



Pilot site snapshots: Oldham

To accompany the year 2 evaluation
of The Coordinated Community
Support Programme



Oldham (1/2)

Summary of funded activity

- Partnership project extension and Advice Network (OCAN) facilitation £44,750
- Clothing bank interim funding REEL £13,422
- Staffing capacity REEL £11,076
- Staffing capacity SAWN £10,080

Leveraged/ regranted

- Smallwood Trust funding Inspiring Futures CIC £2,225; REEL £2,225; SAWN £4,500

Position at the end of year 1

Year 1 of the CCS programme improved access to essential goods which was especially needed during the Covid-19 pandemic. Funding this helped the CCS team to build trust, legitimacy and credibility with the local VCS

What Year 2 has focused on

Building upon the relationships forged in year 1, year 2 has focused on formalising the emerging network - OCAN - and designing an appropriate referral network. Additional funding to boost capacity at small VCS organisations also aims to encourage space for strategic planning within these funded organisations

What has been achieved in year 2

Aspirations that the referral system will improve service user experience longer term

- partners recognise that it is too early to see impact amongst service users at this stage but there is a recognition that they are more likely to "receive the appropriate intervention" in a timely way once the referral system is up and running. The referral system is described as a system for boosting confidence amongst workers who describe occasionally "scrapping around" trying to find the right place to signpost / refer to

CCS has supported confidence and engagement of VCS organisations

- the programme has provided a boost for organisations who are under resourced to attend meetings ("we didn't have the time to sit in the meetings so she [CCS officer] did it for us"). There is little evidence of this translating into tangible long term solutions but rather an ability for small organisations to "focus on my expertise" delivering services

The referral system is regarded as the "glue" which will ensure that collaboration continues

- there is optimism that the momentum gained through the programme will be sustained as a direct result of the referral system. It is described as a "glue" and there is an incentive to keep it up to date. There is, however, some nervousness about how it will be funded longer term

CCS has supported the visibility and credibility of the VCS amongst local authority

- there is a shift within the VCS of being seen as a partner to the local authority rather than a "poor relation". CCS has been credited with this shift - "they made the council aware that our organisation is needed." VCS organisations report an appetite to challenge a (perhaps perceived) assumption in the local authority that they are the "quick and cheap option." The VCS report little visible engagement of the local authority within the development of the referral system

How is CCS adding value in Oldham?

Stakeholders in Oldham are very complementary of the skills of the CCS Officer they are working with. They appreciate her collaborative attitude and leadership skills. They value having someone from “outside” to come and “bang heads together”. The CCS Officer is described as both a “fresh pair of external eyes” and a “local expert”

Having outside resource from the CCS team has provided much needed momentum for a group of committed and passionate people often from small, under resourced organisations

Example of how CCS is increasing capability

“Almost all the relationships we have with the local authority and housing associations have been strengthened by CCS team especially Julia David. Because of this relationship with CCS, Julia has not only enabled us to reach out to families with emergency furniture packs and the admin role which is helping people that maybe should have been supported by statutory services. Also, a funding opportunity that was shared by Julia to us has enabled us to get a funds from Great Places who have given us £13,000 to buy a van which will enable us to reach out to more people with our furniture offer. CCS have linked us to key statutory organisations and has enabled us to be invited to stakeholders meetings more than before” (VCS organisation in Oldham).

Programme-level recommendations to inform Year 3

The year 2 evaluation recommends that the CCS team should consider the following recommendations for the programme.

Referral system recommendations

Resourcing referral system as a focus for year 3. Clear progress can be evidenced around building network capacity and setting up digital referral systems. However, the long term resourcing of such networks and systems remains unclear. The long term sustainability of the referral system is critical in encouraging partners to work together. Without it, there is a high likelihood that organisations will fall back to siloed working. It is recommended that options / models for funding the referral system are clearly articulated with partners (and potential funders) in each pilot site.

Training on the referral system. Partners involved in the CCS programme stress that the sustainability of coordination is about more than funding for the referral system - there is a need to continue developing the network and quality of the work. Notably, there is a need for ongoing training costs to be built into any sustainability funding. It is recommended that any longer term funding for networks and referral systems ensure that ongoing training for system-users is part of the funding package.

Other local-system recommendations

Build upon work with statutory services, especially schools. The CCS programme focused primarily on the advice sector in the 4 pilot sites. This is where there has been most traction with the concept of coordination (when compared with other sectors such as food provision, statutory services and others). It is possible that other types of crisis-support providers will engage with the initiative in the future. The increased collaboration between advice services and schools in Tower Hamlets has, up until recently, taken place without a digital referral system (longer term there is an aspiration for at least 1 local school to be on the system). It is recommended that the programme promotes

the lessons learned around increasing collaboration between advice agencies and schools. This will be of interest in areas both with and without plans for a referral system. It is recommended that CCS identifies opportunities to collaborate with schools and leverage funding for specific school-focused collaboration projects both within and beyond the 4 pilot sites.

Long term ownership of local coordination. At the inception of CCS, it was assumed that local steering groups would be set up in each pilot site and would take ownership of the coordination agenda. To some extent, advice networks are fulfilling this role although there is heavy reliance on the capacity and skills delivered via CCS. Setting priorities has been facilitated (and on occasion, directed) by the CCS team and this function has been welcomed in localities. This indicates that coordination work can be facilitated by experts based outside of the area. It also points to a risk that once CCS funding ends, there could be a leadership void. It is recommended that steps are taken to mitigate this void (e.g. pilot-site leaders coaching / shadowing CCS colleagues).

Engagement plan for local authorities. Learning from years 1 and 2 illustrate a somewhat piecemeal approach to engaging local authorities in the programme. For many local authorities there are communication challenges within the organisation and efforts for an “authority wide” commitment to coordination (and associated referral systems, for example) has been unmanageable. Furthermore, the CCS team have had no mandate to incentivise change at this level. For year 3 it is recommended that each of the 4 local pilot sites has an engagement plan for each pilot site local authority which includes:

- Mapping out which teams are interested in the programme and what their needs are in relation to the referral system. Inviting them to join the network.
- Identification of senior stakeholders (revisiting signatories on the initial application to be part of CCS) to remind them of their commitment to the programme.