

Assumptions for Theory of Change

1. A greater number of effective and sustainable VCSE organisations leads to engaged, stronger and more resilient communities.
2. A thriving VCSE sector with opportunities to volunteer, contributes directly to the wellbeing of individuals and communities.
3. Improved wellbeing of individuals leads to a reduction in use of public services, especially health services.
4. Communities of place and interest have the inherent knowledge and resources within them to develop solutions to issues, when given the opportunity, resources, time and confidence to do so.
5. Working collaboratively and in partnership is beneficial to all.
6. The VCSE sector is an essential and willing partner in the delivery of public services.
7. Public services have the capacity and agility to change and adapt to respond to community needs.
8. Citizens want to engage in volunteering and community activities.
9. Local authorities and statutory partners need local people and VCSE organisations to be involved in decision making and service delivery.
10. Relationships between activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts are complex and multifaceted, and several outputs and outcomes may be needed for a single impact to happen.
11. External factors including socio-economic ones and those that are intangible will also influence impacts.
12. It would not be accurate to draw straight lines from specific outputs or outcomes to a specific impact without unambiguous evidence being presented to substantiate the relationship.
13. Outputs, outcomes and impacts need to be systematically evidenced.
14. Service delivery by local infrastructure organisations is not accounted for in this theory of change, as it is not a core infrastructure activity, but may have a positive or negative impact on LIOs.

Theory of Change for Local Infrastructure Organisations in England

Mechanisms

1. Strategic plans of LIO lead, reflect, respond to and evolve to meet needs of VCSE.
2. Create space for VCSE to represent and advocate for section on local networks, for and statutory partnerships.
3. Dissemination and development of emerging plans that affect VCSE and advocacy for needs.
4. Develop skills and experience of representatives so lived experience can be involved in local plans and decision making.
5. Facilitate inclusive consultation. Gather intelligence of VCSE to advocate and inform.

1. Relationships with stakeholders, voluntary sector partners and statutory organisations are well understood and used to facilitate collaboration and information sharing.
2. Advocacy for co-design and co-production of services with VCSE.
3. Develop, lead and support partnerships.

1. Responds to needs of the sector through consultation and engagement, especially with marginalised or excluded groups.
2. Providing high quality relevant information, training, support and resources for VCSE.
3. Enable VCSEs to assess their performance and plan for development.
4. Identification of relevant funding / grants to support sustainability of VCSE.

1. Promote volunteering, support development of new forms and models of volunteering. Share good practice. Reduce confused market place.
2. Reduce barriers to volunteering especially for excluded groups.
3. Raise visibility of volunteering, show its value.

Activities: 4FI

Leadership and advocacy

Partnerships and Collaboration

Capacity Building incl. community development

Volunteering

Outputs

1. Provide an informed voice for VCSE to statutory partners, local authorities and other bodies.
2. Convene networks, forums or partnerships of place or interest to inform decision making by local authorities and statutory partners.
3. Provide or enable formal representation for VCSE where decisions are made affecting sector and/or communities.
4. Lead and facilitate cross-sectoral working for the benefit of VCSE sector and communities.

1. Networking, events to facilitate, or active formation of partnerships for communities of place or interest to work together on joint projects / form consortia.
2. Enabling for forums or networks that can inform and influence delivery of public services.
3. Develop, lead and support partnerships using co-design / co-production approaches.

1. Collect and analyse qualitative and quantitative data on VCSE sector, demonstrating reach, activities and outcomes. Identify and share needs and strengths.
2. Training, support, advice to develop organisational capacity and skills to improve delivery for beneficiaries and contribute to financial sustainability.
3. Events, training, resources to support organisations to understand and engage communities, respond to their needs and be learning organisations.

1. Training, support and networking for volunteer involving organisations.
2. Brokerage service for volunteers and opportunities.
3. Reduce barriers to volunteering for excluded groups.
4. Make case for volunteering to partners and stakeholders, lead and enable best practice.

Outcomes

1. VCSE has strong voice and influence on key decisions and relevant policy and service development.
2. VCSE informed and supported to participate in local policy development and decision-making structures.
3. Local partners are better informed about local VCSE sector and communities they serve.
4. LIO is recognised by VCSE and partners for its credible leadership role and ability to create links within VCSE and across sectors.

1. There is effective communication, collaboration and partnerships among VCSE organisations, between sectors, with communities and people.
2. VCSEs influence and deliver services more effectively by working collaboratively through networks, formal partnerships and consortia.
3. There is increased understanding of the principles underpinning good partnership working.

1. Strengths and needs of the VCSE sector are identified and solutions to maximise potential and strengthen capacity are developed.
2. VCSEs organisations access high quality support, advice and facilitation which extends their knowledge, skills and sustainability.
3. VCSEs are more knowledgeable about needs and priorities in their community and can adapt activities in response.

1. LIO supports and develops a positive environment in which the value of volunteering is recognised, and volunteer activity is flourishing.
2. Partners and stakeholders have good understanding and knowledge of volunteering, best practice and impact of changes in policy and practice.

