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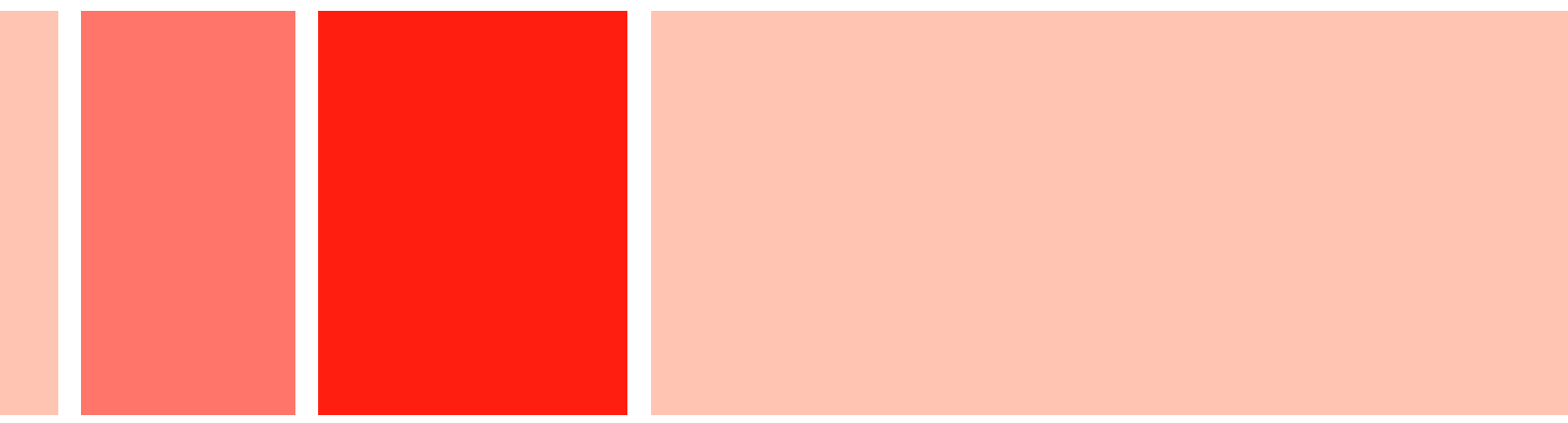
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# Independent Evaluation of WCVA's Making the Connections Project

## Formative Evaluation



# **Independent Evaluation of WCVA's 'Making the Connections' Project**

## **FORMATIVE EVALUATION**

**Gareth Williams, Old Bell 3 Ltd**

Views expressed in this report are those of the researcher and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government

For further information please contact:

Jackie McDonald,

Knowledge and Analytical Services,

Welsh Government,

Cathays Park,

Cardiff CF10 3NQ

Tel: 029 2080 1193

E-mail: [Jackie.McDonald@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Jackie.McDonald@wales.gsi.gov.uk)

<http://www.wales.gov.uk/research>

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## **GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS**

CVC	County Voluntary Council
ESF	European Social Fund
FTE	Full-time Equivalent
GAVO	Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations
LHB	Local Health Board
LSB	Local Service Board
MtC	Making the Connections
RBA	Results Based Accountability
SIP	Single Integrated Plan
SLA	Service Level Agreement
TSO	Third Sector Organisation
WCVA	Wales Council for Voluntary Action
WEFO	Welsh European Funding Office
WG	Welsh Government
WLGA	Welsh Local Government Association

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### *Background*

Old Bell 3 Ltd. has been commissioned by the Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) in conjunction with the Welsh Government to undertake an independent evaluation of WCVA's 'Making the Connections' (MtC) project<sup>1</sup>.

Established in June 2012 and fully operational by March 2013, the MtC project provides funding for additional post(s) within each County Voluntary Council (CVC) in the Convergence area to stimulate and harness the contribution of the third sector to the public service reform work being driven forward by Local Service Boards (LSBs).

The MtC project aims to build the long-term capacity of the third sector to contribute to the process of public service reform and in particular to the implementation of the Single Integrated Plan (SIP) developed for each local authority area. In particular, MtC's objectives are:

- to enhance the readiness of third sector organisations to deliver public services, including co-produced services;
- to increase the number of third sector organisations prepared to deliver public services through consortia or collaborations;
- to ensure that the third sector is better informed about the LSB and progress of public sector reform in its area and more generally;
- to increase the capacity of the third sector to engage meaningfully with service users; and
- to increase the capacity of the third sector to influence decisions affecting design and delivery of public services.

The project is due to end in March 2015 (though funding for the MtC Officers will cease on 31 December 2014) and the project evaluation will support decision makers in determining whether and how the project is meeting its

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<sup>1</sup> Part funded by the European Social Fund through the Welsh Government as part of the wider the Local Service Board Development and Priority Delivery Project - funded under Priority 4 Theme 1 of the Convergence ESF Operational Programme for West Wales and the Valleys

stated objectives, as well as providing on-going feedback and learning that allows continuing improvements to be made to the project.

This report is the second of what is expected to be three reports arising from the evaluation: a baseline and initial process evaluation was published in early 2014<sup>2</sup> and a final evaluation will be undertaken by March 2015. This report is expected to be read in conjunction with the previous report, which sets out in full the background for the MtC project and the context in which it is operating.

### *Work Programme*

The report is based on a work programme undertaken between April and July 2014 which focused on the five case-study areas. This involved:

- agreeing a revised approach to the fieldwork, taking into account the difficulty of undertaking a meaningful quantitative stakeholder survey within the case-study areas, given difficulties over securing suitable contact data;
- undertaking fieldwork in the five case-study areas. This involved individual interviews with 54 stakeholders, as well as studying a wide range of relevant documentation;
- Updating the literature and data review to consider key policy documents published since the baseline report was written in January 2014.

### *Findings*

The more in-depth work in the case-study areas which has been undertaken during the latest phase of the research has tended to confirm the findings from the initial process evaluation with regard to the considerable gap which exists between the ambitions of the project as originally conceived and the achievements which have been possible to date.

MtC officers are in many cases making a positive contribution to ensuring better representation of the sector at the LSB and other key fora; to

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<sup>2</sup> See

disseminating information about the LSB and the SIP; and to supporting individual third sector organisations to develop their capacity to deliver public services and to consider working in partnership to do so. Our case-studies suggest some very positive (if relatively isolated) examples of MtC officers playing a central role in taking forward practical initiatives to improve service delivery; in brokering collaborations between third sector organisations; and in acting as a catalyst for stronger input from the sector to the work of LSBs and other fora; while the project as a whole has helped raise the profile of the 10 National Principles for Public Engagement within the sector.

However, the capacity of MtC officers and indeed CVCs more generally to translate their activities into tangible results in terms of an enhanced role for the third sector in shaping and delivering public services and a material improvement in the quality of the design and implementation of services has been severely limited by the context in which the project is being implemented, in particular:

- The often slow progress in terms of moving the work of the LSB from the analysis of needs and identification of issues to the consideration of design and delivery of services, and the sense of disconnect between these high level strategic discussions and commissioning decisions;
- The tendency of public bodies to turn inwards in response to the pressures brought about by the cuts in public funding;
- The decreasing capacity of many third sector organisations to engage with more strategic agendas because of the effect of cuts in their own funding;
- What appears to be confusion and inconsistency in the approach to procurement, with relatively limited opportunities for local third sector organisations to tender, and fewer for them to tender successfully, to provide services;
- A mismatch between the expectations of public sector commissioners that using the third sector might represent a cheap option, and the view of third sector organisations that the added value the sector can bring is through quality and co-production, not lower costs;

- The ‘planning blight’ resulting from the discussion about restructuring local government and the tension between the local focus of most LSBs and the growing importance of the regional agenda.

In this sense, our research has tended to confirm the view of the Commission on Public Service Governance and Delivery that LSBs are far from achieving their full potential and have yet to result in service improvements, that partnership working is too onerous and overly complex and that co-production is more talked about than practised. Indeed – while acknowledging that the picture in each of the five case-study areas is very different, and that in the absence of MtC, the position of the sector could well be still weaker - in several of them, it seems clear that it has become more, not less, difficult for the third sector locally to play a significant role in service design and delivery.

But while external factors may account for many of the difficulties faced by the MtC project, there are also a number of issues around the design of the project:

- Firstly, there is a mismatch between the scale of the ambition set out in the Business Plan and the resources and timescales of the project. Even in much more favourable circumstances, it is unlikely ever to have been realistic to expect one relatively junior officer in a CVC to be able to deliver the range of activities (and even more outcomes) envisaged;
- Secondly, the focus on recruiting a dedicated MtC Officer in each area, while understandable from the viewpoint of demonstrating the ‘additionality’ of the project, did not necessarily recognise fully the extent to which issues around public service design and delivery are already a key part of the work of CVCs and many of their staff. This has meant that, even where MtC has worked well, it is impossible to disentangle the effects of the project from the wider effects of CVC promotion of this agenda. Where it has worked less well, MtC officers have struggled to define their role. The fact that MtC officers have inevitably been employed on relatively short, fixed-term contracts has



meant managers may have been reluctant to deploy them in more visible, outward-facing roles;

- Thirdly, and perhaps more complicated to resolve, is the question that while the CVCs are recognised by the Welsh Government as having a unique role in terms of representing the sector at a local level, their position is by no means uncontested, with CVCs often seen as representing only one part of the sector, more particularly the more locally-anchored and more community-based organisations.

### *Recommendations*

We make seven recommendations, though these are inevitably tentative at this stage and will be subject to further discussion (including with the MtC officers) and reflection during the final evaluation phase.

**Recommendation 1:** It is important for the Welsh Government to continue to support CVCs to prioritise their work on the design and delivery of public services. However, this will probably be achieved more effectively by ensuring that resources are clearly available within the Infrastructure Grant to support this work and by ensuring that CVCs do in practice give appropriate priority to this role. CVCs need to have the flexibility to deploy staff resources in the way that seems most appropriate to them.

**Recommendation 2:** CVCs (with support from WCVA where necessary) should review their existing staff roles and responsibilities to identify obvious gaps (post-MtC) in terms of ensuring adequate coverage of key LSB sub-groups and other fora. Drawing on good practice developed through the project (particularly in one case-study area) to support third sector representatives to report back, they should consider how far representation from the wider sector (i.e. non CVC staff) can be mobilised to ensure full coverage.

**Recommendation 3:** CVCs should continue to offer training and capacity building relating to tendering to member organisations as part of their core

training offer, pooling resources wherever possible, and with a continued strong focus on brokering collaborations.

**Recommendation 4:** The Welsh Government and WCVA should consider whether and, if so, how, there can be stronger engagement with larger third sector organisations to harness their input into thinking on service design and to ensure consistency of messages from the wider sector to public sector commissioners.

**Recommendation 5:** In taking forward its response to the Commission, including its forthcoming paper on co-production, the Welsh Government should recognise the views within the sector of the limited progress made in terms of this agenda and consider what further measures can be taken to incentivise local authorities and other public bodies to engage more actively, particularly given the impact of budgetary pressures.

**Recommendation 6:** While recognising that it has already invested significant effort in terms of improving procurement, the Welsh Government needs to ensure that all public bodies both have and take into account clear guidance on good procurement practice, including with regard to the perception that potential conflicts of interest render third sector input into service design inappropriate.

**Recommendation 7:** The Welsh Government should consider what further steps can be taken to ensure greater compliance on the part of all public bodies with the Code of Practice for Funding the Third Sector.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background

Old Bell 3 Ltd. has been commissioned by the Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) in conjunction with the Welsh Government to undertake an independent evaluation of WCVA's 'Making the Connections' (MtC) project<sup>3</sup>.

Established in June 2012 and fully operational by March 2013, the MtC project provides funding for additional post(s) within each County Voluntary Council (CVC) in the Convergence area to stimulate and harness the contribution of the third sector to the public service reform work being driven forward by Local Service Boards (LSBs)<sup>4</sup>.

Originating as a distinct project proposal to WEFO from WCVA and CVCs, the project has been awarded funding of some £2.7 million from the European Social Fund (ESF)<sup>5</sup> as part of a wider (and previously approved) Welsh Government project – the Local Service Board Development and Priority Delivery Project - funded under Priority 4 Theme 1 of the Convergence ESF Operational Programme for West Wales and the Valleys<sup>6</sup>.

The MtC project aims to complement the wider project by building the long-term capacity of the third sector to contribute to the process of public service reform and in particular to the implementation of the Single Integrated Plan (SIP) developed for each local authority area. In particular, MtC's objectives are:

- to enhance the readiness of third sector organisations to deliver public services, including co-produced services;

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<sup>3</sup> Part funded by the European Social Fund through the Welsh Government

<sup>4</sup> The project provides funding for one project development officer in each of 13 CVCs and two in the Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations (GAVO), which covers both Blaenau Gwent and Caerphilly, as well as a central project management resource (1.9 FTE) in WCVA itself.

<sup>5</sup> The total funding for the project consists of £2.7 million of ESF, £453,352 of match funding from CVCs and £45,788 of match funding from WCVA.

<sup>6</sup> Throughout this report we use 'the project' to refer to the WCVA element of the wider project, and 'the wider project' to refer to the overall LSB Development and Priority Projects Delivery Project.

- to increase the number of third sector organisations prepared to deliver public services through consortia or collaborations;
- to ensure that the third sector is better informed about the LSB and progress of public sector reform in its area and more generally;
- to increase the capacity of the third sector to engage meaningfully with service users; and
- to increase the capacity of the third sector to influence decisions affecting design and delivery of public services<sup>7</sup>.

The project is due to end in March 2015 (though project activity will cease on 31 December 2014) and the project evaluation will support decision makers in determining whether and how the project is meeting its stated objectives, as well as providing on-going feedback and learning that allows continuing improvements to be made to the project.

## **1.2 Aim of the Evaluation and of this Report**

The aims of the evaluation are to:

1. Assess how MtC has impacted on the involvement of the third sector in public service delivery, development and redesign;
2. Assess how MtC has affected the design, planning and development of local public services and whether this has brought about improvement.

The detailed objectives for the evaluation are to:

- examine how the role of the third sector in delivering local services is changing (e.g. whether the scope and volume of the third sector's delivery is changing);
- explore how supply and demand for third sector services has changed and how this will affect its sustainability;
- assess impacts of these changes on workforce planning and skills in the third sector;

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<sup>7</sup> From the Project Summary as submitted to WEFO. See also Section 2.

- explore whether the relationship and network-building and other activities of MtC officers will be sustainable beyond the lifetime of the Project;
- examine if and how the third sector's influence on key partnerships, and the activities they pursue, is improving through the implementation of MtC;
- assess whether the design and planning of public services (particularly around Single Integrated Plan [SIP] priorities) is being improved through better integration of the third sector;
- examine how citizen engagement has featured in the establishment of LSB and SIP priorities and the design and delivery of services;
- assess whether MtC has brought about improvements in this respect.

This report is the second of what is expected to be three reports arising from the evaluation: a baseline and initial process evaluation was published in early 2014<sup>8</sup> and a final evaluation will be undertaken by March 2015. This report is expected to be read in conjunction with the previous report, which sets out in full the background for the MtC project and the context in which it is operating, as well as considering in some detail issues around the structure of project delivery.

This report is intended to focus principally on what is being achieved by the project within the case-study areas, and what other factors are affecting its capacity to deliver.

### **1.3 Method**

This report is based on a work programme undertaken between January and June 2014 which involved:

- agreeing a revised approach to the fieldwork, taking into account the difficulty of undertaking a meaningful quantitative stakeholder survey

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<sup>8</sup> See <http://wales.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/independent-evaluation-wales-council-voluntary-actions-making-connections-project/?lang=en>

within the case-study areas, given problems over securing suitable contact data;

- undertaking fieldwork in the five case-study areas. This involved individual interviews<sup>9</sup> with 54 stakeholders<sup>10</sup>, as well as studying a wide range of relevant documentation and in one case, observing a meeting of a relevant forum bringing together third sector organisations. In all, these stakeholders comprised:
  - the five MtC officers;
  - the Chief Officers (or equivalent) of all five CVCs and a further nine CVC staff;
  - 17 representatives of third sector organisations, either involved in delivering services or directly involved with the work of the MtC officers<sup>11</sup>;
  - 14 Local Authority officers<sup>12</sup>, three representatives of Local Health Board (LHBs) and one representative of a Police Force.
- updating the literature review to consider key policy material published since the baseline report was written in January 2014, in particular:
  - The Welsh Government's new Third Sector Scheme (January 2014);
  - The Report of the Commission on Public Service Governance and Delivery<sup>13</sup> (January 2014);
  - Devolution, Democracy and Delivery: White Paper – Reforming Local Government (July 2014);
- reviewing the Interim Report of the Evaluation of the Local Service Board Development and Priority Delivery Project (May 2014).

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<sup>9</sup> Of these, 45 were undertaken face to face and nine by telephone

<sup>10</sup> Including four who were only interviewed in the first stage fieldwork.

<sup>11</sup> These were from 15 organisations, five of which we would characterise as small, three as medium-sized and seven as large, which operated in a range of policy areas: four were involved with health and social care in general, two with older people, three with children and young people, two with housing and one each with citizens' advice, domestic violence, time-banking and area regeneration.

<sup>12</sup> The majority of these worked in the Chief Executive's Department or equivalent, but two were from Regeneration/Environmental Services, two from Older People's Services and one from Health and Social Care more generally.

<sup>13</sup> Throughout this report we refer to this as 'the Commission'.

## 1.4 Structure of this Report

In the remainder of this report, we firstly consider changes to the context in which the project is working (**Section 2**) before presenting our findings from the latest stage of the fieldwork (**Section 3**) and providing a brief set of conclusions and recommendations (**Section 4**).

## 2. CONTEXT

### 2.1 Introduction

In the baseline report, we noted that:

- The Welsh Government has for more than a decade developed a distinctive and consistent approach to public service delivery based around the idea of ‘voice, rather than choice’ and collaboration between public service providers rather than competition;
- The creation of Local Service Boards (LSBs), with mandatory involvement of the CVC, and more recently, the introduction of Single Integrated Plans (SIPs) which are intended to allow a significant streamlining of partnership working, has been a critical part of this agenda;
- Citizen engagement is also seen as a key to improved public services, with the third sector recognised as having an important part to play in ensuring that the voice of the user of services is heard, as well as bringing its own experience to bear on the design of public services;
- Increasingly, the Welsh Government has also stressed the importance of the public sector making greater use of the third sector in delivering innovative public services, with a strong focus on prevention and early intervention, as part of a ‘mixed economy’;
- The Welsh Government has also urged the third sector, in the context of public expenditure cuts, to move away from a culture of grant dependency and embrace social enterprise: this is seen as requiring greater collaboration within the sector, with WCVA and CVCs having an important support role in this regard;
- While the LSB agenda has been to date focused at the level of individual local authorities (albeit that in some areas, there is experimentation with LSBs and/or SIPs covering two neighbouring local authority areas), the Welsh Government has also been increasingly concerned to encourage regional collaboration, and established the Commission led by Sir Paul Williams to look into the shape of public service governance and delivery;



- Research into partnership working suggests that financial pressures in the wake of the economic crisis are pushing local authorities increasingly towards instrumental partnerships, designed to cut costs (often involving working with other local authorities across boundaries) rather than on partnerships where the focus is on citizen engagement and the personalisation of services;
- Citizen engagement and increasing the role of the third sector appear in practice to have a generally low profile in the LSB - ESF Delivery Projects as they are being implemented<sup>14</sup>.

In this Section, we provide an update on the analysis of the policy context presented in the baseline report.

## 2.2 The Commission and the Welsh Government Response

### **KEY FINDINGS**

The Commission's report endorses the direction of travel of the Welsh Government in terms of partnership working and greater engagement of the third sector in the design and delivery of public services, but strongly suggests that relatively little progress has been made and much remains to be done.

The Welsh Government has broadly accepted the Commission's findings and has re-iterated its support for strategic partnership working, including the third sector, with LSBs to be put on a statutory footing through the forthcoming Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill.

The Welsh Government has also flagged up its intention to publish further guidance on co-production, in consultation with the third sector, later in 2014.

The Welsh Government is committed to reforming the structure of local government, on the basis of 12 Unitary Authorities, but this is unlikely to be fully implemented until 2020.

<sup>14</sup> See also the Evaluation of the ESF Local Service Board Development and Priority Delivery Project, Welsh Government, May 2014, p. 52

The *Report of the Commission on Public Service Governance and Delivery* was published in January 2014.

The report clearly signals a need for a ‘step change in public service governance and delivery’<sup>15</sup> to respond to the continued pressure on public budgets as a result of austerity, demographic change and increasing public demand for world-class services. It argues that while the perception of public services by citizens is relatively positive, ‘the picture for too many of the public services in Wales is poor and patchy’<sup>16</sup>.

Much of the focus of media coverage and political debate around the report has been on its proposals to restructure local government through the merger of current local authorities, on the basis of one of four different models, involving 10, 11 or 12 unitary authorities: only Powys of the current 22 authorities would be certain to see no change, though here the report advocates a merger between the local authority and the LHB. Swansea and Carmarthenshire might also be retained in some of the scenarios.

However, the report also champions the importance of significant changes in the culture of and approach to public service delivery in Wales. This includes an insistence that there needs to be a much clearer focus on citizen-centred services, which will require cross-sectoral working and strong leadership, and on new delivery models focused on early intervention to ease demand pressures and based on ‘meaningful collaboration across sectors, organisations and boundaries, with co-production being a key feature in the service delivery toolbox’<sup>17</sup>.

The report argues that while the consolidation of partnership working at the local level through LSBs is welcome in principle, ‘there is clear evidence that progress so far has been no more than limited and sporadic’. It suggests that

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<sup>15</sup> The Report of the Commission on Public Service Governance and Delivery: Summary Report, p. 2

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p.10

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p.12

there is little evidence of collaboration having any impact on service standards or the attainment of outcomes and reports ‘a general sense that supporting collaboration consumed more resource than the results could justify’, concluding that ‘the current systems and structures need a radical overhaul’<sup>18</sup>.

The report recognises that even with strong leadership from the Welsh Government, the significant change required will take at least three to five years<sup>19</sup> and recommends that programme arrangements for local authority mergers should be in place by Easter 2014<sup>20</sup>. Other of its 62 recommendations of relevance to MtC include:

- The need for urgent action to integrate health and social services on the basis of ‘clear and robust plans...involving detailed proposals, milestones, targets and outcomes for improved and integrated delivery of all relevant services’<sup>21</sup>;
- That ‘local partnership structures must be radically streamlined and made more effective’, with LSBs i) ensuring that they meet criteria set out in the report for effective partnership working; ii) overhauling (within no more than 12 months) other local partnership structures to bring them into line with these criteria and the priority outcomes set by the LSB; and iii) ensuring that SIPs focus on the priority outcomes and ‘set out clearly the actions which need to be undertaken, by whom and by when’<sup>22</sup>;
- The need for the Welsh Government to reform LSBs to ensure that ‘there is a national single, robust governance model in place which is equitable and transparent and which ensures that decisions are based on identifiable responsibilities and actions and joint rights and obligations’ and so that LSBs are ‘empowered to take significant and meaningful decisions’<sup>23</sup>;

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p.22

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p.86

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 90

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., pp.88-89

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., pp. 89-90

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. p.93

- A strong focus on the importance of scrutiny including ensuring that LSBs put in place a specific scrutiny programme and the requirement of the 'co-option of individuals from advocacy and other groups onto scrutiny committees to increase such committees' capacity and capability to provide constructive and informed scrutiny<sup>24</sup>;
- That the Welsh Government should agree with each LSB by the end of 2014/15 'how the board and its members will contribute to national strategic outcomes while also addressing local needs and priorities'<sup>25</sup>.

The report thus, while endorsing the direction of travel of the Welsh Government over recent years in terms of partnership working and greater engagement of the third sector and citizens in the design and delivery of public services, strongly suggests that relatively little progress has been made and much remains to be done.

In response to the Commission's report, the Welsh Government published two papers in July 2014<sup>26</sup>. The first of these – *Devolution, Democracy and Delivery: Improving Public Services for People in Wales* – sets out a reform agenda for public services in order 'to improve the well-being of people across Wales now and in the future'<sup>27</sup>. The paper endorses the overall recommendations of the Commission which it says 'viewed as a package...represent an important and logical next phase of reform', while acknowledging that 'the Commission's findings are uncomfortable reading for many in public services'<sup>28</sup>.

The paper sets out a vision for public services in Wales which – in line with earlier Welsh Government policy – stresses that 'public services must increasingly be delivered not **to** people but **with** people...involving people in the design and delivery of services, recognising people's own strengths and

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 92

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p.97

<sup>26</sup> Alongside a third paper dealing with increased powers for the devolved Welsh Government.

<sup>27</sup> *Devolution, Democracy and Delivery: Improving Public Services for People in Wales*, Welsh Government, July 2014, p. 7

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p.8

tailoring services accordingly<sup>29</sup>. The vision also emphasises the need for ‘acting earlier to help people take action preventatively to improve their lives, rather than only responding when things go wrong’ and ‘putting people’s needs foremost, working to engage a wide range of partners to work as “one public service”<sup>30</sup>

The paper endorses the need to restructure Welsh local government and expresses a preference for the 12-authority model proposed by the Commission, while not ruling out considering alternative proposals<sup>31</sup>. It stresses a commitment to ‘rationalising and developing stronger, more focused partnerships with other public services and realigning existing partnerships and collaborations with the boundaries of new local authorities and other delivery partners’ and highlights the continued central importance of LSBs in the new arrangements<sup>32</sup>.

The paper stresses the importance of the forthcoming Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill which it says will establish a smaller set of national outcome goals which public service organisations and partnerships will need to address<sup>33</sup>.

The paper also emphasises that:

‘public services need to innovate and continuously seek to improve to anticipate and respond to economic, environmental and societal changes in Wales. New models for public services need to be encouraged... and we need to find new ways of actively managing the demand for public services rather than just passively reacting to it’<sup>34</sup>.

This, it argues, requires adapting services more closely to individual needs:

‘At the heart of achieving this is what many call co-production; the concept of genuinely involving people and communities in the design

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p.11

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p.13

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p.19

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p.21

and delivery of public services, appreciating their strengths and tailoring approaches accordingly. Public services in the future need to be a shared endeavour between the user and the service based on the principles of co-production<sup>35</sup>.

In this context, the paper pledges to 'continue to work with partners in the third sector and more broadly to this end and to make further announcements on supporting the development of co-production in Wales later this year<sup>36</sup>'. The paper also commits the Welsh Government 'to encourage the third sector to realise its full potential in supporting public services' (though not explicitly mentioning design and delivery) and highlights a number of case-studies providing examples of the successful integration of service provision, two of which explicitly mention the role of third sector partners<sup>37</sup>.

The second paper, *Devolution, Democracy and Delivery: White Paper – Reforming Local Government* is a consultation document which focuses more narrowly on Welsh Local Government with a deadline for responses of 1 October 2014 (highlighting that the highly ambitious timescale for change set out by the Commission has already slipped).

The White Paper:

- Stresses the importance of early intervention to reduce demands for acute services and of greater engagement with citizens over the design of services<sup>38</sup>, although does not refer to the third sector as such in its discussion of how to strengthen community governance<sup>39</sup>;
- Endorses the need for a stronger system of scrutiny of local government and other public bodies<sup>40</sup>;
- Underlines the importance of partnership and collaboration including with the third sector and more particularly the role of LSBs which it

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p.22

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 23-30

<sup>38</sup> Devolution, Democracy and Delivery: White Paper – Reforming Local Government, Welsh Government, July 2014, p. 10

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p.16

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. , pp.14 - 15

says have ‘a vital role in bringing local public service organisations together’ but says reform as advocated by the Commission is needed and will be proposed through the forthcoming Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill<sup>41</sup>;

- Endorses the need to restructure Welsh local government but argues that there is insufficient time to pass legislation before the next National Assembly elections in May 2016 , while promising to publish a draft Bill for consultation in autumn 2015<sup>42</sup>;
- Envisages that the new authorities would come into existence on 1 April 2020 but commits to legislate to allow voluntary mergers at a more rapid pace<sup>43</sup>.

### 2.3 The Third Sector Scheme

#### **KEY FINDINGS**

The new Third Sector Scheme re-affirms that input into public service design and delivery is one of the core functions of CVCs which Welsh Government funding is intended to support. It also pledges continues support the WCVA as the national infrastructure body, with responsibilities including managing the Infrastructure Grant (which funds CVCs).

The Scheme also reiterates the Welsh Government’s commitment to ‘maintain, use and promote the existing Code of Practice for Funding the Third Sector.

Alongside these developments, the Welsh Government has also published, in January 2014, its new Third Sector Scheme, revising the Scheme put in place in 2004 and reflecting the results of the consultation between May and August 2013 on *Continuity and Change: Refreshing the Relationship between Welsh Government and the Third Sector*<sup>44</sup>.

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p.17

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., pp.24 - 25

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 26

<sup>44</sup> The Third Sector Scheme, Welsh Government, January 2014 p. 4

The Scheme emphasises that:

‘the Third Sector can help to transform the way that public services meet present and future demands, by treating people and communities as assets and equals in the design and delivery of services, not only as service receivers. Some people describe this as co-production... Through this Scheme we will make sure that the arrangements for working with the Third Sector, and for designing and funding public services, support a new approach to public services based on co-production’<sup>45</sup>.

The Scheme identifies three ‘spheres of interest that define and structure Welsh Government’s interest in, and support for, the Third Sector’:

- Stronger communities through the harnessing voluntary effort;
- Better policy by drawing on the knowledge and expertise of the sector;
- Better public services through ‘the innovative and transforming role the Sector can play in making public services reach more people and become more sensitive to their needs’<sup>46</sup>.

The Scheme endorses the National Principles of Public Engagement in Wales and stresses the role of the third sector in ‘seeking collaborative solutions, whereby people and communities work with service providers to design, deliver and monitor and evaluate the service’<sup>47</sup>.

The Scheme also sets out the views of the Welsh Government on the ‘Third Sector Infrastructure’ (comprising WCVA, CVCs and Volunteer Centres). It recognises that ‘these organisations require support and commits to maintaining a joined up infrastructure’, while stressing that the infrastructure will need to ‘develop in line with new models of public services and structures to support national, regional and local working’<sup>48</sup> (which might be thought to imply the need for restructuring of CVCs in line with any future local

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p.6

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p.9

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p.16

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p.18



government re-organisation). It sets out its view of the role of the infrastructure as being:

- ‘Enabling other Third Sector organisations to grow and develop;
- Supporting individual volunteers and collective voluntary action;
- Promoting good and safe governance across the Third Sector;
- **Supporting Public Service design and delivery;**
- **Providing voice and representation for the wider sector;**
- Sharing good practice and innovation’<sup>49</sup> [emphasis added].

The Scheme thus re-affirms input in public service design and delivery as one of the core functions of CVCs which Welsh Government funding is intended to support. It also pledges continues support for the WCVA as the national infrastructure body, with responsibilities including managing the Infrastructure Grant (which funds CVCs)<sup>50</sup>.

The Scheme also re-commits the Welsh Government to ‘maintain, use and promote’ the existing Code of Practice for Funding the Third Sector<sup>51</sup> which is set out as an Annex to the Scheme.

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 19

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p.5

## **3. FINDINGS**

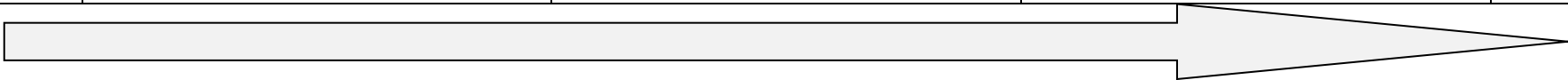
### **3.1 Introduction**

In this Section, we report on our findings from the fieldwork undertaken in the case-study areas, while drawing also on the findings to date of the evaluation of the wider LSB – ESF project. In doing so, we aim to build on (and not repeat) the findings reported at the baseline and initial process stage, although inevitably many of the messages to emerge are very similar.

In particular, at this stage we have sought to focus attention on what is being achieved by the project; how far the wider ambitions for the project are being achieved, whether by the project itself or by other means deployed by the CVCs (since we recognise that in practice CVCs have often used the resource provided by the project as a way of complimenting existing staff who were already undertaking at least part of the role envisaged for the MtC officer); what appear to be the critical ingredients of success where this is occurring; and, insofar as these wider ambitions are not being realised, what are the barriers which are preventing this.

We have structured this Section around the project logic model which we have developed for the project (see Figure 3.1 over). We thus report in turn on the four thematic areas on which the project is expected to focus viz: representation and information (Section 3.2); input into service planning (Section 3.3); input into service delivery (Section 3.4); and citizen voice (Section 3.5). In each of these sections we consider the relevant activities, outputs and results, though it is important to stress that a review of the quantification of the outputs will only be undertaken in the final evaluation. After these sub-sections, we go on to consider emerging evidence on impact (Section 3.6), to draw out elements of good practice which have supported the project to achieve (Section 3.7) and barriers which have been encountered (Section 3.8).

Inputs/ Resources	Activities	Outputs	Results	Impact		
<b>Representation and information</b>						
<div data-bbox="98 580 302 639" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">15 MtC officers in CVCs</div> <div data-bbox="98 671 302 794" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Line-management from CVCs</div> <div data-bbox="98 826 302 911" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">1.9 FTE project management staff in WCVA</div> <div data-bbox="98 943 302 1050" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Project management support from WG</div>	Ensure representation of sector at LSB and key groups	Dissemination initiatives and products	The third sector is better informed	<div data-bbox="1921 576 2141 746" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">A shift towards early interventions reducing the need for acute services</div> <div data-bbox="1921 778 2141 911" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Citizen-centred public services better designed and delivered more effectively</div> <div data-bbox="1921 943 2141 1027" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">A more sustainable third sector</div>		
	Provide information on public service developments to third sector orgs	Initiatives to support LSB development				
	<b>Input into service planning</b>					
	Facilitate input from third sector into public service planning (through brokering links)	Collaborative agreements between public sector/third sector	An increase in the capacity of third sector to influence decisions affecting design and delivery of public services			
	Training to enable third sector orgs to engage in service planning effectively	Secondments between third sector/ public sector				
		Organisations trained in service planning				
	<b>Input into service delivery</b>					
	Provide advice and help to potential third sector providers	Organisations trained/ supported to meet procurement standards	Third sector organisations are more ready to deliver public services, including co-produced services			
	Training/support to ensure third sector orgs able to tender (equal opps., environmental policies etc.)				An increase in the number of third sector organisations which are more ready to deliver public services through consortia or collaborations	
	Support/brokering collaborative ventures between third sector organisations		Collaborative agreements within third sector			
	<b>Citizen voice</b>					
	Organise events/activities to enable citizens to engage in public service planning	Consultation events organised/attended	An increase in the capacity of the third sector to engage meaningfully with service users			
Support service user groups to input into public service planning						
Support third sector orgs to engage effectively with service users	Organisations (third sector/public sector) trained in service user engagement/participatory planning					
Work with public sector partners to encourage participatory planning methods						



## 3.2 Representation and Information

### **KEY FINDINGS**

Representation and information has been a key element of most of the case-study MtC officers' work.

MtC officers have usually represented the CVC on working groups related to the LSB and have sometimes also played a role in terms of other partnership and fora (which continue to exist despite the Welsh Government view that the LSB should streamline them).

In one case-study area, in particular, the MtC officer has been instrumental in instigating a web-based system to improve wider representation of the third sector in such partnerships across the area.

However, MtC officers' ability to represent the entire third sector is often questioned because of a view (within statutory organisations and some larger third sector organisations) that CVCs themselves do not speak for all third sector organisations.

MtC officers have also used a variety of means to raise awareness of, and provide information about, the work of the LSB in their areas. However, this does not seem to have resulted in high levels of awareness of the work of the LSB and of the SIP.

This is due to a range of factors, principally the perception that LSBs are operating at a level and in a way which has little direct relevance to the day-to-day activities of most third sector organisations.

This has been a key element of the role of MtC officers in at least four of our case-study areas (all except one, where the MtC officer has little direct involvement with the processes of the LSB and its sub-groups).

### 3.2.1. Activities

In terms of *ensuring the representation of the sector at LSB and key groups*, it is important first of all to note that in all areas, it is the Chief Officer from the CVC that attends the LSB itself (and in many cases, other attendees are not allowed).

However, in four of the case-study areas the MtC officer has been actively involved at sub-groups or working groups reporting to the LSB. Thus in one area, the MtC officer represents the CVC on the Officer Working Group which sits below the LSB while in another, the officer has represented the CVC in a number of working groups, including one focused on communities. In a third, the MtC officer has represented the sector in sub-groups focusing on engagement and needs analysis and, in the case of the engagement sub-group, is perceived (by the local authority as well as by CVC interviewees) as having played a significant role in ensuring the effectiveness of the group, including by driving forward a recent review of its working.

More generally, in most of the case-study areas – and certainly three of them - it is clear that, despite the Welsh Government's expectation that the LSBs would effectively take over the functions of the wide range of partnerships which formerly existed, these partnerships have either continued to operate or have been re-invented. Thus, in one area, a Children's and Young People's Board has recently been reformed, following the lapsing in 2012 of the former Children and Young People's Partnership, which according to one interviewee 'looks just the same as' the previous Partnership. In this same area, there are a whole range of partnership bodies related to health and social care, which the CVC sees as driven largely by the LHB and not closely related to the work of the LSB, while a Community Safety Partnership continues to meet. Similarly, in a second case-study area, the Health, Social Care and Well Being Board and the Children and Young People's Partnership Board continue to meet (albeit under somewhat different titles), while more generally the CVC Chief Executive pointed to a tendency for new fora, such as a Poverty Forum, to 'spring up'.

The involvement of the MtC officers in ensuring representation of the sector in these other partnerships has varied considerably between the case-study areas. In one case-study area, the key focus of the MtC officer has been on creating an effective system for ensuring representation of the sector at a wide range of fora across the local authority area and providing a web-based mechanism by which such representatives can report back (and even be 'elected'). In this area, the MtC officer has also themselves represented the sector in a wide range of fora and has played the key role in driving forward a pre-existing Third Sector Forum, taking charge of the agendas and practical arrangements.

In a second area, also, the MtC officer has been instrumental more recently in setting up an Advisory Board (alongside a pre-existing Forum) which has the express purpose of aggregating and articulating third sector views in the context of the LSB.

In other areas, MtC officers have been involved in a more piecemeal or partial way, often filling gaps which have emerged within CVC staffing structures or supporting the work of colleagues within the CVC, perhaps most notably Health, Social Care and Well Being Co-ordinators<sup>52</sup>, who in most areas continue as full-time posts within the CVC funded by LHBs. Thus in one, the MtC officer has taken over the facilitation of the Children and Young People's Third Sector Forum, which both fulfils a function in disseminating information and enables the CVC to represent the views of third sector organisations at the Partnership Board and the LSB more effectively. In another, the MtC officer has assisted other CVC staff in facilitating the work of similar fora relating to both Health and Social Care and Children and Young People.

However, in all the case-study areas, some doubts were raised by interviewees (particularly those within the statutory sector) about the extent to which the CVC (and thus by extension the MtC officer) could and did represent the entire third sector, perhaps reflecting a concern highlighted in

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<sup>52</sup> These have different titles in different areas

the Interim Evaluation of the wider LSB – ESF project, where national stakeholders flagged up concerns about the ‘fragmentation’ of the sector<sup>53</sup>.

In some cases, local authority interviewees were sceptical of the extent to which the CVC could be relied on to represent the wider sector, with one officer, for example arguing that the CVC was a membership organisation and did not represent many of the third sector organisations who were active in the area. In another case-study area, the local authority has helped to establish a separate Social Enterprise Forum, which has deliberately excluded the CVC from membership: one interviewee here thought that the CVC ‘is seen as an organisation for small groups ... and for people who want to volunteer’ as opposed to ‘social enterprises’ which aspire to influencing and delivering public services.

In a third area, despite the fact that relationships between the local authority and the CVC were generally good, officers similarly worried that the CVC did not represent ‘social enterprises, especially those more on the enterprise side’, while in a fourth, partners appreciated the value of the CVCs contribution (which in this case was made almost exclusively by the Chief Officer) but also recognised that it represented just one segment of the third sector i.e. smaller scale and less specialist organisations.

These doubts were to some extent also echoed by some interviewees within the third sector itself – with particularly larger organisations likely to question the extent to which the CVCs (and thus MtC officers) were representing them. This was strongly the case with one interviewee from a large organisation (with significant SLAs with both the Local Authority and the LHB) who was particularly critical of the fact (acknowledged by the CVC) that the CVC frequently itself delivered services, which in some instances could be squeezing out individual third sector organisations. This interviewee felt that the CVC was not representing the sector effectively, arguing that CVCs more generally had lost their way, and that it was no longer clear what they were

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<sup>53</sup> Evaluation of the ESF Local Service Board Development and Priority Delivery Project, Welsh Government, May 2014, p. 4

for. Similar views, albeit in a less forceful way, were echoed elsewhere e.g. by another medium-sized organisation in the same area (which again was critical of the CVC's tendency to bid to deliver services) and by third sector organisations in at least two other areas, while in a fourth area, interviewees in three third sector organisations had very limited relationships with the CVC.

In terms of *providing information on public service developments to third sector organisations*, this has been again a major element of the work of the MtC officer in one case-study area where (as already noted) much effort has been put into creating the 'infrastructure' within the CVC to enable third sector representatives in a wide range of partnerships and fora to report back to the wider sector. This has amongst other things, involved the creation of a website which provides details of local partnership arrangements and fora and also provides information to support third sector representatives on them. Innovatively, the site also allows people to vote for their preferred representatives on forums and in partnerships when vacancies are advertised.

Elsewhere, the provision of information particularly on the work of the LSB was also seen as an element of the work of the MtC officer in three other areas, though in all these areas, this element of the role was seen as challenging because of what was perceived as a disconnect between the work of the LSB and the actual commissioning and delivery of public services. Thus, in one area, it was widely acknowledged (not just from within the third sector) that the LSB had been struggling to find its way, with a major overhaul currently underway:

'the LSB is at the point where people understand that it's not working as envisaged ... though I don't think that's different from many other LSBs in Wales' [public sector interviewee].

Similarly, in a second case-study area, the MtC officer felt it was becoming increasingly difficult to interest third sector organisations in the work of the LSB, while it was widely acknowledged that the business of the LSB was at a



level which made it difficult for operationally-focused organisations to see its relevance:

'it's all receiving presentations from the Fire and Rescue Service and receiving reports from lots of sub-groups' [CVC interviewee].

In a third area it was widely recognised that the CVC was increasingly disengaged from the work of the LSB which its Chief Officer saw as working in a way which marginalised the inputs of the CVC and the third sector more generally.

### *3.2.2 Outputs*

In terms of *dissemination initiatives and products*, monitoring by WCVA confirms that this is the area where the project has had most success in respect of its formal targets, with some 214 dissemination initiatives recorded compared to a target of 15 across the entire project, with 84 recorded in the five case-study areas alone.

The most significant developments are again in the case-study areas where the MtC officer has developed a stand-alone website, albeit linked to that of the CVC, to facilitate the representation of the sector and to ensure that information on developments within a wide range of partnerships and fora is fed back to the sector more generally.

Feedback in terms of this was generally very positive both from within the third sector and from other interviewees, with the website being repeatedly cited as good practice.

At the same time, some doubts were expressed about the wisdom of establishing a distinct website, separate from (though linked to) that of the CVC, with a number of interviewees from both the statutory and third sectors arguing that this represented a missed opportunity in terms of raising the profile and awareness of the CVC.

In this same area, the MtC officer has been actively engaged in disseminating information via a newspaper produced by members of the LSB (the MtC Officer sits on the working group that produces this publication) and via the national MtC newsletter (which is widely distributed within the area), sending out e-mail updates to a wide circulation list (via MailChimp) and providing a regular update on the LSB at the Third Sector Forum (which has grown significantly in terms of the number of organisations attending).

Elsewhere, officers have also used a range of tools and products to disseminate information about the public service reform agenda in general and the LSB in particular. Thus, in a second case-study area, the MtC Officer has been responsible for providing material about LSB developments on the CVC website (which now features dedicated pages about the LSB) and to the CVC's newsletter and was also seen as a resource for other staff within the CVC to tap into. In a third, the MtC officer has sent out a leaflet about the LSB, contributed regularly to the CVC newsletter and provided material for the CVC website.

Individual meetings and briefings with third sector organisations have also been an important part of the MtC function in most of the case-study areas, with this being particularly evident in three areas. Such meetings have provided an opportunity for MtC officers both to explain the work of the LSB and to gather information on the perspectives of the organisation on key concerns on public service design and delivery within the area. However, in some cases, it would appear that meetings have not necessarily gone much beyond a first exchange of information: for example, one of the organisations interviewed reported that they had had a useful introductory meeting with the MtC officer but it had only really provided an opportunity for a general exchange of views.

There are perhaps fewer examples of *initiatives to support LSB development* being taken forward by MtC (none are recorded on the monitoring system in any of the case-study areas). In one case-study area, as already noted, the MtC officer was seen to have played an important role in effectively co-

chairing the Engagement sub-group of the LSB, and this has included helping to organise a recent review of the sub-group's role, remit and method of operating (including using Participation Cymru to facilitate a workshop which had helped to identify a way forward). More generally in this area, the MtC Officer was seen as having played an important role in identifying and facilitating individual third sector representatives to attend specific sessions of the LSB or its sub-groups (e.g. on domestic violence), which in turn was seen to have added value and depth to the discussions on these subjects.

### 3.2.3 Results

Despite the efforts which MtC officers have made in terms of representation and information, it is not clear that this has generally resulted in *the third sector being better informed* about the LSB agenda. In most of the case-study areas, we found that most third sector organisations we spoke to were not well informed about developments within the LSB and had relatively little knowledge of the SIP. Thus, in one case-study area, even an interviewee who had themselves taken part in a thematic discussion at the LSB said that she had little knowledge of what the LSB did:

'I feel very distanced from it. I just don't know what goes on there'

In another area, all three individual third sector organisations interviewed had low levels of awareness of the LSB, had not engaged with it previously and did not know enough about it to do so currently.

There would appear to be several reasons for the fact that activity on the part of the MtC officers has not translated into the desired result. Perhaps the most important is a widespread view that the LSB is operating at a level and in a way which has little direct relevance to the day-to-day activities of most third sector organisations, so that there is little motivation to access information which is available.

Secondly, there is the fact that many third sector organisations simply do not have the time to engage with anything other than the operational demands of

their role – particularly given downward pressure on funding and often increased demand for services (linked to increasing poverty):  
'we just don't have the time to wade through a 32 page pdf' [Third sector organisation].

Thirdly, as is also suggested by the quotation above, the forms of communication used do not appear to have always been sympathetic to the needs of the sector.

Finally, it appears to be the case that in most of the case-study areas – and certainly in three of them - the MtC officers have a low profile within the sector. Indeed, in one of these areas, three interviewees from third sector organisations each of which had some involvement with public service delivery had only limited awareness and engagement with the CVC more generally: they had heard of it, and knew one or two individuals within it, but none said that they received regular information from it (although it was not clear if this was because of communications within their own organisation or because of the effectiveness of the CVC's outreach). Limited contact with the CVC was also a feature of some of the larger organisations interviewed elsewhere.

By contrast in one of the areas, there seemed good levels of engagement with the CVC from those third sector organisations interviewed, and a reasonable level of awareness of the MtC officer and their role.

### **3.3 Input into Service Planning**

#### ***KEY FINDINGS***

Input into Service Planning has not been a significant feature of MtC activity in most of the case-study areas and this is reflected in the fact that few outputs in terms of collaboration agreements with the public sector and secondments have as yet been recorded.

In two areas, however, brokering links to facilitate third sector inputs into service planning has been an important part of the officers' work and in both of these areas, MtC is perceived as having played a positive, if modest, role in increasing the capacity of the sector to feed into such planning.

However, more generally, there is a strong view from within the sector in most case-study areas that the potential for the MtC officers and the sector more generally to influence service planning is highly constrained by a lack of willingness on the part of local authorities to engage in meaningful discussions with the sector about the shape of services.

In some areas, this is seen to have been exacerbated by an increased use of public procurement and concerns that allowing third sector organisations who might bid respond to such procurement exercises to engage in prior discussions about commissioning might be a conflict of interest.

Relations between LHBs and the third sector are generally seen to be somewhat more positive, but input from the CVC here is more often the result of the work of Health, Social Care and Well-Being Co-ordinators than the MtC officer.

Input into service planning has been less of a feature in most of the case-study areas. This partly reflects the difficulties of bridging the gap between the high-level strategic focus of the LSB (with, in many cases, little direct evidence of the LSB itself engaging with detailed issues of public service planning) and the operational concerns of most third sector organisations. It also owes something to a view in at least two of the areas that the role of influencing senior public sector interlocuteurs is best undertaken by more senior staff within the CVC with established relationships:

*'Between us [the CVC SMT] we've pretty much got it covered'* [CVC interviewee].

### 3.3.1 *Activities*

Having said this, facilitating input from the third sector into public service planning through brokering links has been a relatively important part of several MtC officers' roles.

Most notably in one case-study area, the MtC officer has contributed to a number of key initiatives linked to the SIP, including one related to ensuring better co-ordination between advice services within the area and a second harnessing the input of both statutory and third sector organisations to support independent living of older people and thus reduce the increasing demands on statutory health and social care provision. The role of the MtC officer in respect of the latter initiative which has included drawing up a directory of services offered by both the statutory and the third sector was regarded by interviewees as pivotal, with the success of the project dependent on the CVC's strong networks with both the third sector and public sector organisations.

In another area, the system which has been put in place in order to co-ordinate third sector representation on a wide range of partnerships has clearly had an important part to play in facilitating the input of the sector into the design of public services as well as securing the flow of information out from these partnerships to the sector. Moreover, the MtC officer in this area has played a key role in servicing and driving forward a Third Sector Forum which had been in existence for a number of years, but which has seen activity and attendance levels increase sharply thanks to the MtC officers input. Interviewees said that the Forum was an opportunity for organisations to discuss issues that were important to the third sector and have their voice heard: issues raised at the Forum are regularly fed back to public sector partners through partnerships including the LSB and the Compact.

Outside these two areas, the involvement of MtC officers has probably been less. As already noted, in one area, the MtC officer has been used as a resource by the LSB to identify and secure input to discussions of key thematic issues (such as domestic violence) at LSB meetings, and in this

area, the MtC officer also played an important role in developing the application for a successful project funded by the LSB – ESF project which is increasing the input of the third sector into both the planning and delivery of local health services.

Similarly, in a second case-study area, the MtC officer organised a conference for the sector to discuss local services and has been playing what was perceived by the LHB as an important role in facilitating the input of third sector organisations into a new project (still in an early stage) to address premature mortality in one part of the local authority area:

'[the MtC officer is] bringing a richness that is shaping thinking'.

In the final area, the MtC officer has worked with counterparts in the same region to facilitate third sector input into the Police and Crime Commissioner's strategic planning.

However, it is important to note that other CVC staff with longer-established links have often had an equally or more important role in terms of facilitating this input: in particular the Health, Social Care and Well-Being co-ordinators (posts which have been funded over more than 10 years, initially by Welsh Government and more recently by LHBs) have an important role in this respect and were generally much better known by relevant third sector organisations, particularly in two of the case-study areas.

In terms of more formal training to enable third sector organisations to engage in service planning effectively, this has been a feature of some MtC officers' work, notably in two areas but less evident elsewhere. In some areas, this is not because such training is not available, but rather because in these areas training is a separate strand of activity within the CVC and the MtC officers have not been required (and sometimes positively discouraged) from becoming involved.

### 3.3.2 Outputs

*Collaborative agreements between the public and third sectors and secondments between the two* are part of the formally agreed target outputs for the MtC project. Monitoring data confirms that there has been limited success with these so far: within our five case-study areas only one collaborative agreement and two secondments have been recorded (with seven recorded in each output category for the project as a whole).

In line with this, such outputs were rarely flagged up during our fieldwork as significant achievements, with few examples of actual or pending collaborative agreements or secondments being mentioned. One secondment that was had been unsuccessful, with a local authority officer who had been seconded to a third sector organisation withdrawing early because they perceived the activities they were being involved with as too operational and not relevant to their role. Indeed, in this area, secondments were regarded as a 'tick-boxy' necessity driven by the monitoring requirements. In another area, discussions were still underway about possible job shadowing between local authority officers and the CVC but these were not being led by the MtC officer and had yet to come to fruition.

In terms of *organisations trained in service planning*, as already noted, case-study MtC officers have for the most part not been formally engaged in providing or facilitating such training.

### 3.3.3 Results

In two areas where this strand has been a significant focus of the MtC officers activities, the role played by MtC seems likely to have led to or to be leading to an increase in the *capacity of the sector to influence decisions affecting the design and delivery of public services*.

In one, public sector partners valued highly the role of both the MtC officer and the third sector organisations which the officer was mobilising within the project focused on early interventions with older people. It was thought that this had the potential to make a real difference to the delivery of support to vulnerable older people and to reduce the call on front-line health and social



care services – though it was admitted that it was still early days, since the project was only about to go ‘live’ and would depend on the use made of it by GPs and other health service professionals. More generally, the input of the CVC to the LSB (albeit made principally by the Chief Officer) in this area was valued, with the CVC perceived by public sector partners as a full and legitimate partner in the LSB and its various forums for strategy, operations and scrutiny.

In the other, too, the system put in place by MtC to co-ordinate input from the sector was similarly seen as very positive by both the third sector and statutory sector interviewees:

‘..there is [generally] an upwards trend overall for third sector involvement in public service development and in delivering public services, though I think Making the Connections will help speed this up’ [CVC interviewee].

This was attributed in part to the extra capacity which MtC provided to engage with public sector bodies outside of the formal partnership meetings, including freeing up time of other CVC staff to do so:

‘What we’ve been able to do with Making the Connections that we couldn’t do previously is work on developing the one to one relationships with the public sector bodies. Previously the links were much more about being members of the same partnership groups. We can be more proactive now’. [CVC interviewee]

An example here was that the MtC officer had arranged a meeting between the LHB and local credit unions which has led to the LHB appointing a temporary post to consolidate relationships. The MtC officer was also seen as having played a critical role in ensuring much better representation of third sector organisations (including front-line staff) on a range of bodies related to health and social care, including the critically important Clinical Strategy Commissioning Group convened by the LHB. This in turn was seen as likely to lead both to strengthening the quality of service design and to improving the confidence of public sector decision makers, who, armed with the views of

frontline staff could be emboldened to make decisions to improve service quality.

More generally, the on-line resource which had been put in place through the MtC officer in this same area was also seen as raising awareness amongst third sector organisations of opportunities to represent their sectors on key partnerships and thus improving the input 'from the grassroots' into these partnerships.

In this area, public sector partners were thought generally to be becoming increasingly welcoming of third sector input, though it was argued that there were still areas where engagement was tokenistic. A local authority interviewee argued that where this was true, it was due to a lack of understanding of what was required to engage the sector in service design: 'There needs to be more than just giving them [third sector organisations] the opportunity. You need to genuinely work with them and that means offering them support if they need it, which a lot of them do, especially at the beginning. Too often I think that gets missed'.

In a third case-study area, also, an LHB interviewee was very positive about the input of the MtC officer in bringing a wide range of third sector organisations to the table in the context of the project to address premature mortality, though the MtC officer themselves stressed this was at a very early stage. The LHB was clear that the current level of dialogue would not have occurred to the same extent without the MtC officer input. Interestingly, it was argued that the third sector input had slowed progress, because it had been challenging and had made the statutory bodies think, but this interviewee felt the outcomes would be much better in the longer term.

By contrast, in another area, it appeared that despite the strenuous efforts of the MtC officer in terms of the LSB engagement strategy, the results in terms of actual input by the sector was quite limited: both the MtC officer and LSB interviewees here were disappointed at the lack of engagement by the sector with the recent update of the SIP, though this was again thought to reflect the

perception that the SIP had little connection with the actual design and commissioning of services.

While, in terms of the third sector's input into service design, the logic model focuses here on capacity, it is important to emphasise that a clear message from the fieldwork in the case-study areas was that there are real issues on the *demand* side in respect of the influence of the sector on commissioning decisions. Any consideration of the success or otherwise of the MtC officers and CVCs more generally in influencing such issues clearly needs to be set within the context of the extent to which public sector partners are (or appear to be) prepared to listen and take into account the views of the third sector.

In at least three of the case-study areas interviewees within the CVCs and the third sector more generally were highly sceptical of the interest of public sector partners (especially local authorities) in listening to the views of the sector. As a result, these interviewees clearly felt that building the capacity of the sector to input into service planning was at best of limited value and in some cases, a waste of time.

Thus in one of these three, where relations between the local authority and the CVC have traditionally been relatively good, and where there were one or two instances of very close working relationships between third sector organisations and the Council, interviewees from third sector organisations did not believe that the local authority (or at least key parts of it) was serious about engagement. Thus interviewees in one medium-sized organisation, focused on a specific community, argued that the Council was incapable of co-ordinating between its own services in the area, and despite a high-profile commitment to bringing together relevant service providers (both statutory and voluntary) in the area dating back several years had made no progress in this. In these interviewees' view, consultation by the Local Authority was usually highly tokenistic and relations with different parts of the authority highly dependent on the outlook of individual middle-ranking officers.

In this case-study area, moreover, some interviewees saw an increasing tendency by the local authority to by-pass the CVC and work directly with organisations which they perceived to be relevant (often larger organisations): 'If they're talking about anti-poverty they go straight to the credit union. If they're talking about the poverty prevention agenda they go straight to Barnardos' [CVC interviewee].

A similar tendency had long been evident in a second area. Here relations between the CVC and the local authority were described as 'tense' and 'difficult', with statutory sector interviewees expressing frustration at what they saw as the CVC's attempts to 'by-pass' the LSB and CVC interviewees generally arguing that the local authority was uninterested in the sector's views while paying 'a lot of lip service' to the importance of the sector. Other third sector interviewees reported that they had not traditionally looked to the CVC to influence service design but were used to 'doing their own thing'.

In this area, the CVC and every individual third sector organisation interviewed felt that the local authority did not value or understand them. Moreover, the capacity of the sector to influence service design was felt to have diminished over recent years, because of a clearer focus by the local authority on procurement and the insistence of procurement officers that the status of third sector organisations as potential bidders precluded any prior consultation between them and the commissioners (reflecting a concern also flagged up by national stakeholders in the wider LSB – ESF evaluation<sup>54</sup>: in one case, indeed, the CVC itself had been excluded from discussions about service design because of what was seen to be a potential conflict should one of its members bid.

Each one of three third sector organisations interviewed in this area were able to point to examples where they said services which had been commissioned

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<sup>54</sup> This reported that some national stakeholders were worried about 'the lack of clarity about the multiple roles of the third sector and pointed out that the third sector can be involved in advocacy and lobbying as well as service delivery. This can raise conflicts of interest, particularly when an organisation is primarily focused on securing grant funding for the delivery of its own services, which may make it difficult to play a more strategic role in, for example, service design and commissioning'

had been less appropriate than they might have been because of their lack of input at the design stage (for example, splitting a tender for Supporting People into three different geographical areas; focusing mental health services on day centres rather than providing flexibility for provision at home). All three also reported that they had had little or no input into the SIP, with the CVC in this area also feeling more generally that it had had little opportunity to influence the process.

Similarly (and as noted in the baseline report), in another area relations between the Local Authority and the CVC (and arguably the wider sector) had been soured by the former's decision without prior consultation to terminate a range of long-standing SLAs and replace them with contracts procured through sell2wales. Again, in this area, one local authority employee argued that the use of procurement made it more difficult to engage with third sector organisations over service design, because procurement rules meant that third sector service providers which invested time in shaping public services ran the risk of not being contracted to deliver those services.

Interviewees in this case-study area also argued that the capacity to influence the decisions of the local authority on public service design were highly limited, not least because the LSB was still dysfunctional. Thus, one public sector interviewee argued that, with the LSB in 'a state of flux', it would be difficult for the third sector, the CVC included, to become actively involved in shaping public services until the public sector 'gets its own house in order'.

In all three of these case-study areas (and also in a fourth), covering in all three different LHBs, relationships with the LHB were generally perceived as somewhat more engaged. In this fourth area, the LHB was seen as having a 'very positive attitude' to the input of the sector into both service design and delivery, working closely to a Commissioning Code of Practice which was viewed as representing best practice and in another area, the LHB was seen as being much more open to encouraging third sector input into service design.

Having said this, some third sector interviewees, and - in at least two case-study areas, some of the statutory sector interviewees also - argued that third sector delivery remained relatively marginal in terms of LHBs' priorities and certainly budgets, with a local authority officer commenting:

'they don't appreciate what [the third sector] has to offer beyond making tea in the hospital café ... they're not taken seriously' [Local Authority interviewee]

One third sector organisation, in a different case-study area, for example, had provided training to front-line health practitioners on domestic violence which was seen as a valuable way of influencing service provision, but this training had been delivered without any payment by the LHB. Another large third sector organisation with a significant SLA from the LHB argued that it had little dialogue with the LHB over the shape of the service it provided, although interestingly the LHB interviewee here noted that a recent co-location of this organisation's staff within a hospital had improved the service to patients and reduced the burden on statutory services.

Interestingly, the role of Health, Social Care and Well-Being Co-ordinators (paid for by the LHBs but employed by CVCs) was seen as of key importance here in mobilising the sector's input into the design of LHB services. In one case-study area, while the MtC officer has been instrumental in putting the building blocks in place for the older people's project, the project itself will be managed by the Health, Social Care and Well-Being Co-ordinator; while in another, a health-related project which the MtC officer helped initiate has also been taken forward under the management of the Co-ordinator. In both cases, the fact that the Co-ordinator post is funded recurrently, rather than as a short, fixed-term appointment, seems significant.

Our evidence-gathering did not really permit us to gain any clear view of the different perceptions of the Fire and Rescue Services and the Police Service. In one area, community safety was seen as an area which had been less open to third sector input, albeit that the election of a Police and Crime Commissioner seemed to be making a difference, while in two other areas, the police were seen as willing to work closely with the sector albeit that:

'they don't naturally find partnership working that easy' [Third sector organisation].

### 3.4 Input into Service Delivery

#### **KEY FINDINGS**

The extent to which MtC officers have been engaged in providing training and advice to third sector organisations to increase their capacity to deliver public services has varied significantly, depending on the priorities and other resources available to CVCs. In two case-study areas, this has been a significant area of activity, but in others this is less the case.

While CVCs more generally have been active in stimulating greater collaboration between third sector organisations, outside one case-study area, this rarely appears directly attributable to MtC and results generally appear to have been fairly modest.

Feedback from the case-study areas more generally again suggests that the context has been unfavourable to this aspect of MtC.

In practice, the sector perceives there to be relatively little in the way of transparent procurement practice, while the actual delivery of services by the third sector appears to be reducing as a result of budget cuts and a tendency in some local authorities to take services in house in order to preserve public sector jobs. Where the third sector is seen as offering advantages in terms of the delivery of public services, this appears to be largely due to the perception that it represents a cheaper alternative to public sector provision, a perception disputed by the sector itself.

As with the planning of services, the success of MtC (and indeed CVCs more generally) in terms of increasing the role of the sector in the delivery of public services appears highly contingent on the wider context, in particular the

'demand side' i.e. the view of statutory bodies themselves as to the appropriateness and desirability of the third sector playing such a role.

### 3.4.1 Activities

In terms of *providing advice and help to potential third sector providers*, as has already been noted in Section 3.2, one-to-one meetings between the MtC officer and individual third sector organisations have been a feature of the work of several MtC officers and this has in some cases involved providing direct advice and support on issues relating to procurement or wider issues of public sector service delivery.

In particular, in one case-study area, the MtC officer has provided advice and guidance to around 20 individual organisations including on 'traditional' CVC issues such as governance and structure (and thus arguably with only limited links with the public service reform agenda):

'we've been using the resource to do our own work ... going around organisations doing the governance health checks, doing development work ... at least at the end of the period, the sector will have got something useful out of it' [CVC interviewee].

In this case-study area, the MtC officer is also seen to have performed an ancillary role to the Health, Social Care and Well Being Co-ordinator in terms of working individually and through pre-existing networks with third sector organisations to increase their capacity to deliver public services. In this area, the Co-ordinator noted that the MtC officer was 'an additional resource' and that:

'I would not have the capacity to do that kind of work ... my remit is very broad and I wouldn't have time to go to see them individually'

Perhaps more significantly, the role of the MtC officer in another area, working on specific LSB and SIP related projects, has inevitably involved providing support to individual third sector organisations in defining and tailoring their role in the public sector service delivery. In this instance too, MtC has clearly



been playing a role in *brokering collaborative ventures between third sector organisations*.

In a third area, the MtC officer has also been engaged in raising awareness of, and stimulating, collaboration between third sector organisations, most notably by arranging an event on 'Working together for Service Delivery' which was attended by almost 100 organisations as well as working with a neighbouring CVC to put on training on an 'Introduction to Collaboration

More generally, in terms of *training/support to ensure third sector organisations are able to tender*, the MtC officer in this same area has had an active role in training provision, working with Business Wales to deliver courses on 'Introduction to Tendering' and on using sell2wales, equality and diversity training and a training for trainers session on 'Demystifying Commissioning'.

Similarly in another area, the MtC officer has been actively involved in arranging a range of training sessions, including a 'Get your House in Order' workshop; an equality and diversity workshop, a 'Green Dragon' environmental management workshop, a co-production event which also included a 'How to Tender' workshop; a workshop on Quality Assurance Systems and an event on delivering procured services relating to health and social welfare. Further, more 'innovative' training products are in development (including on marketing, demonstrating social value and public engagement). However, these training activities are generally arranged in conjunction with other staff of the CVC or with other CVCs in the region.

Outside these two areas, there is less evidence of MtC having played a significant role in training delivery. This is not because such advice, training and brokerage does not exist, but rather that it has been delivered elsewhere within the CVC. As we noted in the baseline report, a number of other projects such as Enterprising Communities have been resourced separately to deliver capacity building training to third sector organisations to increase their trading activity more generally and their ability to comply with procurement

procedures and processes. In several case-study areas training around procurement has been a staple 'offer' for quite a number of years: one third sector interviewee reported having first undergone such training around ten years ago.

However, it was evident from our fieldwork in this (as in a number of other ways) there was a dichotomy of view between smaller and larger third sector organisations. Several of the larger organisations we spoke to were sceptical of procurement training and advice provided by CVCs arguing it was too basic and would not really enable organisations with the capacity to compete effectively in fully open procurement situations.

In a number of case-study areas, two in particular, CVCs have clearly been active in bringing together consortia to bid for specific pieces of work for example, in one, a consortium to deliver children's services and in the second, a very successful consortium which was providing alternative curriculum services to the Local Authority) but this work was undertaken independently of MtC.

#### *3.4.2 Outputs*

For the reasons outlined above, there would appear at least as yet to be relatively few outputs in terms of *organisations trained/supported to meet procurement standards* and *collaborative agreements within the third sector* which can be directly attributed to the project. The monitoring system currently records only two eligible examples of such collaborative agreements, both from one case-study area, though it is believed that a further four from a second case-study area are 'in the pipeline'. In all, 19 such collaborative agreements have been recorded across the entire project, against a target of 30.

Indeed, in one area, CVC interviewees argued that the target of producing at least one collaborative agreement between third sector organisations was unnecessary, possibly counter-productive to good relationships and failed to take account of difficult relationships locally.

### 3.4.3 Results

In terms of results, again, it would appear that while MtC has contributed to the work of CVCs more generally in terms of encouraging *third sector organisations [that] are more ready to deliver public services, including co-produced services and an increase in the number of third sector organisations which are more ready to deliver public services through consortia or collaboration*, the overall results directly attributable to MtC are probably relatively limited.

However, there are some exceptions.

In one area, the partnership-driven approach bringing together both third sector organisations and the statutory sector to identify collaborative approaches to supporting older people to continue to live independently has been largely facilitated by the MtC Officer and may be expected to generate greater involvement of the third sector in providing preventative interventions.

Similarly, in a second area, the MtC officer has been instrumental (albeit working with other CVC staff) in creating a network of eight or nine third sector organisations providing a new befriending service for older and vulnerable people, which was identified as a gap in the support available locally (particularly in the light of the closure of facilities such as day centres). This is seen not only as having delivered benefits in terms of bringing about real cultural change within the third sector organisations e.g. around increasing the scope of the service provided, adopting a more flexible approach and a mind-set that views other third sector organisations less as competitors and more as partners, but as also making a significant contribution to a more preventative approach which is anticipated to lead to reduced illness (all forms) and from there be associated with reduced costs for healthcare treatment (i.e. real cost savings for the taxpayer in the long term).

More generally, in this case-study area it was argued that training events facilitated by the MtC officer would also have resulted in positive changes to

the attending third sector organisations because the events/training themselves received very positive feedback in terms of relevance and quality and because they were action orientated e.g. encouraged organisations to sign up to the specific principles e.g. equalities or to develop specific action plans e.g. collaboration.

In a third area, the training offer facilitated by the MtC officer has generally been well received, while the existence of the MtC officer has also clearly increased the capacity of the CVC to offer individualised support to a limited number of organisations, in order to 'prepare them for tendering', albeit that a public sector interviewee here argued that the sort of support offered had been too superficial to make any real difference. In this same area, a CVC interviewee also argued that many third sector organisations were now getting to the point of understanding that 'they have to work with each other and maybe even create new entities' in order to play a part in the delivery of public services, while adding that 'they don't quite know how they need to go about it' because the LSB's priorities have yet to become clear'.

More generally, the case-studies suggest to some extent an increasing willingness on the part of third sector organisations to enter into collaborative agreements and partnerships in order to deliver effective services and a greater awareness of the importance of moving away from a dependence on grants to a more service delivery-type approach.

However, in at least two of the areas, this is being driven largely by financial pressures on local government leading to fairly unilateral decisions by local authorities to wind down long-standing grant or SLA-type relations with third sector organisations and move along a procurement route. In the view of third sector interviewees in these areas, this was generally leading to a weakening of the sector locally and a reduction in the involvement of the sector in providing services.

In one of these two areas, examples were given of organisations which had for many years been delivering provision under Families First (and its

predecessor) which had lost out as a result of a procurement exercise which was seen to have been carried out with relatively little warning and in a quick timescale. It was alleged that such procurement approaches generally favoured in-house bids from Council staff (despite the requirement for 'Chinese walls'), with the minimum size of 'lots' being a particular issue (in the case of Families First the minimum size was said to be valued at £300,000).

Interestingly, however, local authority interviewees in this same area pointed to the fact that several large contracts had been won by third sector organisations as a result of these recent procurement initiatives. At least a part of this conundrum would appear to be explained by a tendency for larger, often Wales or UK-wide organisations within the third sector, who are more able to compete effectively for such contracts 'squeezing out' more grassroots organisation which are more likely to be in membership of the CVCs. One interviewee from another case-study area who was familiar with developments in her sector in this same area, noted that a local organisation from within the area had lost out to a somewhat larger and more predatory rival from outside. This interviewee thought procurement was a major threat to charities like her own which had a wholly local agenda and did not wish to expand.

In the three case-study areas, the relevance of CVC attempts to build capacity to tender for services was seen as undermined by the fact that statutory agencies had not yet really committed to following a procurement approach (albeit that many of those noting this did not wish to see this happen).

In one of these, interviewees from all sectors noted that in reality the local authority had been very resistant to following a procurement approach, with SLAs (which in many cases were effectively grants linked rather loosely to activities and outcomes) being rolled forward year after year, albeit with cuts now being imposed. One interviewee noted that for many years they had been told by the Local Authority that this would be the last year that a SLA would be rolled forward and that the service (funded by Families First) would be procured, but it had not yet happened. Another said that the current

system represented the worst of all worlds: their SLA committed them to deliver certain outcomes, but if these were achieved, the Local Authority still wanted to audit their expenditure and claw-back anything which they did not regard as directly related to the service.

In this same area, it was reported that the LHB had recently gone through a major review of its third sector commissioning which had resulted in much greater consistency of approach in terms of processes across the Board's area, but this had not led to any significant upheaval in terms of long-established relationships and only one instance of procurement where there was seen to be a significant overlap in provision between two third sector organisations funded by the Board.

Even in the case-study area where the attempts by the local authority to replace long-standing SLAs with a procurement exercise had caused such bad blood, interviewees suggested that there was still often more talk of procurement than real opportunities for third sector organisations to tender, not least due to the lack of progress in driving forward the SIP.

In a different case-study area, moreover, while there was a view that open procurement would increasingly become the default approach of the local authority in the future, there were widespread concerns that there was no clarity about future commissioning plans:

'Forward planning on what is being commissioned is something we are looking at closely. What is difficult though is that new opportunities aren't being advertised because the same organisations have held contracts for many years. That said we've been told that a lot of those contracts are going to come up for renewal in the near future so we want to be in a position where we can alert the third sector to those [opportunities]' [MtC officer].

Similarly, an interviewee from a large organisation working across a number of local authority areas expressed amazement that none of the LAs or the LHBs she worked with appeared to have clear Commissioning Strategies or

Procurement Implementation Plans, which would flag up clearly what was in train.

While in principle, some interviewees believed that the pressures on public sector budgets should be driving more innovative approaches to service delivery, including greater co-production, there was considerable scepticism as to whether this was happening. Indeed, in several instances, interviewees believed that local authorities in particular were trying to protect jobs and avoid redundancies by taking services in-house.

In one case-study area, as noted above, procurement was perceived by some as a route to shore up in-house delivery of key services, while in another several cases were cited of services which had formerly been provided by the third sector being taken in-house. These included an advocacy service, where the local authority had given notice that it was withdrawing funding from two third sector organisations and providing the service in-house (albeit that the jobs had been graded at a significantly higher salary than was currently being paid) and a statutory advice and support service where a volunteer co-ordinator formerly within the CVC had been replaced by a local authority employee, losing significant economies of scale which had previously arisen from the co-location of this post with the Volunteer Bureau.

Elsewhere, in a third case-study area, there was somewhat more optimism that retrenchment might be driving a greater willingness to use the skills of the third sector more extensively, although to some extent the jury on this was felt to be still out.

Moreover, in this area, at least one third sector organisation felt that nervousness about public and private sector provision, particularly in social care, was boosting opportunities for the third sector. However, other interviewees within the sector felt that while some departments had a healthy approach to commissioning, others were increasingly protective of service areas and the jobs that were associated with them.

Across the board, however, third sector interviewees were concerned that where statutory bodies were considering greater use of the sector, this was driven by a misplaced view that the sector could provide services at low cost (in part because of the use of volunteers).

Thus, one CVC interviewee argued that:

'there's still a need to increase awareness of what third sector organisations do and what they offer...[to ensure that the public sector] understand the nature of the sector... [including] capacity, staffing levels ... their dependency on volunteers'.

This interviewee thought that public sector organisations' expectations of the third sector were often unrealistic and the demands made of them over-bureaucratic. He also suspected that those working in the public sector sometimes regarded third sector organisations as 'unprofessional and amateur', without really giving due regard to the fact that volunteers are often highly qualified and highly committed individuals.

In a different case-study area, several third sector organisations stated that local authority officers and tender specifications did not allow for third sector organisations' proper management and administrative costs, overheads such as rent, or attendance at meetings. The idea that it was legitimate for third sector bodies to generate a reasonable surplus from their activities was felt to be an anathema, with one third sector organisation saying that they felt that their financial claims were subject to 'excessive' scrutiny. Monitoring requirements were also seen as excessive, with one organisation in this area giving the example of how, part way into a contract, the commissioner changed the requirement for information about whether or not service users were disabled to needing to know the nature of their disability, requiring significant retrospective work to provide the information.

Such interviewees believed that, while the sector could offer a cost-effective and above all, higher quality service because of its close awareness of the needs of services-users and its capacity to mobilise skilled and motivated



volunteers, the same overheads and compliance costs fell on third sector organisations as on statutory ones, frequently with diseconomies of scale, while managing volunteers was itself labour-intensive:

‘we still have to have the HR, the ICT, the back-office functions. And while what we can bring uniquely is the added value which comes from our volunteer base, that itself requires significant investment and support’ [Third sector interviewee].

Moreover, as value-driven organisations, third sector organisations were less prepared to cut corners and lower standards to get the job done: in one, all of the third sector organisations specifically argued that they was a price below which they were not willing to tender as it would compromise quality for their users.

Overall, there was a strong sense from our case-study areas that cuts in public funding, far from spurring innovation in terms of service delivery and opening opportunities for the sector, were reducing the willingness of Local Authorities at least to take a more imaginative approach. One third sector interviewee argued that there previously had been an appetite for change, but that cuts and their impact on people and departments had meant retrenchment, with people becoming inward looking and no longer really engaging in the LSB. Far from opening up procurement, the cuts were making the local authority risk-averse, both in going for the ‘safe options’ when selecting contractors and in how they handled the process.

This was reflected in a somewhat muted view of the potential for co-production, with third sector interviewees generally arguing that statutory bodies were relatively far from embracing this. Thus in one area, CVC interviewees argued that ‘co-production is the buzz word these days’, but that the concept of co-production was ill understood by public sector organisations in general and the Local Authority in particular:

‘they use the jargon, but they’re not in the mind-set ... they use the word without understanding what it means’.

In another area, a LHB interviewee argued that the power which the local authority had over third sector organisations – where a decision to reduce funding could put an organisation out of business – made co-production impossible, while third sector interviewees generally felt there was no real appetite for, or mechanisms to achieve co-production in the area.

### 3.5 Citizen Voice

#### **KEY FINDINGS**

MtC officers have generally played only a modest role in case-study areas in terms of developing the role of third sector in channelling the citizen voice, although in several areas, they have made a significant contribution to the engagement strategies of the LSB. In part this reflects doubts (within statutory partners but also to some extent within the sector itself) as to whether the third sector more generally is well placed to fulfil this role.

MtC has, however, enabled generally well-received training in Participation Cymru's 10 Principles to be provided to the sector and will thus have increased the capacity of the sector to engage meaningfully with service users.

Partly reflecting this view that public sector partners were 'looking inwards' rather than outwards in terms of their reshaping of public services, it would appear that the citizen voice strand of MtC has been relatively modest.

#### 3.5.1 Activities

Nevertheless, in terms of *organising events/activities to enable citizens to engage in public service planning, supporting service user groups to input into public service planning and working with public sector partners to encourage participatory planning methods*, in several case-study areas the MtC officer has played an important role in the engagement work of the LSB.

Thus, as already noted, in one case-study area the MtC officer has been instrumental in driving forward the work of the Engagement Sub-Group of the

LSB and as part of this has been involved in the arrangement of some key consultation events. Moreover, in this area, the MtC officer also assisted in the launch of the Community Voice programme<sup>55</sup>, which was perceived as a considerable success.

In another area, by contrast, the existence of Community Voice may have been one reason for the MtC Officer to step back from any close engagement with the citizen voice, with the work to enhance the effective input of the sector to public sector planning focusing largely, though not exclusively, on third sector organisations themselves rather than their users. Other reasons included a lack of clarity about what exactly was meant by the term ('do we mean third sector organisations or do we mean all citizens?'), a feeling that the CVC could only engage with citizens via third sector organisations and a view that the right of the sector to 'represent' citizens was contested ('the risk is you tread on other peoples toes').

Indeed, interviewees in other case-study areas voiced doubts as to whether the third sector in general, but the CVC in particular, was best placed to channel the citizen voice. In one, some interviewees within the CVC noted that its main function was to represent the third sector, and that at times, there could be at least tensions between the interests of the sector itself and that of service users. More commonly, public sector interviewees noted that there was a range of ways which they had of engaging directly with service users, through the role of elected members in their communities, through Local Authority-recruited, citizen panels and through fora established directly by relevant departments.

In terms of health and social care, interviewees in case-study areas tended to see the Health, Social Care and Well-Being Co-ordinator as being the key resource within the CVC supporting citizen engagement. Certainly in at least two case-study areas LHB and local authority interviewees emphasised the importance of these posts in terms of engaging with user groups via the third

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<sup>55</sup> A Programme funded by the BIG Lottery Fund and providing resources to certain CVCs to fund a portfolio of projects which aim to increase the input of service users into service design.

sector: indeed, in one of these, the local authority had worked via the Co-ordinator to fund a post specifically to ensure that the voice of users of mental health and social care services was heard.

In terms of *supporting third sector organisations to engage effectively with service users*, all MtC Officers have been required to assist with arranging training for the sector by Participation Cymru in the 10 Principles and methods for engaging with service users. In general terms, feedback from the case-study areas suggests that this training has been reasonably well attended and received.

### 3.5.2 Outputs

There are no formal targets agreed for the project with WEFO which relate to this strand of activity. However, as noted above, in all case-study areas, MtC as a project will have resulted in outputs in terms of *organisations (third/public sector) trained in service user engagement/participatory planning*, with a focus primarily on third sector organisations, while in most MtC has at least played a contributory part in a number of *consultation events organised/attended*.

### 3.5.3 Results

In general terms, not least through the Participation Cymru training, it is likely that MtC will have made a modest contribution to *an increase in the capacity of the third sector to engage meaningfully with services users*. However, for those case-study areas with Community Voice projects (three of our five) this latter programme seems likely to be the main focus in terms of the CVCs' engagement with this agenda. In at least one of these areas, Community Voice was seen as already offering considerable promise in terms not only of increasing the awareness and sensitivity of the third sector itself to the user perspective but also in terms of generating interest from the public sector: one third sector interviewee, which was hosting one of the area's portfolio of Community Voice projects, noted that the worker employed on the project was in demand for meetings with more senior figures in the Local Authority, police

and LHB than she had access to, because this worker could provide an authentic insight into the user viewpoint.

### 3.6 Impacts

#### **KEY FINDINGS**

Identifying impact is challenging, given the long-term and wide-ranging nature of the change sought by MtC and the lack of a counterfactual.

While there are some examples within the case-study areas of where MtC officers have played a role in supporting a shift towards early interventions, the contribution of the project as a whole is likely to be modest.

This is also the case in respect of the aim of bringing about more citizen-centred services which are better designed and delivered more effectively, where MtC appears to be operating in an unfavourable context.

Finally, in terms of a more sustainable third sector, there is little evidence that MtC has been sufficient to make a positive difference in the face of strong counter-vailing pressures as a direct or indirect result of cuts in public expenditure.

Turning to the expected impacts of the project, it is important to first make a number of *caveats*.

The first is that MtC is a short-term project but with ambitions to bring about long-term change. As such, impacts will certainly not be visible until well into the life of the project, and, indeed, may only manifest themselves after the project is over.

The second is that the changes sought are far-reaching but subtle and are themselves likely to be influenced and affected by a wide range of external factors: indeed, previous sections have highlighted quite how dependent the

project is on the context in which it is operating. The project is also modest in terms of scale: for even the smallest of the case-study CVCs, the MtC resource represents less than 5% of its overall resources.

Thirdly, it is impossible to model in any real way the counter-factual, in other words what would have happened in the absence of the project, which is an essential step in any assessment of impact. It is important therefore to be aware that even where the desired changes have not come about – or where things have actually moved in the opposite direction – it is at least possible that matters would have been worse in the absence of the project.

Turning first to whether the project has aided *a shift towards early interventions reducing the need for acute services*, there are certainly some positive examples from within the case-studies where MtC interventions might help to achieve this. This is true for example of the work in one case-study area to better co-ordinate statutory and third sector services to support older people to live independently and similarly of the project in second to create a network of third sector organisations to provide befriending services (though this is only partly attributable to the inputs from the MtC officer). It is also the case that in all case-study areas there is a strong focus within SIPs on a preventative approach, and to the extent that MtC in some areas has successfully ensured the engagement of the third sector in developing these strategies, a contribution will have been made. However, taken as a whole, the contribution of MtC is likely to be a modest one.

This is likely to be true also with regard to the contribution towards ensuring *citizen-centred public services better designed and delivered more effectively*. As we have seen, in many ways the project has not had a strong focus on harnessing the user voice – early indications, at least from one area are that the Community Voice programme may have more impact here - while, as yet, co-production appears more talked about than practised. Having said this, the MtC officer in this same area has played an important role in seeking to increase engagement with the LSB and the SIP (albeit with only limited results), while in another area the MtC officer has put in place mechanisms to

ensure that third sector organisations, often with close contact with users' needs, are better represented in partnerships and fora which are playing a role in designing and delivering services. Set against this is the evidence that in some areas the use of more formal procurement routes (and the perceived problems this creates for close working with the sector) and the focus on reducing costs and/or protecting public sector jobs, may well be impeding the potential for the sector to bring the user perspective to bear.

Finally, in terms of *a more sustainable third sector*, there is little evidence that MtC has been sufficient to make a positive difference in the face of strong counter-vailing pressures as a direct or indirect result of cuts in public expenditure. Even where the expertise of the sector is being brought to bear, it is not clear that this is adequately funded, while the fieldwork has yielded numerous examples of third sector organisations under severe pressure from funding cuts and procurement processes which lack transparency or are not designed in a way which facilitates the engagement of the sector. Although MtC will have built the capacity of some third sector organisations to engage more effectively with procurement, this appears marginal in the wider context, while the fieldwork has also highlighted the fact that many of the third sector organisations most likely to engage with public procurement processes have relatively little engagement with CVCs who have delivered the project.

### **3.7 Good Practice**

#### ***KEY FINDINGS***

MtC appears to have been more successful in two of the five case-study areas and this appears to be attributable:

- focusing down on a relatively narrow range of elements within the overall MtC officer role;
- integrating the work of the MtC officer effectively with other resources available to the CVC and ensuring excellent communications with other colleagues within the CVC;

- utilising the individual skills and expertise of the officer effectively and 'playing to their strengths';
- taking advantage of pre-existing good relationships between the CVC and the local authority.

Looking across all four strands where MtC was expected to make a contribution, we now turn to consider what factors have played a role in ensuring the success of the project in some areas and in some respects.

Broadly speaking, there are two of our five areas where interviewees generally felt that MtC was making a more significant contribution to increasing the profile and role of the sector in terms of shaping and delivering public services. In these two cases, a number of factors emerge as important in underpinning success.

Firstly, the decision in both these cases to focus in on a narrower range of activities than the overall MtC job description and Individual Action Plan (IAP) might suggest.

In one, the MtC officer has largely focused on direct delivery of a number of relevant LSB priorities, both of which involve extensive mobilisation of the third sector locally: this appears to have both demonstrated the value of engaging with the sector to key public sector partners and supported the sector to develop its own responsiveness.

In the second, the MtC officer has largely focused on supporting capacity building within the sector and on the 'infrastructure' of connecting the third sector to the public service planning process with a very strong focus on ensuring the good two-way flow of information between the LSB and other partnerships and the sector locally, leaving other elements of the job description largely to other CVC staff (or for the future). In this area, it was argued that it was important to 'walk before you can run', with the CVC taking the view that it had been crucial for the MtC officer to focus on understanding



needs, raising awareness and building capacity within third sector organisations – arguably all essential prior to encouraging engagement in service design or delivery.

In both these case-study areas, the IAP has been seen largely as a bureaucratic exercise rather than as something guiding the day-to-day work of the Officer.

By contrast, in some of the other case-study areas, MtC Officers appear to have been more concerned with activity related to ‘ticking the boxes’, arguably leading to wasted effort and potential duplication of other staff within the CVC.

Secondly, and related to this, there has been a strong emphasis in both these two case-study areas on integrating the work of the MtC officer with the other resources available to the CVC. In one, this was addressed from the start:

‘We were well aware from other areas that the Making the Connections officer might be seen as stepping on the toes of existing staff. So we made a point of addressing that early in the project.’

Moreover, the importance of ensuring excellent communications and regular liaison with colleagues within the CVC (with weekly meetings with key staff employed by other relevant projects) was very heavily emphasised by the MtC officer and other CVC interviewees, with one expressing surprise that this did not seem to be the case with other MtC colleagues:

‘Other CVCs in our region seemed very surprised that we were holding these meetings’.

By contrast, in at least two other case-study areas, the MtC officer appears to have been relatively marginalised within the CVC, operating in something of a vacuum or fulfilling only ancillary roles. Indeed in one of these the officer said that ‘there’s been a negative attitude towards the [MtC] project in general’ from within the CVC and other CVCs she was aware of.

Thirdly, and again closely related, has been a capacity to utilise the individual skills and experience of the MtC Officer effectively. In this regard, it is notable that in in one of the two more successful case-study areas, the individual filling the MtC role is a long-standing employee of the CVC, with well-established connections with both third sector organisations in membership of the CVC and public sector partners. In the second, while the MtC officer was recruited specifically for the post, there was a close match between their skillset (notably very strong ICT skills) and the focus of their work. Similarly, in other case-study areas, MtC officers often appear to be at their most effective when allowed to play to their strengths: this is true, for example, in one area where the MtC officer has proved effective at contributing to the LSB Engagement strategy, drawing on previous experience in Communities First.

Fourthly – and less capable of imitation – both of the two more successful areas are ones where relationships between the CVC and the local authority have historically been close in contrast to others where broader tensions between the CVC and the Local Authority appear to have made the work of the MtC Officer much more problematic. In one of these areas, for example, there has been a strong commitment to the Compact process by the local authority and CVC (and indeed the LHB) and in the other, relationships between the CVC and key partners were portrayed in a positive light by all those interviewed. Moreover, in this second area front-line services were reported to have thus far been largely protected from spending cuts, though this is expected to change from next year; the LSB is regarded by the third sector as functioning effectively (which is certainly not the case in the three other areas) and there has been little, if any, change in the way in which the local authority commissions services from third sector organisations.

### 3.8 Barriers

#### **KEY FINDINGS**

A wide range of factors have acted as barriers to the MtC project fully realising its potential. These include issues around the over-ambitious design of the project; poor relationships in some cases between the CVC and statutory organisations; the lack of progress in developing SIPs and LSBs to the point where they start to influence the commissioning of services; and the direct and indirect effects of public expenditure cuts.

In our baseline report, we identified a number of contextual factors which, in our view, were adversely affecting the capacity of MtC to achieve its full potential and a number of these have already been discussed in Sections 3.2 to 3.6 above. However it may be useful to provide a further brief summary of these. They include the following:

- Difficult pre-existing relationships between the CVC and the local authority (which are generally seen as in effect controlling the LSB, whatever the theory). This is certainly the case in two areas;
- The resources available to the CVC and the extent to which key aspects of the MtC post, as originally conceived, were already being fulfilled by other staff funded by other projects and funding streams (albeit that in some cases, as discussed above, the objectives of MtC are being achieved by other means). This seems particularly true in the case of health, where in all of the case-study areas the role of Health, Social Care and Well-Being Co-ordinators is long-established and valued. Indeed, one LHB interviewee argued that the Co-ordinator was effectively a MtC officer for health and social care, and suggested that covering everything else was a big 'ask' for one individual;
- Related to this, a strong feeling from many of the interviewees who were aware of the scope of MtC that the role as originally conceived was over-ambitious, particularly given the short life-span of the project, and that individual MtC officers are not able to do more than scratch the surface if they attempt to cover the piece:

‘not enough resource to make a mark, especially if you trying to make a sustainable mark’ [Public sector interviewee];

- The progress (or lack of it) in terms of developing the SIP, and the sense that SIPs (and the work of the LSBs more generally) are detached from practical decisions about the shape of public service planning and commissioning (thus reducing the incentive for third sector organisations to become engaged). Indeed, in one area, it was argued by several interviewees that the flux within the LSB had made the job of the MtC officer impossible:

‘nothing’s moved forward [with the LSB]...it’s not been possible for her to realise her main objectives ... but because of things beyond her control’ [CVC interviewee];

Even where relations were good, interviewees still thought structures around the LSB were unsettled:

‘they seem to change from week to week’ [CVC interviewee];

- The impact of financial cuts on local authorities and other public sector organisations. While in some instances, this was still seen as presenting opportunities (in terms of offering new opportunities to deliver non-statutory services such as libraries and community centres through the sector with a greater use of voluntary input), a common theme from interviewees both in the first round of fieldwork and even more so in the fieldwork underpinning this report was that local authorities were too transfixed by dealing with the immediate crisis – and in many cases trying to minimise the loss of jobs - to think imaginatively or to think of the sector as anything other than a source of free labour);
- The high turnover of staff in the public sector as a side-effect of the financial pressures on the public sector and the difficulties this caused for *sustaining* the connections;
- The impact of cuts and the difficult economic situation on third sector organisations themselves, through cuts or reductions in grants which reduced the capacity of organisations to engage with more strategic agendas such as public service design (a finding echoed by the

evaluation of the wider LSB- ESF project<sup>56</sup>). In one area, for example, this was particularly felt to be the case for smaller organisations who ‘don’t have the resource and back office functions to devote the time’ [CVC interviewee];

- The lack of clarity in terms of the public sector approach to commissioning public services from the third sector. In at least two case-study areas it was argued that in practice there was very little transparent commissioning of services, which meant that investment in building the capacity of the sector to bid was nugatory, whereas in at least two other areas, more aggressive approaches to using procurement were seen to have been introduced in a ‘knee-jerk’ way, and were actually diminishing the potential for the sector to input into service design and delivery;
- ‘Planning blight’ in terms of decisions on commissioning services as a result of the uncertainty over the future of local government structures and regional working caused by the creation of the Commission. Even though the Commission’s report had been published at the time of our latest fieldwork, some interviewees argued that the recommendations (which looked likely to take several years to implement) meant there would be an extended period when strategic decisions on commissioning were left in abeyance, with budget cuts resulting in salami slicing rather than fundamental re-design of services.

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<sup>56</sup> A survey of LSB projects found that respondents ‘saw third sector organisations as lacking the capacity to engage fully, despite the fact that this is one of the aims of the ESF-LSB project’

## 4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The more in-depth work in the case-study areas which has been undertaken during the latest phase of the research has tended to confirm the findings from the initial process evaluation with regard to the considerable gap which exists between the ambitions of the project as originally conceived and the achievements which have been possible to date.

MtC officers are in many cases making a positive contribution to ensuring better representation of the sector at the LSB and other key fora; to disseminating information about the LSB and the SIP; and to supporting individual third sector organisations to develop their capacity to deliver public services and to consider working in partnership to do so. Our case-studies suggest some very positive (if relatively isolated) examples of MtC officers playing a central role in taking forward practical initiatives to improve service delivery; in brokering collaborations between third sector organisations; and in acting as a catalyst for stronger input from the sector to the work of LSBs and other fora; while the project as a whole has helped raise the profile of the 10 National Principles for Public Engagement within the sector.

However, the capacity of MtC officers and indeed CVCs more generally to translate their activities into tangible results in terms of an enhanced role for the third sector in shaping and delivering public services and a material improvement in the quality of the design and implementation of services has been severely limited by the context in which the project is being implemented, in particular:

- The often slow progress in terms of moving the work of the LSB from the analysis of needs and identification of issues to the consideration of design and delivery of services, and the sense of disconnect between these high level strategic discussions and commissioning decisions;
- The tendency of public bodies (perhaps particularly local authorities) to turn inwards in response to the pressures brought about by the cuts in public funding, to seek to minimise job losses by taking services in house, and to be less willing to consider innovative and more

personalised approaches to public services (in other words, co-production) in the face of such pressures;

- The decreasing capacity of many third sector organisations to engage with more strategic agendas because of the effect of cuts in their own funding (and in some cases, increased demand for services);
- What appears to be confusion and inconsistency in the approach to procurement, with relatively limited opportunities for local third sector organisations to tender, and fewer for them to tender successfully, to provide services;
- A mismatch between the expectations of public sector commissioners that using the third sector might represent a cheap option, and the view of third sector organisations that the added value the sector can bring is through quality and co-production, not lower costs;
- The ‘planning blight’ resulting from the discussion about restructuring local government and the tension between the local focus of most LSBs and the growing importance of the regional agenda.

In this sense, our research has tended to confirm the view of the Commission that LSBs are far from achieving their full potential and have yet to result in service improvements, that partnership working is too onerous and overly complex and that co-production is more talked about than practised. It also chimes with the findings of the wider LSB – ESF evaluation that enhancing the role of the third sector and increasing the influence of the service user over service design have, so far at least, been of relatively limited concern in terms of the Delivery Projects. Indeed – while acknowledging that the picture in each of the five case-study areas is very different, and that in the absence of MtC, the position of the sector could well be still weaker - in several of them, it seems clear that it has become more, not less, difficult for the third sector locally to play a significant role in service design and delivery.

But while external factors may account for many of the difficulties faced by the MtC project, there are also a number of issues around the design of the project which suggest that these difficulties do not just relate to timing.

Firstly, as many of those we interviewed recognised, there is a mismatch between the scale of the ambition set out in the Business Plan and the resources and timescales of the project. Even in much more favourable circumstances, it is unlikely ever to have been realistic to expect one relatively junior officer in a CVC to be able to deliver the range of activities (and even more outcomes) envisaged.

Secondly, the focus on recruiting a dedicated MtC Officer in each area, while understandable from the viewpoint of demonstrating the 'additionality' of the project, did not necessarily recognise fully the extent to which issues around public service design and delivery are already a key part of the work of CVCs and many of their staff. Although the new Welsh Government Third Sector Scheme has highlighted support for third sector involvement in public service design and delivery as a core function for the third sector infrastructure (and a key aim of the funding which the Welsh Government provides for it), this in effect only restates a priority which was set in *The Third Dimension* as long ago as 2008.

This has meant that, even where MtC has worked well, it is impossible to disentangle the effects of the project from the wider effects of CVC promotion of this agenda. Where it has worked less well, MtC officers have struggled to define their role and in some cases, seem to have become marginalised within their own organisation. The fact that MtC officers have inevitably been employed on relatively short, fixed-term contracts has meant managers may have been reluctant to deploy them in more visible, outward-facing roles.

Thirdly, and perhaps more complicated to resolve, is the question that while the CVCs are recognised by the Welsh Government as having an unique role in terms of representing the sector at a local level, their position is by no means uncontested. Our fieldwork, in highlighting the well-known huge diversity of the sector, has also highlighted the fact that in many cases, CVCs are seen as representing only one part of the sector, more particularly the more locally-anchored and more community-based organisations. Ironically,



perhaps, those organisations operating on a larger scale, who may already be quite strongly engaged with influencing the thinking of commissioners on service design and who are already relatively well-equipped to secure contracts for the delivery of public services which are tendered openly, tend not to see the CVCs as representing them, and may indeed, see them as competitors.

Although any recommendations made at this stage of the research must inevitably be tentative, we are mindful that MtC officers contracts generally come to an end in December 2014 and that decisions will be needed shortly about the future. We are also conscious of the fact that it is unlikely that there will be a successor ESF-funded project to MtC, given that the new ESF Programmes for 2014 – 2020 do not contain provision for interventions to support public service reform. We therefore recommend:

**Recommendation 1:** It is important for the Welsh Government to continue to support CVCs to prioritise their work on the design and delivery of public services. However, this will probably be achieved more effectively by ensuring that resources are clearly available within the Infrastructure Grant to support this work and by ensuring that CVCs do in practice give appropriate priority to this role. CVCs need to have the flexibility to deploy staff resources in the way that seems most appropriate to them.

**Recommendation 2:** CVCs (with support from WCVA where necessary) should review their existing staff roles and responsibilities to identify obvious gaps (post-MtC) in terms of ensuring adequate coverage of key LSB sub-groups and other fora. Drawing on good practice developed through the project (particularly in one case-study area) to support third sector representatives to report back, they should consider how far representation from the wider sector (i.e. non CVC staff) can be mobilised to ensure full coverage.

**Recommendation 3:** CVCs should continue to offer training and capacity building relating to tendering to member organisations as part of their core

training offer, pooling resources wherever possible, and with a continued strong focus on brokering collaborations.

**Recommendation 4:** The Welsh Government and WCVA should consider whether and, if so, how, there can be stronger engagement with larger third sector organisations to harness their input into thinking on service design and to ensure consistency of messages from the wider sector to public sector commissioners.

**Recommendation 5:** In taking forward its response to the Commission, including its forthcoming paper on co-production, the Welsh Government should recognise the views within the sector of the limited progress made in terms of this agenda and consider what further measures can be taken to incentivise local authorities and other public bodies to engage more actively, particularly given the impact of budgetary pressures.

**Recommendation 6:** While recognising that it has already invested significant effort in terms of improving procurement, the Welsh Government needs to ensure that all public bodies both have and take into account clear guidance on good procurement practice, including with regard to the perception that potential conflicts of interest render third sector input into service design inappropriate.

**Recommendation 7:** The Welsh Government should consider what further steps can be taken to ensure greater compliance on the part of all public bodies with the Code of Practice for Funding the Third Sector.