



Destinations Unknown

Executive Summary

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Children Matter East

East of England Regional VCS Infrastructure Consortium



Executive Summary

This research undertaken between June and August 2007 addresses the Voluntary and Community sectors (VCS) concerns about their future role in delivering services that have been supported or funded by the Children's Fund, Sure Start Local Programme (SSLP) and the Local Network fund (LNF).

The work captures data that indicates over £10m pa is invested in commissioning services through these three funds alone from the VCS across the region, and that the loss or significant reduction in this investment could have irreversible consequences. Conclusions of the report include:

Children's Fund

- During 07/08 over £4m will be invested in 124 projects delivered by the VCS contributing to an estimated 485 staff's salaries.
- The sector's insecurity around the future of the Children's Fund has not been alleviated by recent ministerial announcements.
- Local authorities and the VCS share the opinion that new commissioning arrangements and Local Area Agreements do not seem fully aware or prepared for mainstreaming of the Fund.

Local Network Fund

- During 2006/07 the LNF awarded £2.84 million to some of the smallest VCS providers.
- There appears to be a lack of clear planning concerning the future of the fund and its potential transfer to local authority control.
- 50% of the "Fund Administrators" do not believe the LNF will continue as a separate fund in their county.

Sure Start Local Programmes

- Figures given indicate as much as £5m of services were commissioned from the VCS by lead SSLP organisations. During the transition to Children Centres this commissioning ability has reduced by 70%.
- Whilst some decommissioned services have been mainstreamed during this year, others have disappeared altogether.
- Opportunities for the sector to tender for Children's Centres appear to have been highly variable between different local authorities.

Recommendations of the report are:

1. Local Authorities should urgently clarify the future of the Children's Fund or face a potentially irreversible loss of VCS providers from the region.
2. Significant activity is required to raise awareness to Children's Fund and Local Network Fund in Local Area Agreement and Children's Trust planning.
3. Children's Trusts should consider a one year extension to current Children's Fund projects to ensure a more structured mainstreaming.
4. The Local Network Fund should be maintained as a ring-fenced pot targeted at funding the smallest groups working in the most disadvantaged areas.
5. The Department for Children Schools and Families and/or Local authorities should, as an urgent priority develop firm proposals for the LNF's Continuation.
6. The VCS has an equitable opportunity to lead and deliver services across the whole of the Children's Centre programmes – this includes maximising provider potential across the region.
7. Children's Trusts, consider; what further steps they might take to ensure the VCS' inclusion in the planning and decision making processes for Children's Centres, Extended services including the Children's Fund and Integrated and Targeted Youth support.