



... enabling Voluntary/Community Organisations in the South East to influence policy,  
wherever it is made or implemented for the benefit of the people they serve...

# A Review of Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure in the South East

Report from RAISE to GOSE

**19<sup>th</sup> July 2004**

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## FOREWORD AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The day that RAISE said 'yes' to being commissioned to deliver the Early Spend Programme was, a scary one for me personally. I arrived at RAISE with huge aspirations to make a difference and two weeks into the job there was an opportunity to do so - RAISE was ready for this challenge but was I?

Hidden challenges that you will not have seen were many in the early days. We needed to build the confidence of Government Office South East to believe in RAISE, and not me personally as I was an unknown quantity, still to be tested. Government Office South East had been tasked with delivering the Early Spend Programme, with little to no warning, and were vulnerable and wanting to make it work.

We both needed to develop a robust partnership and work effectively together as the timescales were tight and the potential rewards if we got this right were great.

Whilst the main focus of the research was to increase public service delivery through frontline Voluntary/Community Organisations, the recommendations are valid across a much wider remit.

The Voluntary/Community Sector needs to take a lot of credit for this report. We have been staggered by the commitment and enthusiasm by which this programme of activity was met. The Voluntary/Community Sector grabbed the opportunity and made it work. You answered endless questionnaires, attended events, ran projects and most of all delivered all of the outputs on time. This was particularly impressive as the timescales were so short and the volume of work huge.

We set out to establish the "**State of the South East Voluntary/Community Sector**". We wanted to establish an honest, transparent picture of what the Voluntary/Community Sector looks like in our Region and what issues/barriers it has to providing infrastructure services to frontline Voluntary/Community Organisations. However, there are other pieces of research that have been undertaken previously and others that were current. When deciding upon the recommendations that are implemented these do need to be taken into account.

As anticipated the picture was very mixed, ranging from 'all singing and dancing' services provided by Infrastructure Organisations to appreciative frontline voluntary/community organisations. The reverse being patchy/poor services not being accessed by frontline organisations as they do not know the services exist, neither are they what they need.

Making plans to tackle the diversity of the issues is challenging but thankfully following this piece of work not impossible. Chapters 3 and 4 bring together the findings from the research and make recommendations in key service delivery areas. We need to ensure that we meet the needs of both Infrastructure Organisations and frontline organisations concerned with public service delivery

Inevitably a key issue from the research was all aspects of funding. This is not surprising in any way as this issue has been highlighted repeatedly within our Region, through other research reports and Voluntary/Community Sector lobbying spanning 3 years. In 2001 RAISE wrote a report forecasting the potential funding crisis for the Voluntary/Community Sector in the South East, complimented by a small research project in 2003 that looked at funding from Local Authorities to Voluntary/Community Sector. The move to Single Pot, demise of Single Regeneration Budget, creation of Area Investment Frameworks and lack of longer term funding now leaves the Voluntary/Community Sector with a funding crisis.

The Infrastructure Review, publication of 'ChangeUp' and the plans to increase public service delivery through the Voluntary/Community Sector are all opportunities to make the 'step change' necessary to address some of the funding issues in the South East.

The 6 recommendations at 4.1.1 (pg19) state that Infrastructure Organisations require the following;

- Overall increase in funding to support their infrastructure costs.
- Equitable funding across the Region to reflect the local circumstances.
- The acceptance and implementation by funders of 'Full Cost Recovery'.
- Longer term funding agreements to enable organisational planning.
- The appreciation of the value of the Voluntary/Community Sector by the Public and Private Sector.
- To widen the funding base upon which the organisations sit to include exploring the opportunities to 'charge for services'.

The research highlighted the need for more effective collaborative working locally between Voluntary/Community Organisations. Where robust infrastructure networks/consortia exist the picture is so much better. There is a need for all Infrastructure Organisations to be involved in the creation of Local Development Plans. These plans will drive the development of infrastructure services; locality based and will support the need for funding as well as help to promote the role of Infrastructure Organisations and services locally. Frontline organisations were very critical about not knowing about infrastructure services. The recommendations at 4.1.2 (pg23) consider investment in developing the Local Development Plans and local networks/consortia as a priority.

Quality Standards, BME, Social Enterprise and ICT were all found to be regional issues requiring a strategic regional approach in the first instance. This regional approach needs to engage with other key stakeholders in the region and look at where other work is happening and 'join it up'. There are potential opportunities to 'match fund' the Main Spend money with other initiatives that are already happening in the South East.

It will be important that the services subsequently developed reflect local circumstances as 'one size does definitely not fit all'. We need to further explore the possibility of service provision through 'hubs'. A concept not well understood or defined yet but worth exploring. The tension inevitably will be the need for services to be hands on and locally responsive versus economies of scale and tackling duplication of effort.

Tackling the BME issues in our region is highlighted as a major priority as the research demonstrated that we are not meeting the needs of our BME communities. It also demonstrated the huge duplication of agenda with both Rural and Community Development services.

Rural and Community Development services were patchy and variable, a term that many of us have long used but we should now take the opportunity to stand back and change this term. We need to work with other key stakeholders and programmes of activity such as the DEFRA Main Spend programme and ensure that we link the services provided.

Volunteering infrastructure was an incredibly mixed picture that reflected the findings nationally. The publication of 'Strategy for Volunteering Infrastructure in England – Building on Success' by Volunteering England in February 2004, is a key strategy for moving volunteering infrastructure development forward. It will be necessary to work with Volunteering

England in partnership to look at the recommendations from this research and actions required.

ICT was a potential area for considerable gains with strategic investment required to tackle all aspects of ICT to include information, software, hardware, support, training and longer term investment.

The findings on Social Enterprise were surprising with a lot of knowledge existing within the Voluntary/Community Sector but frustration as to what next! The lack of clarity about the role of Infrastructure Organisations in delivery of support services combined with the increasing interest from frontline organisations in what Social Enterprise can do for them, means a partnership approach to developing support services is required. Working with the new South East Social Enterprise Strategy and emerging partnerships will be a useful first step to developing robust services for local Voluntary/Community Organisations.

The research has highlighted that the definition of Infrastructure Organisation was very narrow in the terms of this review and many more infrastructure 'type' organisations exist and provide services. The creation of Local Development Plans will provide an excellent opportunity to widen the partnerships to reflect local circumstances.

There are some key areas in the South East that require some capacity building of the current infrastructure. These areas have demonstrated significant difficulties during this research and the needs of the localities that they serve will need to be explored and addressed.

Frontline organisations want and need a range of services that they know about, can access easily and are responsive to their needs. The increased collaborative working between Infrastructure Organisations and a clarity about the services provided coupled with regular needs assessments of frontline Voluntary/Community Organisations will ensure that we tackle their main needs.

An overriding need from both frontline and infrastructure Voluntary/Community Organisations is the better engagement of the Public Sector. The Voluntary/Community Sector will struggle to increase its Public Service Delivery without better engagement of Public bodies. Local Authorities, Learning and Skills Councils, Primary Care Trusts all need to understand the value of the Voluntary/Community Sector, not just in monetary or contribution to Gross Domestic Product terms but in the independence, diversity, expertise and skills in tackling social exclusion that exist within the Voluntary/Community Sector. Public Bodies need to make a commitment to working in partnership with the Voluntary/Community Sector and plan accordingly. They need to understand the need for infrastructure funding to support service delivery and embrace the concept and implementation of full cost recovery.

In this Executive Summary we recommend several areas of work to be approached regionally in the first instance. There is a need to ensure that there is a mechanism regionally (Regional Panel) or similar that is representative of Voluntary/Community, Public and Private Sectors that monitors the impact of the Early Spend Programme and subsequent Main Spend. They need to be able to look at other key drivers such as ChangeUp and ensure that in the South East we plan strategically for change whilst ensuring that services reflect local circumstances. This Regional Panel will also assist the engagement of the Public and Private Sectors.

The Early Spend Programme has been an adventure for all of us. Government Office South East and RAISE have brokered a very effective partnership. We have a good picture of what the "**State of the South East Voluntary/Community Sector**" looks and feels like. Chapters one to four contain the headlines of the report with the detail of the individual aspect of the

subregional research, projects, frontline research, events and mapping contained within the appendices. We have collected more information than originally perceived, which will help to move the recommendations forward with our ability to seek further information.

We have had some early wins as part of the Early Spend Programme through the range of projects that included development, exemplar and gap initiatives. All of these projects added value to our research and enabled us to have a closer look at what works and what doesn't in our Region. Significantly for us these projects have demonstrated that a small amount of investment at the right time enabled Infrastructure Organisations to make the step change required to reconfigure their structures to reflect local circumstances and service delivery.

The feedback that we have received from RAISE members has been honest and positive. Some of the findings are not a surprise, but they do reflect the real picture within our Region as described by the Public and Voluntary/Community Sectors. RAISE will be guided by the membership as to what input we should have when looking forward to the Main Spend Programme.

This report will be available on the RAISE website like all other RAISE publications.

Finally it just remains for me to say thank you to the huge body of individuals and organisations that seized the challenges presented and helped RAISE to provide this report.

**Catherine Johnstone**  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
**RAISE**  
**July 2004**

## **CHAPTER 1: THE CONTEXT**

### **1.1 National Context**

Within the last 8 years, there has been an increasing focus placed by Government on the value of the work undertaken by the Voluntary/Community Sector, and a desire to define and employ a strategic response to the needs of the Sector that will enhance its ability to continue, and to develop further, its important function within the community.

The publication of the National Compact in 1998 heralded a new approach to the relationship between the Government and the Voluntary/Community Sector, and together with the arrival of the 5 Codes of Practice over the subsequent years, set the framework for an effective relationship within which each side committed itself to a series of undertakings designed to ensure that the relationship was beneficial for both. Building on the work of the National Compact, and as part of the 2002 Spending Review, the Government conducted a far-reaching cross-cutting review of "The Role of the Voluntary/Community Sector in Service Delivery", one of the off-shoots of which was the establishment of Futurebuilders, a new £125 million investment fund that, through an innovative mix of grants, loans, advice and training, will support a number of front-line Voluntary and Community Organisations who are engaged in the delivery of public services. At the same time, the review identified that the patchy distribution and quality of infrastructure was hindering the development of the capacity of the Sector.

In response to this weakness, the Government launched key consultation exercises in 2003 exploring in more detail the strategies required to strengthen the infrastructure support required by frontline organisations. The first of these was embedded in the consultation document "Voluntary/Community Sector Infrastructure", published by the Active Community Unit in September, with responses requested late December. At the same time, details of the rural sub-programme, working within the same consultation period, were set out in the Defra policy paper; "Community Capacity Building and Voluntary Sector Infrastructure in Rural England". The consultation was to be used to guide the development of a generic Capacity Building Infrastructure Framework to be finalised in early 2004. A third consultation exercise launched in December by the Civil Renewal Unit, entitled "Building Civil Renewal", was more tightly focused on the needs of community groups and support at community level. It was hoped that early messages arising from this consultation would also contribute to the drafting of the Capacity Building Infrastructure Framework.

In advance of the Main Spend, which will be dedicated to the implementation of the Capacity Building Infrastructure Framework, monies were allocated from the Home Office for an 'Early Spend Programme' in connection with the infrastructure review. Late in the day, the 9 Government Offices for the English Regions were identified as the channels for these funds, and bids were requested from infrastructure organisations operating within the respective Regions for funding for projects which fitted one of three categories: identifying or tackling gaps in infrastructure support; identifying and tackling development needs in infrastructure support, or exemplar projects which built on innovative success. In a parallel process, Defra also channelled money through the Government Offices for bids for a rural early spend programme.

## 1.2 Regional Context

RAISE (Regional Action and Involvement South East) is the regional generic infrastructure body for the Voluntary/Community Sector in the South East Region. In contrast to its counterparts in the other English Regions, it has from the outset been keen to draw its membership from frontline as well as local infrastructure bodies, rather than being constructed mainly from an infrastructure membership. Originally conceiving of itself as "a network of networks", it invested in the construction of a number of regional networks focused around themes or beneficiary groupings, though this structure is now under review. Throughout this, it has maintained links with infrastructure bodies in the Region through events dedicated to their needs. As a regional body it retains good working relationships and clear demarcation from other levels of infrastructure by ensuring its focus remains neither local nor national.

As a regional body it also liaises and works in appropriate partnership with other regional bodies on behalf of the Voluntary/Community Sector. A regional Compact has now been agreed with the Learning Skills Council; it has representation on The Assembly, and the Social Inclusion Partnership South East; and where projects indicate, it works with the Government Office of the South East and the South East England Development Agency, where it is an active member of the steering group for Social Enterprise.

As part of its programme of supporting and developing the voluntary/community sector in the South East, RAISE has undertaken publication of a series of toolkits for distribution to its 1000 member organisations - these have included toolkits on partnership working, on local Compacts, and in progress are 5 toolkits relating to themes around the internal dynamics of voluntary and community organisations - Leadership, Accountability, Representation, Governance and Equalities. It is hoped that a toolkit to guide infrastructure organisations to ensure they are "fit for purpose" will also emerge from the work which is the topic of this current report.

As part of its programme of promoting the sector and increasing understanding of how it functions, RAISE has also undertaken significant research projects: the homelessness report, "Homelessness in the South East Region" studied the role of Voluntary/Community Organisations in the South East in this cinderella service, and the report "How Many?" was the first attempt to quantify the range and numbers of Voluntary/Community Organisations in the Region; further work due to be published in 2004 will give an economic profile and an understanding of the monetary value of the work of the Sector.

In response to the Government's review of the Sector's infrastructure, RAISE coordinated a regional consultation event in November 2003, the results of which were fed back to the Active Community Unit, and which will inform the final Capacity Building Infrastructure Framework. RAISE will also coordinate an event to inform regional Voluntary Community Organisations of the launch of the Futurebuilders fund.

Amongst this activity however, and following from the soundings taken at various events, conferences and research initiatives, was a growing realisation that, although the cross-cutting review could, with a broad brush, describe Voluntary/Community Sector Infrastructure as being patchy in distribution and quality, there was little specific data from this Region to support the proposition either way. To accurately inform the main spend for the Capacity Building and Infrastructure Framework in this Region, it would be necessary to explore deeper.

## **CHAPTER 2: GETTING THE DATA**

### **2.1 The Mapping**

To undertake this part of the work, a team of 4 independent researchers were recruited, together with a coordinator. Each researcher was responsible for one of the subregional areas. From an initial meeting in early March, the team planned its research strategy: this was to involve structured telephone interviews with each Council for Voluntary Service (however titled), with each Racial Equality Council and Rural Community Council and with the Volunteer Bureaux. To investigate the perspectives of statutory authorities, the researchers were to conduct telephone interviews with each Unitary Authority, County Council and Learning and Skills Council, and with a third of the Primary Care Trusts and District/Borough Councils in their subregion. To capture data on significant other organisations functioning as infrastructure it was agreed that where at least 3 respondents from the above lists perceived another specific organisation as infrastructure, this too would be interviewed.

Draft questionnaires for use in the telephone interviews were developed. These focused on a range of relevant issues, including an analysis of the role of the Infrastructure Organisations, perspectives of how well these roles worked in practice, views on gaps and overlaps in infrastructure support, an exploration of the key themes thrown up by the Voluntary/Community Sector Infrastructure consultation document, perspectives on the review itself, and identification of any external local research studies which might help an understanding of the role of infrastructure and beneficiary organisations. Following a piloting exercise, the telephone questionnaires were revised and shortened: even so in practice it was found that interviews lasted between 45-60 minutes.

The bulk of the interviews took place during April 2004, each researcher undertaking around 30-40 such interviews. To feed back and test out initial findings, an event was arranged in early May 2004 for frontline and Infrastructure Organisations in each subregion.

### **2.2 The Frontline Survey**

To gain an in-depth understanding of the perspectives of beneficiary organisations, RAISE contracted with Skills Insight to conduct telephone interviews with frontline organisations. For this purpose, it was decided to focus on those Voluntary/Community Organisations in the Region which dealt with issues of Mental Health or Homelessness. These specialties were chosen as they are generally acknowledged as including Voluntary/Community Organisations whose needs are most likely to be overlooked by existing infrastructure systems: in this sense, this focus would tend to flush out issues of gaps in infrastructure support.

Sixty Voluntary/Community Organisations in the Region working within these two themes were identified and participated in telephone interviews for this part of the exercise.

### **2.3 BME Case Studies**

The mapping research project and the expressions of interest to carry out projects in the Early Spend Programme raised some concerns regarding BME Infrastructure. The research findings suggested that there was a significant gap in this area. In addition, there was only one expression of interest submitted by a BME organisation. RAISE, however, believed that there were pockets of good practice scattered across the Region that were not widely known about. For this reason, various organisations were approached to provide information about their activities for inclusion in this report.

## **CHAPTER 3: REGIONAL OVERVIEW OF KEY THEMES**

This chapter provides a regional overview of the key issues raised by the detailed evidence presented. It is presented in a thematic way, using the key themes identified in the Active Communities Unit Infrastructure consultation document.

These syntheses of the evidence draw together the findings from the subregional research, the research with frontline Voluntary/Community Organisations; the summaries of the early spend projects and the overview of BME infrastructure in the South East. The recommendations for addressing the issues summarised here are provided in chapter 4 (pg 19).

Overall, the evidence presents a diverse picture of Voluntary/Community Sector Infrastructure in the Region. It shows a mixed picture of good practice and of scope for further development. The context is one of organisations working hard to provide effective services to frontline Voluntary/Community Organisations with very modest resources.

### **3.1 Funding, Distribution and Duplication**

#### **3.1.1 Funding**

As one would expect, the research shows that funding is the biggest issue facing Voluntary/Community Sector Infrastructure in the Region. While this is unsurprising, the findings demonstrate that lack of funding, insecurity of funding and 'patchiness' of funding are key factors in Infrastructure Organisations not being able to deliver the levels of support to frontline Voluntary/Community Organisations which are needed.

#### **Key issues included:**

- There is a lack of resources for Infrastructure Organisations to address the known gaps in service provision to frontline Voluntary/Community Organisations, e.g. providing adequate coverage throughout the area which they cover.
- Much of the funding received by Infrastructure Organisations is short-term and insecure, with no longer-term guarantees in place (e.g. beyond the end of the current financial year). This can be a major obstacle to effective planning, delivery and development of the services provided by Infrastructure Organisations.
- Some statutory sector funding is provided on a rolling 3 year programme.
- There are a wide variety of funding arrangements from statutory bodies, and indeed other forms of support provided to Infrastructure Organisations. There are, for example, wide variations in the income received by Councils for Voluntary Service. These variations in available resources inevitably impact on the 'patchiness' of services provided.
- Many Infrastructure Organisations receive a substantial proportion of their income from providing front-line services, alongside their infrastructure work. Evidence from the Projects appendix 3(pg107) indicates that there is tension between Infrastructure Organisations focusing on projects versus core infrastructure activities (because of funding pressures). This distracting duplication of Infrastructure Organisation's roles is perhaps the Region's most apparent and dangerous example of duplication. Properly funded Infrastructure Organisations would not have to engage in project delivery and would in all probability be able to deliver better services to Voluntary/Community Organisations.
- An inordinate amount of time is devoted by Infrastructure Organisations to securing funds. This has a significant effect in a context where staff resources are very modest.

- There is scope to strengthen the levels of funding advice provided by Infrastructure Organisations and statutory bodies. Where Infrastructure Organisations are able to offer funding advice to frontline Voluntary/Community Organisations, it is often on a very modestly-resourced basis.
- There is strong perception amongst Infrastructure Organisations that their work is not well understood by statutory bodies (such as Local Authorities and Primary Care Trusts).
- A crisis management style of working is commonplace amongst Infrastructure Organisations – due to the pressures of work arising from a lack of adequate resources (evidence from the Projects).

Not surprisingly, the funding issues experienced by Infrastructure Organisations have much in common with those experienced by frontline Voluntary/Community Organisations. In the research with frontline Voluntary/Community Organisations, respondents gave funding as the main constraint preventing them from expanding or improving their current service. This had several dimensions: uncertainty and lack of sustainability, cost of bidding and competition for the same funding between infrastructure and front line organisations. Some local Voluntary/Community Sector Infrastructure Organisations have brought together partners to tackle these issues, for example by agreeing longer term funding with the Council.

Overall there is a need to address funding issues in a more strategic manner. Key to this and to ensuring Infrastructure Organisation's sustainability after the Main Spend ends, are quality Local Development Plans agreed in genuine and inclusive partnership by Infrastructure Organisations, local commissioners and other funders. The Government Office of the South East could play a role here in brokering, supporting and 'quality controlling'. (Please note: These issues are also explored more specifically in the thematic sections which follow.)

### **3.1.2 Distribution and duplication**

The subregional research appendix 1 (pg44) shows that duplication is not generally seen as a significant problem for Infrastructure Organisations in the Region. In fact, the reverse is true – Infrastructure Organisations often face the challenge of providing adequate support to Voluntary/Community Organisations throughout the geographical area which they cover, while receiving inadequate funding to meet the needs of frontline Voluntary/Community Organisations. It is also important to recognise that there are some key differences between the subregions in the ways in which Voluntary/Community Sector Infrastructure is provided e.g. volunteering infrastructure.

#### **Key issues included:**

- Some Infrastructure Organisations, however, have identified the potential for overlaps in service provision and the need for this to be addressed, e.g. rural infrastructure, volunteering.
- For example, the Kent subregional research appendix 1 (pg44) identified a number of specific areas of potential duplication to be addressed. One of these – volunteering infrastructure in West Kent - is already being tackled by the West Kent Infrastructure Sustainable Strategy (W-Kiss Project).
- It is important that Infrastructure Organisations working in a particular geographical area work together to co-ordinate work, to address gaps in services provided to frontline Voluntary/Community Organisations, and to identify any actual or potential overlaps in services.
- Evidence from The Projects shows that there can be difficulties in Infrastructure Organisations working together because of the fear of potential take over or merger.

- The Projects provide some specific examples of Infrastructure Organisations working together very effectively to co-ordinate and develop their services in the future. A number of projects have been developing specific plans for change to provide more effective infrastructure support in their areas, e.g. Developing Infrastructure Support in Rother District, Buckinghamshire Infrastructure Group.

Gaps in the provision of services are also discussed more specifically in the thematic sections which follow.

### **3.2 Quality and Standards**

The subregional research appendix 1 (pg44) reveals that support for quality and standards is rather patchy across the Region. Providing information and advice on best practice was seen as a key activity by some, but not all, Infrastructure Organisations. More in-depth support for quality and standards, such as training, guidance and ready-made evaluation tools were generally not being provided to Voluntary/Community Organisations. There were examples of good practice, however, such as 'Horses 4 Courses' in Hampshire. A number of other methods were also in use e.g. the Quality Assurance scheme from Volunteering England, National Association of Councils for Voluntary Service 'Measuring Effectiveness' and Practical Quality Assurance System for Small Organisations. In general, the measurement of quality and effectiveness and meeting standards were areas that needed further development for Infrastructure Organisations as well as front line Voluntary/Community Organisations.

#### **Key issues included:**

- Funders requiring different evaluation systems.
- A focus on counting e.g. numbers of volunteers, training sessions or members, rather than on measurement of quality or impact.
- The difficulties of measuring the benefits of all the Infrastructure Organisations' work.
- A need for more feedback from member organisations to Infrastructure Organisations on their work.
- Lack of knowledge of quality and standards, e.g. health and safety, and lack of any kind of evaluation by some Voluntary/Community Organisations.

#### **What is needed:**

- Time, money, staff to develop and implement evaluation systems.
- Funding, time, training, financial stability to meet standards.
- Ready-made systems that are sector-friendly and flexible to the local context.
- Training, support, examples of good practice, guidance in setting up systems (Infrastructure Organisations and Voluntary/Community Organisations).
- More feedback from member organisations on Infrastructure Organisations' work.

### **3.3 Volunteering**

There are two key infrastructure activities relating to volunteers: providing volunteers and providing advice and information on the recruitment, management and retention of volunteers, generally to Voluntary/Community Organisations that self-recruit. Voluntary/Community Organisations are not the only beneficiaries of direct volunteer placement – other beneficiaries might include hospitals, libraries and social services. In general, Volunteer Bureaux provide volunteers, and Councils for Voluntary Service do not. However, the subregional research reveals a wide range in the nature of the Volunteer Bureaux, with some of them also providing other infrastructure services more commonly associated with Councils for Voluntary Service, some providing services to the public (using volunteers) and, in Hampshire, a completely

different model, whereby all but one of the Councils for Voluntary Service incorporate a Volunteer Bureau. Infrastructure Organisations and Statutory Bodies in the subregion saw this as a good model that worked well.

The subregional research showed that provision of the two key services relating to volunteering were rated as at least 'adequate' by the majority of Infrastructure Organisations and Statutory Bodies. However, it also indicated that some Volunteer Bureaux are in dire financial straits, with some only able to provide a very limited service and others uncertain of their future survival. The W-Kiss project in West Kent highlights the tenuous nature of some Volunteer Bureaux. The project has developed a business plan which proposes a model to address duplication in activities across five Volunteer Bureaux, by amalgamating them into one organisation, on a hub and spoke model, whereby core functions such as fundraising, promotion and personnel are carried out centrally. The aim of this is to make the service both more financially viable and more efficient.

**Key issues included:**

- Volunteer Bureaux had little capacity to follow-up placements or to work with receiving organisations. This kind of support could improve the retention of volunteers.
- Impact was typically measured in terms of numbers of volunteers placed rather than in any wider sense. The ability to follow up placements and work with receiving organisations also had a bearing here.
- Attracting volunteers and meeting the costs of recruitment were problems for some Voluntary/Community Organisations.
- Offering accredited training or learning would provide an incentive to potential volunteers; however Infrastructure Organisations generally lacked the capacity to offer this at present.
- There were gaps in the recruitment of volunteers from BME groups and people with disabilities. Difficulty in recruiting trustees was also reported.
- Managing volunteers has become more complex due to changes in legislation e.g. relating to child protection and health and safety.

**3.4 BME**

**Keys issues included:**

- There is a general lack of knowledge about actual numbers of people/groups from BME backgrounds in the Region.
- There is a tendency for Infrastructure Organisations to under-estimate the size of BME populations.
- There is a lack of knowledge and understanding of the nature of BME populations, their diverse needs and cultures.
- There is little knowledge of the extent/nature of BME Voluntary/Community Organisations. Those that do exist tend to be community-based and unfunded.
- There is a focus on religious/faith-based groups that do not neatly fit the Voluntary/Community Sector Infrastructure model.
- Huge gaps exist in infrastructure support to BME communities and their organisations. At the same time a small number of examples of good practice do exist.
- Support provided by Infrastructure Organisations is technically available to BME organisations. However, there are issues of access, because the BME organisations tend not to know about Infrastructure Organisations and Infrastructure Organisation support may not be culturally relevant.

- Infrastructure Organisations recognise the gap in provision to BME organisations, but tend to be less concerned about this, than about other gaps, because they perceive BME populations to be smaller than they actually are.
- Only one BME-related expression of interest was submitted to the Early Spend Programme. This resulted in a funded project, which aims to map the BME population and develop a support network for BME-led Voluntary/Community Organisations in Kent.

**What is needed:**

- Mapping of the BME population and its organisations across the Region, including detailed and sensitive research aimed at understanding the diverse needs and cultures of different groups. For example, a recognition and understanding of the faith-based organisational model.
- Educate Infrastructure Organisations in the extent, nature and needs of the BME populations in their areas.
- Improve links between BME organisations and their local Infrastructure Organisations.
- Develop specialist Infrastructure Organisations in collaboration with BME organisations, based on the needs of BME groups.
- Build on existing models of good practice.

**3.5 Social Enterprise**

The subregional research reveals very little infrastructure support for Social Enterprise across the Region at present. Any support that was being provided was only rated as poor or adequate. It was seen as a new area, that was not well understood. In fact, there seemed to be confusion about what exactly is meant by 'Social Enterprise'. There was also a question about low levels of demand for the service. Infrastructure Organisations and Statutory Bodies saw this as a gap in provision. However, there is some question as to whether Infrastructure Organisations are best placed to fill that gap, and the Small Business Service was also not seen as entirely appropriate.

Two of The Projects – the Hampshire ICT project and Levelling the Playing Field - involved developing business plans for Social Enterprises to provide ICT infrastructure support in the Hampshire subregion. In both cases Social Enterprises are seen as the most appropriate way of providing this service because they combine the possibility of the business becoming self-funding in the longer-term, with a focus on benefiting the sector as a whole, rather than on profit-making.

**Key issues included:**

- Lack of understanding as to the role of Infrastructure Organisations in the South East.
- Lack of robust, accessible information.

**What is needed:**

- Clarify what is meant by Social Enterprise.
- Assess the level of need for the service or generate a demand.
- Work with existing providers (e.g. one dedicated support organisation in Thames Valley) to look for examples of good practice and disseminate lessons learned.
- Work out which organisations are best placed to provide the service. (Specialist Infrastructure Organisations may be most appropriate).
- Provide training and funding to those responsible.
- Assess/clarify sources of funding available for Social Enterprises.

### **3.6 Community Development**

From the subregional research reports appendix 1 (pg44) it is clear that there is already a lot of activity in the area of Community Development. The majority of Infrastructure Organisations in the two subregions of Kent and Medway and Hampshire and the Isle of Wight and at least four out of ten in the other two subregions saw this as a key activity. Those that did not see it as a key activity, tended to see it as an occasional activity. In addition, Local Authorities and District Councils were noted as providing relevant services. In spite of these relatively high levels of activity, the majority of Infrastructure Organisations and Statutory Bodies believed that there was room for improvement and that gaps in provision existed. Provision was seen as patchy, both geographically and in terms of quality. While Community Development was not seen as a top priority for improvement, there was a recognition that, given the time-consuming nature of the work, more staff and funding and general capacity-building in this area, would all make a significant difference to the level of provision available and the impact the service could make. Existing Community Development provision was rated as working 'adequately' or 'well' by the majority of respondents. A few rated it as 'excellent' and some Community Development work was given as examples of best practice. However, it was rated as 'poor' by about one in five respondents.

One of The Projects, CD-ROM in Kent appendix 3 (pg107), was primarily concerned with improving the delivery of infrastructure support for Community Development in the subregion. The project highlights confusion in the delivery of infrastructure support for Community Development at the moment: it is being delivered by various agencies, including statutory bodies, with varying degrees of partnership and no overall co-ordination or strategy. Quality of delivery is also seen as patchy. The project has involved mapping existing provision, designing and delivering an intensive training programme to improve quality of provision, supporting Infrastructure Organisations to develop business plans and engaging with funders in order to try to attract stable and sustainable funding for this function.

The South East Community Development Network is emerging as a new organisation and is focusing on training and recognition of the important role of Community Development Workers, who often work with little support.

#### **Key issues included:**

- Need for a common understanding of what is meant by Community Development.
- There is a need for co-ordination of the delivery of this function by the different agencies involved and a more strategic approach.
- There is a need for longer-term investment: funders need to recognise the time-consuming nature of the work and the slow returns.
- Ways need to be developed to show the effectiveness of Community Development work and its impact in the longer term.
- Gaps in provision need to be identified more clearly and addressed.
- More funding is needed, more staff, more capacity building, including training, to improve the quality of provision and address gaps.
- Existing examples of good practice in the Region could be drawn on in developing Community Development services across the Region.

### **3.7 Rural infrastructure**

A rather mixed picture emerges from reviewing the findings from the subregional research appendix 1 (pg44) with respect to rural work. In particular, they reveal the lack of a coherent

strategy for the provision of support to frontline Voluntary/Community Organisations working in rural areas.

When asked how well things are working in the rural theme, Infrastructure Organisations provided a wide range of responses, with very significant numbers responding with 'don't know' or 'not applicable'. Of the remaining responses there was no clear consensus with the feedback generally split between:

- Those who rated the support from Infrastructure Organisations to frontline Voluntary/Community Organisations as poor / adequate; and
- Those rating it as working either well or excellently.

It is clear from the responses from the Infrastructure Organisations that there is a common perception of gaps in the rural support provided to Voluntary/Community Organisations. Infrastructure Organisations are more likely than Statutory Bodies to feel that there are such gaps.

The research suggests that there is a need for greater clarity amongst Infrastructure Organisations as to what demarcation exists between the generic and specialist rural Infrastructure Organisations and how this is best managed for an improved service for rural beneficiary organisations and communities. For example, where a Rural Community Council exists, there may be a tendency to expect that rural work is primarily covered by it.

As one would expect, the findings show that frontline Voluntary/Community Organisations working in rural areas have specific needs, which need to be addressed by Infrastructure Organisations.

#### **Key issues included:**

- There is a need to develop clear strategies for rural provision within each subregion. In order to do this, it may be necessary to sub-divide the subregions further. Such strategies will need to address the issues of comprehensive geographical coverage and demarcation between specialist and generic Infrastructure Organisations (who does what?).
- In order to develop such strategies, more detailed subregional research work needs to be done to ascertain the precise extent of the gaps in rural provision and how these might best be met. The differing needs of subregions (and areas within subregions) need to be built into the picture.
- There is a need to improve the links between specialist (Rural Community Councils) and other Infrastructure Organisations working in rural areas. This could be helpful for addressing the clarity over which Infrastructure Organisations are providing what in rural areas.
- It is important to learn from existing good practice in addressing the needs of frontline Voluntary/Community Organisations working in rural areas.

N.B. The findings from this mapping exercise need to be read in tandem with the findings with the parallel DEFRA work on rural infrastructure.

### **3.8 ICT**

The subregional reports appendix 1 (pg44) and two of The Projects appendix 3 (pg107) in Hampshire (Levelling the playing field and Hampshire ICT project) clearly show that the Voluntary/Community Sector – both frontline organisations and Infrastructure Organisations – with a few exceptions, are woefully far behind the business and statutory sectors in their use of

ICT. Use of ICT is growing; however lack of funding has severely constrained development in this area. Frontline organisations and Infrastructure Organisations vary in their use of ICT and the levels of sophistication of their systems. Out of date, uncoordinated collections of equipment.

**Key issues included:**

- In some cases, no or limited access to internet and email (e.g. unable to open large documents, only able to access email once per day).
- Lack of funds to upgrade systems.
- Inadequate security systems to protect against viruses.
- Lack of in-house skills in use and maintenance of hardware and software.
- Technical and operational support that is generally only available commercially and is too expensive.
- Inability to access training courses because they are too expensive.
- People without relevant expertise wasting lots of time trying to solve technical issues.
- Over-reliance on key people who do have technical skills.
- Insufficient knowledge and understanding of the potential benefits of ICT and insufficient funds to develop a vision and strategy for ICT development.

For all these reasons, the sector is at present unable to access the enormous potential benefits and greater efficiency that ICT offers in terms of, for example, information sharing, networking, communications, publicity, data storage and collection of management information.

Understandably, ICT was seen as a key area for development and current levels of provision by Infrastructure Organisations to beneficiaries in this area were generally rated as 'poor'.

**What is needed:**

- Major investment.
- The availability of inexpensive training.
- Inexpensive hands-on technical support available via a telephone helpdesk, or on a call-out basis.
- A high quality, affordable support service that provides advice and information on the benefits of ICT, needs assessments, training in the use of software and technical and operational support.
- To build capacity, capability and competence in the area of ICT within the Voluntary/Community Sector.

The two Hampshire projects have proposed the development of Social Enterprises to provide ICT support that is affordable, targeted on the sector, not profit-making, but self-funding in the longer term.

### **3.9 Other**

#### **3.9.1 Human Resources/Training**

The research with frontline Voluntary/Community Organisations appendix 2 (pg91), the subregional research and a number of the projects identified that Voluntary/Community Organisations need more infrastructure support for human resources. Issues included increasing numbers of paid staff on short-term, temporary contracts, recruitment and retention of staff, understanding and meeting legislative requirements (including European law) and

keeping up to date with legislative changes. In some cases, Voluntary/Community Organisations might also need expert support with industrial tribunals.

The need for affordable local training for Voluntary/Community Sector staff was identified across the sector in a variety of areas including communication, IT, business management, fundraising, campaigning, updating in specialist areas, meeting legislative requirements as well as the management of human resources. Time was being spent by Voluntary/Community Organisations sourcing affordable training from the private sector: a function that could usefully be provided by Infrastructure Organisations. In some areas support for training from Infrastructure Organisations was felt to be working well. On the other hand, some training provision had been cut due to lack of funding.

Examples of good practice exist. For example, the part time Voluntary Services Human Resources Adviser Post in Southampton was identified by Rushmoor Voluntary Services in their project as working so well that they recommended replicating the post across the subregion. In addition, the Oxfordshire Gap Filling Pilot successfully trialled the delivery of training on volunteer recruitment and management, funding and the role of management committees by expert outreach workers from a central base.

### **3.9.2 Relationship between Voluntary/Community Organisations and Infrastructure Organisations**

The frontline Voluntary/Community Organisations' research appendix 2 (pg91) showed that some Voluntary/Community Organisations felt that Infrastructure Organisations did not well understand what they did or the issues they faced or they felt a lack of recognition for their work from Infrastructure Organisations. Some Infrastructure Organisations, however, did research the needs of Voluntary/Community Organisations and this was appreciated. The provision of information and advice by Infrastructure Organisations was also seen as not always working well. Some, particularly larger Infrastructure Organisations, did feed information and advice to Voluntary/Community Organisations. However, where Voluntary/Community Organisations were left to request information, they did not always know what to ask for or what was available. Linked to this was the issue that Voluntary/Community Organisations did not always understand or know what infrastructure support was available to them.

Some Voluntary/Community Organisations also felt they were not well represented by Infrastructure Organisations. The subregional research appendix 1 (pg44) also raised the issue of representation from the Infrastructure Organisations' and Statutory Bodies' point of view, pointing out that Infrastructure Organisations could do more to raise the profile of the Voluntary/Community Sector, particularly in relation to funders and that in some instances it might be more appropriate for member organisations to represent their part of the sector themselves, with Infrastructure Organisations playing an enabling role.

Frontline Voluntary/Community Organisation research appendix 2 (pg91) showed that many of the organisations went to a wider range of Infrastructure Organisations or support services than the usual definition of Infrastructure Organisations. These were not necessarily based within the Voluntary Community Sector and included organisations such as Citizens Advice Bureau, Primary Care Trusts, District Councils, Health Authorities and Housing Associations.

## **CHAPTER 4: OVERALL FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND SOME SUGGESTED DELIVERY MECHANISMS**

The focus of these recommendations is on how to enhance the work of Infrastructure Organisations to support and develop the work of frontline Voluntary/Community Organisations. It is important that we evaluate the findings and then make suggested delivery mechanisms. Many of the delivery mechanisms will need to be created at differing levels depending upon the target audience. They could be geographical, theme based or pilot study orientated to pick up on the fact that for many of the recommendations the approach cannot be 'one size fits all'.

### **4.1 Funding, Distribution and Duplication**

#### **4.1.1 Funding**

##### **Overall Findings**

Funding is the biggest issue facing Voluntary/Community Sector Infrastructure – lack of funding, insecurity of funding and patchiness of funding are key factors, this leading directly to Infrastructure Organisations not being able to deliver the levels of support to frontline Voluntary/Community Organisations which are needed to increase the delivery of public services.

Lack of sufficient and reliable funding is the largest single factor affecting the effectiveness of infrastructure services provided by Infrastructure Organisations to frontline Voluntary/Community Organisations. There is a lack of consistent equitable systems of funding for all Infrastructure Organisations and little evidence of 'Full Cost Recovery' models of operation in action. Generally the level of funding required by Infrastructure Organisations for sustainability and efficiency is not understood by the funders, neither is the value of the Voluntary/Community Sector. This lack of understanding results in under funding and missed opportunities for maximising the potential for increased public service delivery through the Voluntary/Community Sector.

These findings are further supported by research undertaken in 2003, by RAISE called 'Funding Issues for the Voluntary/Community Sector'. Disappointingly the current picture continues to reflect the original findings to include:

- The funding of Voluntary/Community Sector infrastructure is continuing to deteriorate.
- Infrastructure funding has remained predominantly on one year planning cycles.
- There is no consistency across the Region.

This issue is further exacerbated by the findings from the Voluntary/Community Sector Frontline Organisations. The most common issue quoted by respondents as preventing organisations from expanding their current services or delivering a better service was 'funding'. Their issues broadly concur with those listed above.

There is a need to link the recommendations to sections **4.2 Quality and Standards (pg26)**, as there is a need for Voluntary/Community Organisations to measure their impact and demonstrate their quality. In addition, there is a useful link to **4.5 Social Enterprise (pg33)** when discussing 'widening the funding' base and 'charging for services'.

No. of Rec.	Recommendations (R) & Delivery Mechanisms (DM)	(R) (DM)
1	<p>There is a need for increased funding overall for Infrastructure Organisations - to enable them to improve their services to frontline Voluntary/Community Organisations.</p> <p><b>All funding to the Voluntary/Community Sector generated from Central Government needs to take into account the infrastructure costs of Infrastructure Organisations and the support needs of frontline Voluntary/Community Organisations. There is a need to look at reviewing all public commissioning and procurement practices and ensure that the infrastructure costs are embedded in the formulae.</b></p>	R  DM
2	<p>There is a need for a consistent and equitable system of funding for all Infrastructure Organisations – to ensure that beneficiary organisations receive an adequate and effective service across the Region. This funding must reflect the local circumstances, as a ‘one size fits all’ model will perpetuate the patchiness currently found.</p> <p><b>Increased understanding of the cost of infrastructure services, generated and promoted at a national and regional level coupled with Local Infrastructure Development Plans will be essential to enable Local Authorities, Primary Care Trusts, Learning &amp; Skills Council, and other funders to properly understand the cost implications of providing sustainable Infrastructure Organisations. The South East Voluntary Sector Funders Forum (SEVSFF) may have a role to play.</b></p> <p>Central Government need to drive through its regional framework the increased understanding and effectiveness of partnership working between the Voluntary/Community Sector and the key commissioners. A good example of this would be the work undertaken by Government Office on Local Strategic Partnerships.</p> <p><b>Possible tools for driving this forward could be;</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Utilisation of Compact and Codes of Practice (funding).</b></li> <li>• <b>Regional dialogue with Local Authorities – currently very difficult as no regional structure.</b></li> <li>• <b>Utilisation of Local Government standards such as Best Value, Corporate Performance Assessment to drive engagement between sectors.</b></li> <li>• <b>The development of specific Public Service Agreement targets.</b></li> </ul>	R  DM  R  DM
3	<p>There is a need for the provision of Full Cost Recovery for infrastructure services and frontline service delivery from funders coupled with an increased understanding of what ‘Full Cost Recovery’ means i.e. there is currently a lack of resources to achieve the core function of Infrastructure Organisations in general.</p> <p><b>Nationally there needs to be a ‘campaign’ with Local Authorities, Primary Care Trusts, Learning and Skills Councils and other funders for the acceptance and integration by key funders of ‘Full Cost Recovery’. Robust information and training to include publications, workshops etc will be</b></p>	R  DM

No. of Rec.	Recommendations (R) & Delivery Mechanisms (DM)	(R) (DM)
	<b>required regionally, with both the Voluntary/Community Sector and Statutory Sector, to establish what it is and how it works.</b>	
4	<p>The issue of sustainability needs to be addressed; Infrastructure Organisations need longer-term guarantees of the continuation of funding i.e. ones that go beyond the end of the current financial year – to enable effective planning and development of their work. (Short-term, insecure funding is a barrier.) For example, some Statutory Sector funding is provided on a rolling three-year programme.</p> <p><b>There is a need for Central Government influence to Local Government and other key funders to encourage flexible, rolling programmes of funding and contracting to enable longer term planning with the Voluntary/Community Sector.</b></p> <p><b>Local Authorities and others should be encouraged to follow the National Association of Councils for Voluntary Service funding formula in allocating funds to support Councils for Voluntary Service activity and other funding formulae should be sought to support other Infrastructure Organisations strategically.</b></p>	R  DM  DM
5	<p>Strategies are needed to develop a better understanding of the Voluntary/Community Sector by statutory bodies (Local Authorities, Primary Care Trusts, Learning and Skills Councils etc.) and its need for funding.</p> <p>The concept of Infrastructure Organisations charging for services needs to be explored fully as a piece meal approach to this could lead to social exclusion issues.</p> <p><b>Using “Hidden Asset” and other available research products there is a need regionally to increase awareness amongst key statutory bodies of the impact that Voluntary/Community activity has on connecting people and helping them to shape their communities.</b></p> <p><b>Primary Care Trusts need to be encouraged to contribute further towards the costs of local Voluntary/Community Organisations infrastructure by funding Infrastructure Organisations. In tandem with this, there is a need to enhance the capacity of Primary Care Trusts to engage with Infrastructure Organisations and to link into the work of Voluntary/Community Organisations.</b></p> <p>To explore the feasibility of Infrastructure Organisations charging for membership at a national level through a partnership approach by the relevant national associations.</p>	R  R  DM  DM  DM
6	<p>More investment is needed in providing ‘funding advice’ for frontline Voluntary/Community Organisations.</p> <p><b>Learning and Skills Councils should be engaged in further building upon</b></p>	R  DM

No. of Rec.	Recommendations (R) & Delivery Mechanisms (DM)	(R) (DM)
	<p><b>the agreed Compact, utilising the proposed ‘Learning and Skills Development Leader’ post based at RAISE.</b></p> <p><b>A network of ‘fit for purpose’ funding advisors needs to be created for and by Infrastructure Organisations, building upon the dormant Funding Advice Workers Network (FAWN). This network needs to work with the South East Voluntary Sector Funders Forum (SEVSFF).</b></p>	<b>DM</b>

### **Subregional Variations**

The recommendations and suggested delivery mechanisms apply to the whole of the South East Region. However, where Infrastructure Organisation provision is weak or uncoordinated special attention to capacity building the Infrastructure Organisations must be addressed prior to developing further networks or solutions.

#### **Kent:**

- There was no consistency evident in the core funding of the Councils for Voluntary Service, even when the same County Council funded them. As a result, 4 of them were run by full-time managers/directors, the other 2 with part-time posts.

#### **Hampshire and the Isle of Wight:**

- The main concern, emerging consistently from Infrastructure Organisations, frontline Voluntary/Community Organisations and at least one statutory organisation, was the need for more funding, more sustainable funding and funding over the longer term. A closely related issue was the lack of consistency in how Local Authorities and Primary Care Trusts organised relations with the Voluntary/Community Sector. This emerged in the diverse job titles of statutory sector contacts suggested by Voluntary/Community Organisations’ respondents, titles included: Partnership and Planning Manager, Head of Community Cohesion, Head of Housing and Community Support Services, Head of Democratic Services, Assistant Director Leisure Services, Head of Inequalities.

#### **Surrey and Sussex**

- Statutory Organisations did not understand the role and needs of the Voluntary/Community Sector generally and Infrastructure Organisations in particular.

#### **Thames Valley**

- Administrative complexity made for funding complexity. Additionally, it was hard to capture the actual level of funding and whether it was core or project related; some statutory organisations did not distinguish between core and project funding; some funded the same Infrastructure Organisation through different departments or different funding initiatives; some had tri-partite funding arrangements in place.

## 4.1.2 Distribution and Duplication

### Overall Findings

The research shows that duplication is not a significant problem for Infrastructure Organisations in the Region. The reverse is true – Infrastructure Organisations often face the challenge of providing adequate support to Voluntary/Community Organisations throughout the geographical area, which they cover, while receiving inadequate funding to meet the needs of frontline Voluntary/Community Organisations. This picture further supports the recommendations in 4.1.1 (pg19) above. Where effective Voluntary/Community Sector consortia exist the research demonstrates that there is greater coordination of and development of new services ensuring quality driven developments, shared understanding, shared skills and maximisation of resources. (The network covering Isle of Wight and Hampshire is a good example of where this works well).

There are issues relating to rural service delivery of infrastructure services. Many specific programmes of activity are targeted at rural communities; however these are not necessarily 'joined up' with other Infrastructure Organisations. The parallel DEFRA Early Spend Programme has served to confuse the local situation in some areas across the South East with more than one consortium of Infrastructure Organisations being created.

No. of Rec.	Recommendations (R) & Delivery Mechanisms (DM)	(R) (DM)
7	<p>It is critically important to encourage Infrastructure Organisations working in a particular geographical area to work together to co-ordinate work and address gaps in services provided to frontline Voluntary/Community Organisations. This is an essential process for identifying any overlaps in services provided and clarifying who does what.</p> <p><b>It is suggested that where consortia or networks do not exist geographically that provision is made to support their development. Where they do exist then further development work should be supported to capacity build their ability to work across subregions, hubs or themes. The creation of Local Development Plans will assist this process</b></p>	R  DM
8	<p>It is important to realise that Infrastructure Organisations are not just Councils for Voluntary Service, Rural Community Councils, Volunteer Bureaux and Race Equality Councils but include other local service providers such as Citizens Advice Bureau, Age Concern, and Development Trust Associations.</p> <p><b>Through the development of local consortia other infrastructure organisations should be engaged. Criteria for funding for consortia development should include a list of all potential 'other' Infrastructure Organisations and link to Local Development Plans.</b></p>	R  DM
9	<p>Where the Infrastructure Organisations and other local service providers are working together it is important to realise that such co-ordination and collaboration does take management time and it is appropriate to provide resources to facilitate effective communication between local Infrastructure Organisations to enable them to work together effectively.</p>	R

No. of Rec.	Recommendations (R) & Delivery Mechanisms (DM)	(R) (DM)
	<b>Full Cost Recovery should include the needs of all Infrastructure Organisations, geographically located to communicate effectively through the consortia or network model.</b>	<b>DM</b>
10	<p>Where there are other specific infrastructure programmes relating to one or more aspect of infrastructure services there is a need to 'join it up' or relate it to existing infrastructure services. Two that immediately stand out would be rural and Social Enterprise.</p> <p><b>Government Office South East (in this case) need to explore the potential for working more closely with DEFRA and DTi regionally to ensure that programmes of activity do reference each other and lend themselves to cooperative working, particularly when parallel programmes exist .</b></p>	<p>R</p> <p><b>DM</b></p>
11	<p>Better sharing of resources and information, as it was identified that local Infrastructure Organisations did not necessarily facilitate the sharing of resources</p> <p>Better sharing of information between the frontline services could be facilitated by the Infrastructure Organisations which would minimise duplication of provision and facilitate sharing of best practice.</p> <p><b>To explore the concept of 'one stop' shops, co location as part of developing local services.</b></p> <p><b>Local Development Plans should be supported by a communication strategy.</b></p> <p><b>This area links to 4.8 (pg39) ICT as improved use of ICT could enable better information sharing.</b></p>	<p>R</p> <p>R</p> <p><b>DM</b></p> <p><b>DM</b></p> <p><b>DM</b></p>

### Subregional Variations

The research demonstrated that there were considerable variations across the South East when looking at consortia and networks.

Areas requiring considerable support to develop geographical consortia or cooperative working are;

- Kent
- Berkshire
- Oxfordshire

Areas of strength in the Region requiring support to further develop subregional or themed networks/hubs are;

- Hampshire & Isle of Wight (CHOFFS)

- Buckinghamshire (Buckinghamshire Infrastructure Group)
- Milton Keynes
- Sussex – East and West
- Surrey

## 4.2. Quality and Standards

### Overall Findings

Voluntary/Community Organisations are quite clearly concerned to review and develop the quality of their work, and to demonstrate the value of their work to stakeholders (particularly beneficiaries and funders). There is, however, scope for Infrastructure Organisations to provide greater support to frontline Voluntary/Community Organisations in these respects – and to promote a higher profile for quality and standards.

It is important that Infrastructure Organisations and frontline Voluntary/Community Organisations have the capacity to assess how well they are doing. For this to happen they need access to appropriate monitoring and evaluation tools – ones which are meaningful and feasible in the context of Voluntary/Community Organisational activity.

There is a need to strengthen the ability of Infrastructure Organisations to provide information and advice to frontline Voluntary/Community Organisations on good and bad practice.

Initiatives to build the expertise of Infrastructure Organisations could be taken at a regional or subregional level in the first instance – and in turn to enable frontline Voluntary/Community Organisations to evaluate their own work in an appropriate manner. (N.B. While such tools need to provide useable frameworks, it is crucial that they are responsive to the differing aims of organisations and the diversity of contexts in which they work.)

The emerging idea of subregional hubs may be relevant to initiatives relating to Quality and Standards (**see also section 4.9.2) (pg42)**)

A particular need is to enable Voluntary/Community Organisations to assess the impact of their work, i.e. how does it make a difference? For example, National Council for Voluntary Organisation’s work on ‘Measuring Impact’ is a useful resource.

Achieving a Quality Charter Mark and monitoring/evaluating your performance are closely linked. Therefore the two elements should be tackled together. There is much knowledge about quality standards in the Voluntary/Community Sector generally in the South East however measuring the impact of what they do is less well understood.

No. of Rec.	Recommendations (R) & Delivery Mechanisms (DM)	(R) (DM)
12	Access to straight-forward standard processes and procedures	R
	<b>Championed by rolling out pilot projects across the South East using a variety of recognised quality standards to include Practical Quality Assurance System for Small Organisations, Quality First and Investor in People.</b>	<b>DM</b>
	There is a need to address the issues of funders requiring Voluntary/Community Organisations to use different evaluation systems.	R
	<b>The engagement of key commissioners is critical if this duplication is not to be addressed. There needs to be a consensus locally where possible as to preferred evaluation system and quality standard or a broader understanding of a range of systems.</b>	<b>DM</b>

No. of Rec.	Recommendations (R) & Delivery Mechanisms (DM)	(R) (DM)
13	<p>Access to support and advice to be delivered by Infrastructure Organisations to Frontline Voluntary/Community Organisations</p> <p><b>A coordinated regional training programme delivered locally at three levels:</b></p> <p><b>a) To Infrastructure Organisations to build their capacity and raise standards.</b></p> <p><b>b) To Infrastructure Organisations – training the trainers.</b></p> <p><b>c) To frontline Voluntary/Community Organisations to increase understanding and knowledge.</b></p> <p>Strengthen the capacity of Infrastructure Organisations to help Frontline Voluntary/Community Organisations to put this into practice in an accessible manner. For example, develop Infrastructure Organisations capacity to provide advice, training and support to frontline Voluntary/Community Organisations in the use of such tools.</p> <p><b>It will be necessary to provide funding for staff time, training, advice and support to:</b></p> <p><b>a) Bring Infrastructure Organisations up to speed;</b></p> <p><b>b) Enable them to support frontline Voluntary/Community Organisations.</b></p>	<p>R</p> <p><b>DM</b></p> <p>R</p> <p><b>DM</b></p>
14	<p>Provide funds for the creation of a regional support network and dissemination of information on good practice, and to facilitate the sharing of good practice.</p> <p><b>This could be approached regionally with a special edition of Voluntary/Community Organisation quality standards publications, network events and bulletins.</b></p> <p><b>(This links to recommendation 13)</b></p>	<p>R</p> <p><b>DM</b></p>
15	<p>Support emerging structures within the Region to provide specialist advice to Voluntary/Community Organisations, e.g. on ICT, human resources, legal and governance. <b>(See Section 4.9.2 on ‘hubs’.) (pg42)</b> Developing quality and standards in the Region needs to be embedded in the information and advice that both Infrastructure Organisations and Frontline Voluntary/Community Organisations receive.</p>	<p>R</p>
16	<p>Identify and develop appropriate monitoring and evaluation tools – through pilot projects across the Region e.g. social audit.</p> <p><b>Existing work at a regional and local level should be built upon to action this recommendation i.e. RAISE are piloting social audit this year within their own organisation.</b></p>	<p>R</p> <p><b>DM</b></p>

No. of Rec.	Recommendations (R) & Delivery Mechanisms (DM)	(R) (DM)
17	<p>Infrastructure Organisations should be encouraged to use monitoring and evaluation tools to evaluate and develop their own work, e.g. by seeking the views of their own beneficiaries (frontline Voluntary/Community Organisations) on a regular basis through a variety of means. This will also support the raising of the profile of infrastructure organisations with frontline Voluntary/Community Organisations locally.</p> <p>In assessing their work it is important for Infrastructure Organisations to engage with the frontline Voluntary/Community Organisations with whom they work.</p> <p><b>Example of this could be by regularly requesting feedback, engaging in dialogue, undertaking research to explore their views and experiences.</b></p>	<p>R</p> <p>R</p> <p><b>DM</b></p>
18	Build the costs of monitoring and evaluation explicitly into project costs.	R

### Subregional Variations

#### Kent:

- Particular concern was expressed at funders having different monitoring systems; anecdotal evidence suggested some Volunteer Bureaux had concerns about the quality of local Council Voluntary Services.

#### Hampshire and the Isle of Wight:

- Many Voluntary/Community Organisations were particularly keen to find ways of demonstrating their impact.

#### Surrey and Sussex:

- The subregion underlined the need for funding to take this forward effectively.

#### Thames Valley:

- No specific issues.

## 4.3 Volunteering

### Overall Findings

Alongside the regional mapping research project, there has been an important development at a national level. Volunteer England has just published its new Strategy on Volunteering Infrastructure “Strategy for Volunteering Infrastructure in England 2004 – 2014: Building on Success”. This proposes major changes in the number of local volunteer agencies or bureaux – with the aim of ultimately reducing these to just one volunteering agency for each Local Authority area. It is worth noting that the new strategy does not only apply to Volunteer Bureaux but to a whole range of volunteering structures. The strategy is resourced by the appointment of regional development workers who will work with existing Infrastructure Organisations to develop regionally and locally sensitive solutions to issues. In the South East we are awaiting the appointment of the regional worker at the time of writing this report.

The findings from the regional mapping research show that there is a need for more funding to develop volunteering infrastructure, and that this needs to be provided in a sustainable way. There is a degree of funding already allocated to the Volunteering England strategy. There is an extremely mixed picture of structure within the South East with the favoured model being integrated bureaux within other Infrastructure Organisations. Where small Volunteer Bureaux exist in isolation of any other organisation there is a real issue as to the sustainability and capacity of the organisation. Given the complex picture of provision there is an urgent need to review, which organisations are providing, which services in particular areas. This review process would need to be funded:

No. of Rec.	Recommendations (R) & Delivery Mechanisms (DM)	(R) (DM)
19	<p>Strengthening existing infrastructure services;. providing volunteers and providing advice and information on the recruitment, management and retention of volunteers to Voluntary/Community Organisations.</p> <p><b>Volunteering England Strategy</b></p>	<p>R</p> <p><b>DM</b></p>
20	<p>The further development of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support to receiving organisations and follow-up of volunteers after placement, to improve retention.</li> <li>• Training and accreditation of learning for volunteers, to improve retention and recruitment.</li> <li>• Monitoring of the impact of volunteering services, beyond initial placement.</li> <li>• Schemes to meet the need for more specialist volunteers e.g. trustees, people from BME groups.</li> </ul> <p><b>Volunteering England Strategy</b></p>	<p>R</p> <p><b>DM</b></p>
21	<p>It is proposed that Infrastructure Organisations concerned with volunteering in a particular area come together to review current provision locally, with a view to developing sustainable plans for volunteering infrastructure for the future.</p> <p><b>Existing models of good practice should be drawn on.</b></p>	<p>R</p> <p><b>DM</b></p>

No. of Rec.	Recommendations (R) & Delivery Mechanisms (DM)	(R) (DM)
	<p><b>As part of this process, there is a need for Infrastructure Organisations concerned with volunteering to engage with the strategy proposed by Volunteering England for modernising volunteering infrastructure. It is important that the Voluntary/Community Sector infrastructure works nationally and regionally with Volunteering England to tackle the recommendations if considerable overlap is not to be developed.</b></p>	<p><b>DM</b></p>

## **Subregional Variations**

### **Kent**

- Volunteer Bureaux had problems with accountability due to lack of clarity around membership; recruiting trustees was especially hard as was recruiting from particular groups.

### **Hampshire and the Isle of Wight**

- The subregion felt perhaps more keenly than the others the need for volunteering Infrastructure Organisations to work for receiving organisations as well as volunteers.

### **Surrey and Sussex**

- There was a particular problem with Volunteer Bureaux closing due to lack of funding.

### **Thames Valley**

- Placing organisations lacked capacity to follow up placements and ensure continuous improvement.

## 4.4 BME infrastructure

### Overall Findings

Infrastructure support to BME frontline Voluntary/Community Organisations is clearly an issue – there is a major question mark as to how adequate this is, and what would best meet the needs of these organisations. This area is in need of significant investment in order to support the needs of frontline BME Voluntary/Community Organisations effectively.

It is apparent that there is a lack of understanding of the diversity of the BME communities in the South East. This exists both at a regional and local level. There are examples of good practice, captured in some of the case studies contained within this report but it is essential that we build upon these pockets of success and better understand the needs of frontline BME organisations and communities ahead of investing in this area of infrastructure support.

The area of community development infrastructure services demonstrated potential for a more cohesive joined up approach to BME infrastructure support. Frontline organisations working in the area of community development services reported that longer term investment needed to be made to supporting BME communities.

No. of Rec.	Recommendations (R) & Delivery Mechanisms (DM)	(R) (DM)
22	<p>Providing resources to facilitate effective infrastructure support to BME Voluntary/Community Organisations should be a key priority. However, this needs to be firmly grounded in the support needs of BME organisations.</p> <p><b>Investment in this area of work needs to be in line with a three year development strategy for the South East.</b></p>	<p>R</p> <p><b>DM</b></p>
23	<p>From the limited amount of research that has been carried out it is apparent that there is activity in BME frontline Voluntary/Community Organisations and BME Infrastructure Organisations. However, further research needs to be carried out to map out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where the BME frontline Voluntary/Community Organisations are.</li> <li>• What support they currently receive and what works well.</li> <li>• What support, if any, they need/want from Infrastructure Organisations; and whether the Infrastructure Organisations that are currently serving them are the right ones to do so.</li> </ul> <p>It is important that any investment recognises the diversity of our BME population e.g. that it includes Chinese, Kashmiri, Afro Caribbean, and Asylum Seekers etc.</p> <p><b>Research to better understand the population profile of BME communities in the South East needs to be undertaken with mechanisms to capture ‘new’ communities as they are created.</b></p>	<p>R</p> <p>R</p> <p><b>DM</b></p>
24	<p>There needs to be investment into what is already working. There is a need to work with partners who have undertaken successful projects and really understand why it has worked.</p>	<p>R</p>

No. of Rec.	Recommendations (R) & Delivery Mechanisms (DM)	(R) (DM)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify examples of good practice and share the learning of what has worked.</li> </ul> <p>Invest time and resources in working at local level to support BME community groups 'in house' or from within their own community.</p>	R
25	<p>There needs to be a joining up of faith based and generic community development services to ensure a whole service that understands the issues and the challenges all communities face.</p> <p><b>This area of development needs to link to recommendations in 4.6 Community Development (pg35)</b></p>	R  DM
26	<p>It is important to recognise the time frame required to do this properly and that longer term investment is required. Further, it is crucial to recognise the 'TRUST' element and the fact that this is not about 'white' imposing structures and services on BME but quite the reverse.</p> <p><b>A minimum three year development plan should be created for developing BME infrastructure services. This should be approached regionally.</b></p>	R  DM
27	<p>There is currently an important initiative in Kent to address the infrastructure needs of BME Voluntary/Community Organisations in the subregion: 'Kent BME communities – support plus'. This is the Early Spend Project that is working to deliver a Kent wide support network for Voluntary/Community Organisations led by the BME community (this includes asylum seekers, travellers and refugees). The project is expected to report in September 2004.</p> <p><b>Feed the learning from this project into the overall process of reviewing BME infrastructure.</b></p>	R  DM

### Subregional Variations

#### Kent

- Race Equality Councils were providing generic support to BME organisations; support, where it existed, focussed on BME Organisations of Asian origin.

#### Hampshire and the Isle of Wight

- There was only one BME Infrastructure Organisation in the subregion.

#### Surrey and Sussex

- Voluntary/Community Organisations felt there were too few BME people to constitute communities and that this made planning services difficult.

#### Thames Valley

- No specific issues.

## 4.5 Social Enterprise

### Overall Findings

Whilst Social Enterprise is not new to the Voluntary/Community Sector, the idea of Infrastructure Organisations becoming actively engaged in offering business support services to developing Social Enterprises is. It is hoped that South East England Development Agency's Social Enterprise Strategy for the South East will provide an overall framework in the South East. There is, however, a need to facilitate greater involvement and awareness of Social Enterprise amongst Infrastructure Organisations.

No. of Rec.	Recommendations (R) & Delivery Mechanisms (DM)	(R) (DM)
28	<p>Invest resources into the Voluntary/Community Sector to facilitate greater involvement in and awareness of Social Enterprise (RAISE may have a role here). The Social Enterprise strategy group for Voluntary/Community Organisations (which RAISE chairs) could provide the appropriate forum for developing strategies for targeting these resources.</p> <p><b>Approach South East England Development Agency to establish the viability of joint working and investment in this key area of work</b></p>	<p>R</p> <p><b>DM</b></p>
29	<p>Develop an information / training programme to assist those Infrastructure Organisations involved (and the wider Voluntary/Community Sector) to understand Social Enterprise and to explain why it is appropriate for the Voluntary/Community Sector to be involved. Specifically, this will unpick these 6 different themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social Enterprise as a sustainable funding regime for a VCO.</li> <li>• Social Enterprise as a legal entity – trading for social purpose.</li> <li>• Social Enterprise activity.</li> <li>• Thinking more enterprisingly as an organisation.</li> <li>• Offering support to front line Voluntary/Community Organisations attempting to do any of the above.</li> <li>• The role of Business Link in support to the sector.</li> </ul> <p><b>Work with the South East England Development Agency's Social Enterprise Strategy group to look at the 6 key areas above. (This strategy group has cross sector representation)</b></p>	<p>R</p> <p><b>DM</b></p>
30	<p>Explore further the development of support services to frontline Voluntary/Community Organisations pursuing Social Enterprise. It is vital that Infrastructure Organisations work in partnership with organisations such as Business Link and other Voluntary/Community Organisations who are involved in supporting Social Enterprise (not only Infrastructure Organisations).</p> <p><b>Following the engagement in recommendation 29 look to establish where existing local 'Social Enterprise Fora' exist (identify the gaps).</b></p> <p><b>Invest in developing Social Enterprise fora at a local (Countywide) level and encourage their involvement in the development of Local</b></p>	<p>R</p> <p><b>DM</b></p> <p><b>DM</b></p>

No. of Rec.	Recommendations (R) & Delivery Mechanisms (DM)	(R) (DM)
	<b>Development Plans.</b>	
31	<p>Provide Infrastructure Organisations with the expertise and resources to play a targeted role to support Social Enterprises (for those Infrastructure Organisations who are to be involved):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infrastructure Organisation friendly training programme on providing advice and support to Social Enterprises – to enable Infrastructure Organisations to develop in-house expertise.</li> <li>• Identify clearly how this targeted role might work – in tandem with the Social Enterprise support services offered by other organisations, e.g. providing specific local support.</li> <li>• Target funding to cover the staff time involved in supporting Social Enterprise.</li> </ul>	R
32	<p>Draw on the experiences of those Infrastructure Organisations which are supporting Social Enterprise – to look for examples of good practice and to disseminate lessons learned.</p> <p><b>The emerging idea of subregional ‘hubs’ may be one means by which specialist Infrastructure Organisations support could be provided to Voluntary/Community Organisations interested/involved in Social Enterprise. (See also the recommendations on ‘hubs’ in 4.9.2) (pg42)</b></p>	R  DM

### Subregional Variations

#### Kent:

- Displayed particular scepticism about Social Enterprise’s relevance to the Sector

#### Hampshire and the Isle of Wight:

- Voluntary/Community Organisations questioned whether Infrastructure Organisations should provide support but questioned whether Business Link should provide it either.

#### Surrey and Sussex:

- Very basic information was requested.

#### Thames Valley:

- Lack of knowledge about Social Enterprise a recurrent theme.

## 4.6 Community Development

### Overall Findings

The research indicates that there is room for improvement and that gaps in provision exist; provision was seen as patchy, both geographically and in terms of quality. Given the time-consuming nature of the work, more staff and funding and general capacity building in this area, would all make a significant difference to the level of provision available and the impact the service could make.

No. of Rec.	Recommendations (R) & Delivery Mechanisms (DM)	(R) (DM)
33	<p>More funding is needed by Infrastructure Organisations, more staff, more capacity building, including training, to improve the quality of provision and address gaps. There is a need for longer-term investment: funders need to recognise the time-consuming nature of the work and the slow returns.</p> <p><b>The investment in these services needs to be looked at in the context of the needs of both BME and Rural Infrastructure Organisations.</b></p>	R  DM
34	<p>There is, a need for a common understanding of what is meant by Community Development within Infrastructure Bodies, and clarity about the Community Development role.</p>	R
35	<p>Gaps in Community Development support provided by Infrastructure Organisations to frontline Voluntary/Community Organisations need to be identified more clearly and addressed. These need to be communicated clearly to Statutory Organisations – as a means of addressing any differences in perception of what is needed between Infrastructure Organisations and Statutory Organisations.</p>	R
36	<p>Overall, there is a need for co-ordination of the delivery of this function by the different agencies involved and a more strategic approach. For example, it will be important to look at the existing structures in the South East and to develop a common understanding of who is doing what at a regional level and subsequently local level.</p> <p><b>Engagement with the South East Community Development Network will provide a useful point of contact for accessing many community development workers (practitioners).</b></p>	R  DM
37	<p>Ways need to be developed to demonstrate the effectiveness of community development work and its impact in the longer term.</p> <p><b>Measuring the impact of community development services within communities needs to be considered under 4.2 (pg26).</b></p>	R  DM
38	<p>Existing examples of good practice within Infrastructure Organisations in the Region could be drawn on in developing community development support.</p>	R

## **Subregional Variations**

### **Kent:**

- Development not seen as a priority in the subregion.

### **Hampshire and the Isle of Wight:**

- Felt to be 'pretty good' but lots more could be done with more resources.

### **Surrey and Sussex:**

- More funding wanted for capacity building and a shared understanding of what this process entailed.

### **Thames Valley:**

- There was a sense that there were pockets of real excellence.

## 4.7 Rural Infrastructure

### Overall Findings

The findings from the mapping research with respect to rural work reveal a mixture of both gaps in provision and things working well. There is a need for a coherent strategy for the provision of support to frontline Voluntary/Community Organisations working in rural areas. It will be important to refer to **4.6 Community Development (pg35)** when looking to develop rural infrastructure services.

N.B. The findings from this mapping exercise need to be read in tandem with the findings with the parallel DEFRA work on rural infrastructure.

No. of Rec.	Recommendations (R) & Delivery Mechanisms (DM)	(R) (DM)
39	<p>There is a need to develop clear strategies for rural provision within each subregion. In order to do this, it may be necessary to subdivide the subregions further.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Such strategies will need to address the issues of comprehensive geographical coverage and demarcation between specialist and generic Infrastructure Organisations (i.e. clarity over who does what and where).</li> <li>• It will be relevant to link the themes of rural work and community development work together as they are interconnected.</li> <li>• There is a need for a definition of what is meant by 'rural' in the South East.</li> </ul>	R
40	<p>In order to develop such strategies, more detailed subregional research work needs to be done to ascertain the precise extent of the gaps in rural provision and how these might best be met. The differing needs of subregions (and areas within subregions) need to be built into the picture.</p> <p><b>Through the DEFRA programme the creation of rural consortia, countywide need to be built upon further.</b></p>	R  DM
41	<p>It will be necessary to provide funds to enable Infrastructure Organisations to improve their provision to frontline Voluntary/Community Organisations working in rural area. This should be based on a more detailed analysis of the needs and the development of strategies within the subregions. For example, this may involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing specialist rural organisations where none exist; and/or</li> <li>• Strengthening the capacity of generic Infrastructure Organisations to support frontline Voluntary/Community Organisations working in rural areas.</li> </ul> <p><b>The creation of Local Infrastructure Development Plans will enable the local needs for Community Development services to be highlighted.</b></p>	R  DM
42	<p>There is a need to promote/enhance good working relationships between specialist and generic Infrastructure Organisations working in rural areas:</p>	R

No. of Rec.	Recommendations (R) & Delivery Mechanisms (DM)	(R) (DM)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage partnerships/consortia between Infrastructure Organisations at a local level to meet the support needs of Voluntary/Community Organisations working in rural areas.</li> <li>• Use these improved links to facilitate more effective seamless working between Infrastructure Organisations, to ensure clarity over which Infrastructure Organisations provide which service in a particular geographical area.</li> </ul>	
43	It is important to learn from existing good practice in addressing the needs of frontline Voluntary/Community Organisations working in rural areas, including The Projects that have addressed some of the needs of those working in rural areas.	R

### Subregional Variations

#### Kent:

- Generic Infrastructure Organisations often left rural service delivery to Rural Community Councils whose influence was not always felt far from their base.

#### Hampshire and the Isle of Wight:

- Stressed the comparatively high expense of rural work.

#### Surrey and Sussex:

- Lack of funding seen to preclude work in rural areas.

#### Thames Valley:

- No specific variations.

## 4.8 ICT

### Overall Findings

There is an urgent need to build capacity, capability and competence in use of ICT within the Voluntary/Community Sector across the Region. The research demonstrates a priority need to develop and support the use of ICT by frontline Voluntary/Community Organisations in the Region. There is a major gap in the level of ICT support provided by Infrastructure Organisations to Voluntary/Community Organisations, which needs to be addressed urgently. Further, there are significant gaps in Infrastructure Organisation's own ICT capacity, which is holding back their effectiveness. The potential gains from addressing these needs are enormous, and would contribute in different ways to most or all of the key infrastructure themes being explored.

**A regional strategy is proposed with two overarching elements:**

- 1. The development of an effective and sustainable infrastructure for ICT across the Region.**
- 2. Funding and support for Infrastructure Organisations to modernise their own ICT capacity (where this is needed) – in order to enhance the effectiveness of the whole range of their work in supporting Voluntary/Community Organisations.**

Because ICT support is needed by both Infrastructure Organisations and Voluntary/Community Organisations, it is proposed that specialist Infrastructure Organisations be set up to serve the needs of both. Their exact number and location would need to be determined in partnership with existing Infrastructure Organisations in the subregions. They could be managed by existing Infrastructure Organisations.

No. of Rec.	Recommendations (R) & Delivery Mechanisms (DM)	(R) (DM)
44	<p>ICT specialist Infrastructure Organisations would aim to: Provide a high quality, affordable support service that provides advice and information on the benefits and uses of ICT, needs assessments, training in the use of software and the maintenance of hardware, and technical and operational support in the form of a helpdesk and a call-out service.</p> <p><b>There is a need to approach this area of service delivery regionally and subregionally. (See also the recommendations on specialist 'hubs' in Section 4.9.2.) (pg42)</b></p>	<p>R</p> <p><b>DM</b></p>
45	<p>Long-term funding would be needed to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of this strategy. This is to take account of continual developments in the world of ICT and the need to attract and retain staff with relevant expertise.</p>	R
46	<p>There is a potential for these specialist Infrastructure Organisations to operate as Social Enterprises. It is important, however, to explore the realistic feasibility of this. For example, two of The Projects are proposing Social Enterprise models for their ICT support projects (Hampshire ICT Project, and Levelling the Playing Field).</p>	R

No. of Rec.	Recommendations (R) & Delivery Mechanisms (DM)	(R) (DM)
	<b>Explore further the findings of the Early Spend Projects focused on ICT.</b>	<b>DM</b>
47	In addition, funds and expertise are required to build the ICT capacity of the Infrastructure Organisations, to enhance the effectiveness of the whole range of their work in supporting Voluntary/Community Organisations.	R

### Subregional Variations

- All subregions saw this as a major concern; Hampshire and the Isle of Wight were concerned lessons should be learnt from their Project.

## 4.9 Other - including generic work

### 4.9.1 Information and advice

#### Overall Findings

The specific needs expressed by frontline Voluntary/Community Organisations highlight a need for more investment in the provision of information and advice: Further work needs to be undertaken to engage organisations such as Community Legal Service in this area of work.

It is important that wherever services are developed or created that the information and advice requirements are taken into account from the beginning. Effective communication is an important factor for all successful service delivery.

No. of Rec.	Recommendations (R) & Delivery Mechanisms (DM)	(R) (DM)
48	<p>More resources to Infrastructure Organisations to provide information and advice to frontline Voluntary/Community Organisations (responding to the expressed needs of Voluntary/Community Organisations on information). To enable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More outreach work by Infrastructure Organisations – to actively reach even more Voluntary/Community Organisations in their area and to publicise what they can provide to even more frontline Voluntary/Community Organisations, especially smaller organisations. Tackling the lack of awareness and understanding amongst some Voluntary/Community Organisations of what Infrastructure Organisations have to offer them.</li> </ul>	R
49	<p>Resources are needed to facilitate more Funding advice workers.</p> <p><b>See 4.1 Funding (pg19)</b></p>	R
50	<p>Facilitate the better sharing of information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For example, <b>signposting</b> – helping Voluntary/Community Organisations to find what they need.</li> <li>• <b>Mentoring</b> – sharing knowledge between frontline Voluntary/Community Organisations.</li> <li>• <b>Training</b> – helping Voluntary/Community Organisations to find the specific training needed.</li> <li>• <b>Quality and Standards</b> – good practice. For example, it may be useful to develop links between the Community Legal Service and Voluntary/Community Organisations.</li> </ul>	R
51	<p>Effective use of ICT by Infrastructure Organisations to meet the information needs of frontline Voluntary/Community Organisations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For example, this might involve supporting innovative Infrastructure Organisations website projects to enable the effective sharing of information amongst frontline Voluntary/Community Organisations. Such projects require ongoing support for real-time development and updating.</li> </ul>	R

No. of Rec.	Recommendations (R) & Delivery Mechanisms (DM)	(R) (DM)
52	Researching the needs of frontline Voluntary/Community Organisations – to meet the expressed need for a greater understanding of their needs. Also demonstrating the value of the work of frontline Voluntary/Community Organisations e.g. to statutory organisations, the public, and other potential funders.	R

#### 4.9.2 Specialist ‘hubs’ Overall Findings

The concept of hubs is one that has gathered momentum during the life of this research. We originally approached this research via the Government Office subregions as a mechanism to ‘divide’ the Region into manageable units. We encountered some interesting and frustrating findings when working subregionally.

There were challenges that included;

- travel distance
- definition of what defines ‘local’
- working across Local Authority boundaries
- Information dissemination
- Partnership working

There was also significant concern expressed re configuring services across subregions as the funding of these services would be impossible if statutory organisations were required to fund across political boundaries.

However there was interest in the possibility of developing ‘hubs’ to provide support services in the areas of human resource support, ICT, Social Enterprise and possibly quality standards.

The recently published ‘Changeup Strategy’ provides a 10 year Capacity Building and Infrastructure Framework for the Voluntary/Community Sector. It will be important to reference this document when developing regional hubs as well as testing the models using a range of ‘pilot’ projects across the South East. It will be necessary to demonstrate the value of working through hubs as a new structure for service delivery.

No. of Rec.	Recommendations (R) & Delivery Mechanisms (DM)	(R) (DM)
53	Hubs: The idea is to provide specialised support for Voluntary/Community Organisations on a subregional basis (see below). These hubs would provide advice and information on specialist issues, such as ICT, human resources, legal issues, governance, and accountancy. These would be centres of expertise – providing information and support to both frontline Voluntary/Community Organisations and Infrastructure Organisations.	R
54	The idea of specialist subregional hubs should be developed in close partnership with local Infrastructure Organisations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each subregion may require more than one such hub to effectively serve the large geographical areas concerned.</li> </ul>	R

No. of Rec.	Recommendations (R) & Delivery Mechanisms (DM)	(R) (DM)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local Infrastructure Organisations to be encouraged to work together to draw up plans for such hubs, including proposals for the geographical areas to be covered. Such planning may require specific research to ascertain the needs of local Voluntary/Community Organisations.</li> <li>These hubs may need to be piloted first, e.g. to test out effective coverage of a geographical area of a particular size.</li> </ul>	
55	<p>The concept of hubs may also be relevant to sharing expertise and providing specialist support to Voluntary/Community Organisations on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quality and Standards;</li> <li>Social Enterprise.</li> </ul>	R

#### 4.9.3 Other issues

#### Overall Findings

No. of Rec.	Recommendations (R) & Delivery Mechanisms (DM)	(R) (DM)
56	<p>Primary Care Trusts - There is a need to enhance the capacity of Primary Care Trusts to engage with Infrastructure Organisations and to link into the work of Voluntary/Community Organisations.</p> <p><b>The learning from the development of the South East Regional Compact between the Learning and Skills Councils and the Voluntary/Community Sector.</b></p>	R  DM

No. of Rec.	Recommendations (R) & Delivery Mechanisms (DM)	(R) (DM)
57	<p>The need to engage with the public sector to develop both infrastructure services and increased frontline service delivery is crucial.</p> <p><b>A regional strategic approach is required and needs to include Local authorities, Primary Care Trusts, Learning and Skills Councils. Government Office South East has a key leadership role in this area of work.</b></p>	R  DM