>We’ve got a real role to play going forward, but it’s open to some negotiation as we move towards regions.”</i></p>	<p><i>“We don’t really engage with the CVCs – it’s difficult to have this relationship at times. Are they fit for purpose in their current form?</i></p> <p><i>They’re there to represent their members, but also they deliver services in competition with members – how can that be sustainable? I’ve also some concerns about how much they know about specialist areas like ours – there’s a gap there”</i></p>	<p><i>“We’ve made the CVCs our strategic partners in the current arrangements, but they will obviously need to adapt to changing circumstances as we proceed more towards regions.</i></p> <p><i>“We are aware of the charge of conflict of interests if the CVC provides services and this is of concern. We also want to feel reassured that we’re having the right specialist input when we need it.”</i></p>

## ROLE OF THE ALLIANCES

Key questions and comments behind this issue	Who made these comments			
	Local groups	CVCs	National charities / Alliances	Statutory sector
– There is a relatively low level of commissioner recognition of the Alliances at this stage			✓	✓
– How does the sector best develop ‘upstream’ relationships with commissioners?		✓	✓	
– How can the ‘biases’ of national organisations, given that they are campaigners too, be reconciled?		✓		✓
– Are local organisations member of alliances, and if not, could they be?	✓		✓	

### What people might say about the role of the Alliances

Local groups	CVCs	National charities / Alliances	Statutory sector
<i>“I don’t know anything about the Alliances really. I might like to know more and find out how I can make a contribution and be a member, but I think that door is closed.”</i>	<i>“I can see the importance of having the Alliances there, but sometimes it can be difficult to know what their role is. They have a line into the Ministers and they often don’t come through the CVC. As such it’s hard to work alongside them”</i>	<i>“The Alliances are not well known, especially by commissioners but were working on that. We are looking to develop effective ‘upstream’ relationships with commissioners, as difficult as this is. We’re also looking to work better together within the Alliances, and trust each other more.”</i>	<i>“We don’t have any formal relationships at this stage with the Alliances, but that could change over time. We however need to be aware of the ‘biases’ of national campaigning organisations, and that’s why working with CVCs can be preferable at times.”</i>

## ROLE OF WCVA

Key questions and comments behind this issue	Who made these comments			
	Local groups	CVCs	National charities / Alliances	Statutory sector
– What is the role for WCVA for in this new climate? Lots of people asking the question, but not so many answering.	✓	✓	✓	✓
– How good are its relationships? With the Alliances? With ADSS? With the NHS Confed? With CVCs?		✓	✓	✓
– Is there sufficient control over the CVCs?			✓	✓
– If they are leaders for the sector, what are they leading on?		✓		✓

### What people might say about the role of the WCVA

Local groups	CVCs	National charities / Alliances	Statutory sector
<i>“The WCVA seems very distant to us. I’m not sure I know that much about what they do.”</i>	<i>“What is the role for WCVA in this new context? If they are leaders for the sector what is it that they are leading on?”</i>	<i>“How good are WCVA’s relationships with key people – like ADSS and the NHS Confed? Couldn’t they facilitate these conversations for us?  Are the relationships between CVCs and WCVA what they should be?”</i>	<i>“There’s some real scope for WCVA making more of a contribution, but until now that has not really been up for discussion. We want clarity about where responsibilities within the third sector lie so that we know that we are speaking to the right people at the right time.”</i>

## SUMMARY

- Five issues emerged as being of central importance in improving regional leadership in the view of key stakeholders: relationships, leadership and developing partnerships within the third sector; developing strategic and operational relationships and partnerships between the third sector and commissioners; the role of CVCs; the role of the Alliances; and the role of WCVA;
- There is considerable overlap between these issues and the functions identified and tested in the survey. An analysis of where these two complementary bodies of evidence overlap could lead to a prioritisation of actions;
- There is a danger in moving too quickly towards seeking to resolve some of the ‘infrastructural’ issues identified by interviewees at the expense of resolving to create clarity about which functions are the right ones for the sector;
- There is great respect for the work of the third sector in Wales focused on health and social care. Those from outside of the sector can see shortcomings and areas for improvement, but are willing to work in partnership to resolve these issues and develop better working relationships; and
- The more intractable tensions lie within the third sector but, conversely, these are the ones that in many ways the sector has within its gift to resolve.

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## 5. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

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In order to summarise, the following section provides an oversight of the evidence that has been collected to date.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

- There is no one perfect ‘blueprint’ for Wales, but there are approaches and models that are worth exploring and considering the issues facing Wales are by no means unique; and
- The value of the third sector in regional discussions is acknowledged, as is the contribution that the third sector can make in influencing strategic decisions for statutory sector partners. Where progress has been made, it has been made in partnership, with third sector organisations working effectively within and without the sector.

### ONLINE SURVEY

- High proportions of respondents felt that the identified functions were needed and that more regional working would help in the functions being delivered, but that there were stark differences of opinion with respect to how well respondents thought the identified functions are currently operating. The more operational and internal to the third sector the function is, the more people felt that it was currently effective. On the other hand the more strategic and ‘external’, the more likely it was to be thought to be ineffective; and
- The qualitative analysis of the findings demonstrates that a number of consistently emerging themes are present – regardless of which perspective people come from. These are complex but centre on the way in which the sector works internally (around communication, governance, accountability, for example) or externally with partners (around influencing and service delivery, representation, trust, for example).

### INTERVIEWS

- Five issues emerged as being of central importance in improving regional leadership in the view of key stakeholders: relationships, leadership and developing partnerships within the third sector; developing strategic and operational relationships and partnerships between the third sector and commissioners; the role of CVCs; the role of the Alliances; and the role of WCVA; and
- There is great respect for the work of the third sector in Wales focused on health and social care. Those from outside of the sector can see shortcomings and areas for improvement, but are willing to work in partnership to resolve these issues and develop better working relationships and that whilst the more intractable tensions lie within the third sector, these are the ones that in many ways the sector has within its gift to resolve.

Taking all of the research evidence together, the following list provides a summary of the issues facing the third sector in Wales in respect of regional leadership, and the way that local and national organisations work together:

- Create a much better understanding within the sector and with others of how the sector is constituted, its role and purpose and contribution;

- Develop formal collaborative and partnership agreements between local and national third sector organisations which include a commitment to work regionally and develop similar agreements with statutory partners reviewing governance arrangements accordingly;
- Improve communication within the sector and between the sector and partner agencies, sharing information, knowledge, learning and best practice possibly through creating a map of current activity and services showing connectivity, and identifying gaps;
- Create genuine collaborative intent where commitments are open and honest and avoid territorialism, through improving leadership at all levels including political leadership and consider the funding system and schemes so that they become longer term, less competitive, and instead encourage collaboration, enabling fuller participation at all levels of the sector;
- Improve local authority commissioning and procurement to enable more use of the third sector and employ individuals within each region as facilitators for making links within the sector and with others; and
- Review the role and purpose of CVCs and the WCVA to ensure that they are fit for purpose as part of these arrangements.

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## 6. NEXT STEPS - OPTIONS FOR ACTION

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This research project has reinforced the importance and diversity of the third sector at a time of significant change in health and social care, not least because of the impending implementation of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act. This major legislation provides opportunities and challenges for all sectors and its successful implementation will depend on different sectoral interests being harnessed for the common benefit of users, carers and citizens in general.

This is a time for action and we very much wanted this concluding section to have an emphasis on identifying practical ways the research can be translated into options for action in the short, medium and longer terms. As stated earlier, some issues are within the gift of the sector to resolve and whilst we acknowledge some will require the support and attention of others, we hope that this report will act as a catalyst for representatives of all the sectors in Wales to better understand and engage with the actions we now identify as options to move forward. It should be noted that some statutory agencies have already demonstrated their willingness to engage by completing the online survey and/or participating in the interviews. We also freely acknowledge that much work on these sorts of issues is already going on within the sector – we have not been asked nor attempted to ‘map’ this activity, but know that many solutions are already out there and being worked on.

Each of the components of our research provides a basis for future action and the sector will need to consider the learning from each and the relative merits of the thoughts and ideas contained within them. We would recommend that the different “voices” represented in Section 4 be used as a checkpoint for the action to follow. The perspectives represented by these “voices” may be different but we believe there is also a great deal of common thought and purpose within them and ultimately, they all reflect a desire to improve the contribution of the third sector at this important time.

We have identified a number of areas for further consideration (see the following table) which draws together the various elements of our findings and provides a “long-list” of options for actions which we recommend should now be considered to fulfil the priorities. The tables reflect the evidence, telling us what (needs to happen) and how (should we make it happen).

The evidence can also be classified in terms of achievability in the short, medium and long term. Some suggestions may seem extreme, and others less so, but all are open for discussion and all have been identified during the research. In all cases, we believe the action identified can assist the improvement of regional leadership and the links between local and national third sector organisations. It is important that the table should be considered as options for action as much as proposals.

The table provides much further detail, but to summarise, in order to improve regional leadership and the links between local and national third sector organisations, the evidence that we have gathered during this exercise suggests that the sector needs to:

- 1. Create a much better understanding of the sector’s role and contribution to health, social care and well-being and the fulfilment of the aspirations of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act;**
- 2. Establish better internal and external partnership arrangements with capacity to sustain them over time;**
- 3. Operate within a system of funding that provides financial sustainability and the best use of resources; and**
- 4. Formulate clear governance and accountability arrangements for working at the local, regional and national levels.**

**Table 6.1** · Areas for Further Consideration and Options for Action

Key area for action	What?	How?	Implications and commentary	Timescale
<p><i>In order to improve regional leadership and the links between local and national third sector organisations, the sector needs to...</i></p> <p><b>1. CREATE A MUCH BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE SECTOR'S ROLE AND CONTRIBUTION TO HEALTH, SOCIAL CARE AND WELL-BEING AND THE FULFILMENT OF THE ASPIRATIONS OF THE SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELL-BEING (WALES) ACT</b></p>	<p>Creating a much better understanding within the sector and with others of how the sector is constituted, its role and purpose and contribution. Increase the value of the sector. Identifying common agendas, shared values and expectations. Changing attitudes.</p>	<p>Organising a concerted programme of discussions, forums, conferences, webinars, briefings and events involving the relevant parties. Ensuring face to face dialogue. Engaging more meaningfully. Arranging visits by national and statutory representatives to local activities. WCVA to play brokerage role. Engaging with, and involve service users more. Organising provider forums.</p>	<p>Needs much more drive than previously evidenced. Possible campaign topic. Depends to some extent on mutual desires. Needs leadership.</p>	<p>Short to medium term.</p>
	<p>Improving communication within the sector and between the sector and partner agencies, improving the flow of information, input and ideas.</p>	<p>Devising a communication strategy. Adopting a range of communication methods reflecting technology. Ensuring hard to reach groups are included.</p>	<p>Should be achievable with right commitment but size and complexity of sector should not be underestimated.</p>	<p>Short to medium term</p>
	<p>Sharing information, knowledge, learning and best practice.</p>	<p>Taking action alongside the communication initiative.</p>		<p>Short to medium term</p>
	<p>Creating a map of current activity and services showing connectivity, and identifying gaps, aimed at enabling the sector and stakeholders to both understand the sector better and to identify opportunities.</p>	<p>Undertaking an audit of existing provision.</p>	<p>May require specific short term project.</p>	<p>Short to medium term</p>

Key area for action	What?	How?	Implications and commentary	Timescale
	Developing formal collaborative and partnership agreements between local and national third sector organisations which include a commitment to work regionally. Developing similar agreements with statutory partners. Reviewing governance arrangements accordingly.	Seeking support from WG for the importance of the third sector through a refreshed reinforcement of its scheme. Drawing up draft Memoranda of Understanding and other appropriate methods.	Will need some political support to gain momentum. If isn't achievable, will help to flush out other supportive mechanisms for collaboration.	Short to medium term
<i>In order to improve regional leadership and the links between local and national third sector organisations, the sector needs to...</i>	Identifying individuals able to act as contact points within each region for making links within the sector and others.	Seeking volunteers for task.	Requires volunteers for task.	Short to medium term
	Creating genuine collaborative intent where commitments are open and honest and avoid territorialism.	Ensuring action is always taken and seen to be taken on decisions and communicated throughout the sector. Creating regional networks. Maintaining profile of regional working on agendas.	Need to implement decision making tracking system.	Short to medium term
<b>2. ESTABLISH BETTER INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIP ARRANGEMENTS WITH CAPACITY TO SUSTAIN THEM OVER TIME</b>	Increasing capacity of service users to input to service design and enhance the value of the sector to benefit service providers and commissioners, and in doing so ensuring the voice of all citizens, including those at the margins, are heard and can input.	Revisiting engagement and involvement strategies. Instigating new training opportunities.	Will require some careful preparatory work.	Short to medium term
	Improving skills to work collaboratively.	Identifying skills needed to improve joint working – training needs analysis	Could be major exercise but could be more targeted.	Medium term
	Creating formally established posts within each region for individuals to act as facilitators for making links within the sector and with others.	Needs funding.	Funding has not been made explicitly available to date for this purpose and it may not be in future.	Long term
	Making mutual involvement within the sector and between it and others a mandatory duty.	Seeking high level support from leaders within the sector and/or WG.	Third Sector Scheme provides a platform. Duty to cooperate within the Act. Likely to take some time to put into effect.	Long term

Key area for action	What?	How?	Implications and commentary	Timescale
<p><i>In order to improve regional leadership and the links between local and national third sector organisations, the sector needs to...</i></p> <p><b>3. OPERATE WITHIN A SYSTEM OF FUNDING THAT PROVIDES FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY AND THE BEST USE OF RESOURCES</b></p>	Improving local authority commissioning and procurement to enable more use of third sector.	Through negotiation. Identifying and communicating best practice.	Timescales are dependent on LA agreement.	Short to medium, possibly long-term.
	Changing the funding system and schemes so that they become longer term, less competitive, and instead encourage collaboration, enabling fuller participation at all levels of the sector.	Ongoing dialogue within the sector and between the sector and WG.	Big issue and will require shifts in attitude as current arrangements suit some and not others. Little evidence to date of finding right balance.	Long term
	Pooling resources, financial, human and physical.	Establishing formal agreements and new commitments.	Proving to be a challenge within statutory agencies on the health and social care integration agenda.	Long term
<p><i>In order to improve regional leadership and the links between local and national third sector organisations, the sector needs to...</i></p> <p><b>4. FORMULATE CLEAR GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY ARRANGEMENTS FOR WORKING AT THE LOCAL, REGIONAL AND NATIONAL LEVELS.</b></p>	Reviewing the role and purpose of CVCs.	Identifying whether CVCs are providers or there to be the local voice of the sector, support organisations and increase membership.	Potentially controversial issue.	Short to medium term
	Reviewing the role and purpose of WCVA.	Identifying best role for WCVA in current climate.	Revise or reinvent?	Short to medium term
	Reviewing the role and purpose of the Alliance of Alliances.	Identifying whether this Alliance is sufficiently representative of all third sector interests in health and social care. Reviewing terms of reference.	Good opportunity to do this given the fact the Alliance commissioned this project and its relatively new status.	Short to medium term

Finally, we wish to acknowledge that this work has been undertaken in the context of four significant current policy developments:

- First, the new Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act. Greater clarity of the implementation aspects of the legislation is currently being obtained through the publication of its associated regulations and codes of practice but, as with most legislation, an understanding of the Act's implications for the third sector will not fully emerge until after implementation on the 1st April 2016.
- Second, the continuing demand for greater integration of health and social care. As progress is made on this agenda, it follows that cross sector working is likely to improve. However, at this stage, it is not possible to estimate the extent of the positive impact greater integration will have on the third sector and how it relates to its statutory partners.
- Third, that there is a broader policy and legislative context that is germane to this ongoing work. This includes, but is not limited to, the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 and its Well-being Goals including 'A healthier Wales'; Prudent Healthcare; Our Plan for Primary Health Care up to March 2018; the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Bill; the Housing (Wales) Act 2014; and the Local Government (Wales) Bill.
- Finally, and in a similar vein, we know local government reorganisation will result in fewer authorities and therefore a broader geographical footprint for cross sector working. Again, however, we cannot be clear about the potential impact of this on how the third sector will work regionally in the future.

Our view is that whatever action the sector decides to prioritise and undertake, it needs to be 'future-proofed' as far as possible against these three contexts.

# Brief for WCVA and the third sector health & social care Alliance of Alliances: Sustainable Social Services Wales – Delivering Transformation

26 January 2015

## Context and Introduction

Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) represents, campaigns for, supports and develops voluntary organisations, community action, and volunteering in Wales. We represent the sector at a European, UK and Wales level.

WCVA is a membership organisation with over 3,500 members. It is a company limited by guarantee, with charitable status.

Our mission is to provide excellent support, leadership and an influential voice for the third sector and volunteering in Wales.

Our values are a third sector that:

- Builds resilient, cohesive and inclusive communities
- Gives people a stake in their future through their own actions and services
- Creates a strong, healthy and fair society
- Demonstrates the intrinsic value of volunteering and active community involvement.

WCVA works strategically with the health and social care third sector, including the Health and Social Care Alliance of Alliances. The Alliance of Alliances provides a platform for agreeing common policy messages, and considering strategies to promote and implement third sector service delivery models. Work so far has included the I Matter, We Matter campaign enabling citizen's voice in the Social Services National Outcomes Framework, and input into the consultation and scrutiny processes of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act, and Regulations and Code of Practice. This group is also the core membership for the twice yearly third sector meetings with the Minister for Health and Social Services.

Current membership of the Alliance of Alliances is:

Age Alliance Wales

Children in Wales

Cymorth Cymru

Social Care and Wellbeing Alliance Wales

The Long Term Conditions Alliance

Wales Alliance for Citizen Directed Support

Wales Alliance for Mental Health

Wales Association of County Voluntary Councils

Wales Carers Alliance

Wales Disability Reference Group

Wales Reablement Alliance

Wales Social Cooperative Development Forum

WCVA.

A grant from Welsh Government Social Services is enabling readiness activity for partners, including the third sector, in the delivery of sustainable Social Services and the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act. This agreed third sector activity is **Improving Regional Leadership and the links between Local and National Third Sector Organisations**.

The third sector infrastructure has been one traditionally of national and local (local authority footprint) organisation. The introduction of the seven Local Health Boards with regional footprints, the integration of health and social care with regional collaboratives and the coming development of GP locality clusters is tasking the third sector with developing efficient multi-dimensional (national/regional/local) working whilst ensuring and maintaining effective local working within communities where importantly both service design and delivery take place.

The third sector has the important contribution to make to delivering transformation and improved services through *Putting People at the Centre* <http://www.wcva.org.uk/what-we-do/policy-and-influence/putting-people-at-the-centre> and its four foci of community engagement; early intervention and prevention; transformational services; and scrutiny.

WCVA and the Alliance of Alliances believe therefore that there is an essential piece of work to be done to identify and establish this effective multi-dimensional third sector infrastructure, specifically for each region and the linking nationally and locally: highlighting and sharing good practice to address gaps and improve collaborative and transformational working.

## Work

WCVA wishes to commission work to improve regional leadership and the links between local and national third sector organisations.

The work will be:

- Scoping to identify what infrastructure is already in place; good practice; opportunities and gaps.
- The aim is to achieve readiness and capacity to engage with national policy development, and collaborative working both with external partners including ADSS Cymru and the Welsh NHS Confederation, and within the third sector itself, importantly improving working between the local and national organisations with the added regional dimension.

With the following outputs

- A Report giving the modelling and good practice for third sector efficient and effective local/regional/national working
- An agreed infrastructure identified that brings clarity, accessibility and accountability both within the third sector and externally for statutory partners
- 6 identified CVC regional leads for the collaboratives with an appointed regional third sector group including relevant national organisations
- Improved engagement and facilitation of leadership activity and contributions to policy development.



# YOUR VIEW: regional leadership and the third sector in Wales

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## Page 1: INTRODUCTION

The WCVA has asked the Welsh Institute for Health and Social Care at the University of South Wales to undertake a research study into improving regional leadership and the links between local and national third sector organisations. This is all set in the context of the role of the third sector which is at the heart of the Social Services and Well-Being Act.

The following questionnaire has been designed to explore the functions that the third sector needs in order to deal with the challenge of the Act. We are seeking to capture the views of different stakeholders on this and it will provide crucial intelligence for our sector.

We'd like you to complete the survey **by Friday 10th April**.

The questionnaire should take around 20 minutes to complete.

**You should note that the responses will go directly to the researchers and WCVA will not be able to access them. Further, that when reported upon the responses will be anonymised and no-one will be identifiable from the answers given.**

*Note that once you have clicked on the CONTINUE button your answers are submitted and you can not return to review or amend that page.*



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YEARS

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