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**REGIONAL VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY
SECTOR
INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN
East of England**

September 2005

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1 Introduction

This is the East of England Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Regional Infrastructure Plan, produced by the Regional VCS Infrastructure Partnership (RVIP) in response to an invitation to participate in the Government **ChangeUp east** programme.

The plan contains a synopsis of the request for infrastructure funding for the RVIP for the period Sep 2005 - Jun 2006, together with details of each project from the relevant lead partners within the RVIP. It has emerged through an analysis of the challenges facing the region over the next ten years (**APPENDIX 1**) and taking into account regional and national priorities (**APPENDIX 2**). This regional plan also complements the plans of the six county consortia in the region.

It also takes into account the strategic and service priorities of the organisations within the partnership (**APPENDIX 3 gives details for each organisation**).

The aim of the plan is to lay the foundation for a strong VCS regional infrastructure and balance the provision of generic infrastructure services, as articulated in *ChangeUp east* with the voice of VCS at regional level including specialist interests. This is now defined through VCS Strategic Directions - that arise directly from sector experience.

2 Background

2.1 Regional Strategies

VCS infrastructure organisations are necessary and welcome partners assisting the government and its lead bodies to deliver the Integrated Regional Strategy (IRS), the vision for which is: 'to improve the quality of life for everyone who lives or works in the East of England'. Allied to the IRS are other regional strategies, such as the Regional Economic Strategy (RES), the Regional Social Strategy (RSS) and the Regional Health Strategy. Many of these have already welcomed engagement with VCS (**APPENDICES 4a & 4b**).

In line with the IRS, the *ChangeUp east* programme offers significant investment by government into VCS infrastructure support agencies across the region primarily through regional and county VCS consortia. These have been identified as best placed to deliver the *ChangeUp east* aspirations to modernise infrastructure provision, improve sustainability, quality and reach and contribute to the achievement of high level strategic objectives.

In 2003, with the mobilisation of government interest in regional partnerships, COVER, one of the existing regional infrastructure organisations, took the lead in setting up a consortium of interests as a regional partnership. There followed the commissioning of three consultation/research exercises by various members of the

partnership to help it identify the challenges and implications facing the VCS in engaging in regional partnerships priorities (**APPENDIX 5**) for the immediate and longer term, and to determine the Early Spend stages of ChangeUp.

2.2 The Regional VCS Infrastructure Partnership (RVIP)

The RVIP has now been in existence for two years and during this time has achieved the following:

- The engagement of a wide variety of regional networks, which is unique in the country; there are 17 regional VCS networks (**see below and Appendix 3**) in the RVIP and another five are expected to join in 2006
- Regular meetings to share good practice and relevant information
- Formal arrangements have been established – terms of reference for the partnership were devised in 2005
- Joint projects have been set up between partnership members

The regional partnership work has only been in existence since 2003; a short time compared to national and local VCS which have had decades of funding and are comparatively better established in terms of voice, capacity and networking. The informal partnership had to make a huge step change to become a formal regional partnership in 2003 with agreed representation and a formal decision-making process. This has been further complicated by the fact that the majority of RVIP members are not funded for regional work – again a difference as compared to national and local consortia. Where members are paid officers this is usually for a local organisation.

Partnership members are:

AdviceUK Eastern Region

Age Concern Eastern Region

Citizens Advice – East

COVER

CVS East

Disability East

East NGB (National Governing Bodies of sport) Forum

East of England Faiths Agency

East of England Faiths Council

Eastern Region Older People's Advisory Group

MENTER

NCVCCO East Anglia Regional Group

Rural Action East

VHG (formerly the Voluntary Hostels Group)

Volunteering England – East

Voluntary Sector Refugee Network –East of England

Voluntary Youth Services Eastern Region

2.3 Regional VCS Strategic Directions

The RVIP held a two day workshop in March 2005 in order to determine its strategic direction as a basis for submitting its infrastructure plan to ChangeUp. This is what it determined:

- **Regional VCS Strategic Direction 1: ENHANCE THE SECTOR ROLE AS AN EFFECTIVE REGIONAL PARTNER**

Aims:

- Establish a Framework
- Embed quality and improve reach
- Strengthen Representation
- Continue the process of Modernisation

- **Regional VCS Strategic Direction 2: ADDRESS PARTNERSHIP, INCLUSION AND STRATEGIC REGIONAL DRIVERS**

Aim:

- Establish Partnership and Cluster Development in particular to advance participation and sector development

- **Regional VCS Strategic Direction 3: CONSOLIDATE THE COLLECTION, MANAGEMENT AND DISSEMINATION OF KNOWLEDGE**

Aim:

- Set up a strategic plan for knowledge and information management to bring evidence and value to regional strategy and policy development

The plan is designed to enhance regional VCS provision by:

(1) the development of a strategic framework and rationale for the RVIP with a clear evaluation arrangement and an emphasis on sustainable outcomes;

(2) Cluster development where there are already opportunities for joint working, the objectives are priorities within the VCS and there is a good case for enhanced infrastructure support. For example, there is an older people's cluster because there are several networks within the partnership representing different aspects of provision and advocacy for older people. Services can only be improved if all these networks look at how they work together and rationalise the infrastructure support they provide. There is no disability cluster as there is only one network. This network has bid within the regional plan for funds to ensure that the entire plan is "disability-proofed". These clusters will set the model for future similar arrangements. The clusters are designed to provide an expertise hub across the region and prevent unnecessary duplication or silo working; the clusters will not take on local work, they will identify what the regional element

should be, how good practice can be shared across the region and how a specialist regional cluster can complement local infrastructure provision;

(3) offering opportunities for research on joint needs e.g. the usefulness of open source software or improvements to ICT functionality or the possibility of shared back room services and performance improvement toolkits and quality standards

3 The Infrastructure Plan comprises the following sections:

Page 7	Synopsis of Aims, Outcomes, Milestones and Dates of the 3 strategic Directions mapped onto ChangeUp east Priority Areas
Page 13	Detailed exposition of the 3 Strategic Directions which will include the Lead, Purpose, Evidence of Need, Key Objectives, Timetable, Outcomes, Measurement of Outcomes and Detailed Budget

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July 2005

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1: TO ENHANCE THE SECTOR ROLE AS AN EFFECTIVE REGIONAL PARTNER

Aims: **A.** Establish a Framework **B.** Embed Quality and Improve Reach **C.** Strengthen Representation **D.** Continue Modernisation

AIM		OUTCOME	MILESTONES	DATES	ChangeUp Priority Areas ¹
Aim A. ESTABLISH A FRAMEWORK					
A.1	Develop a route map for the regional VCS plan and ensure it is rural and disability proofed	Clear and agreed framework for the development, implementation and evaluation of a long term VCS strategic plan that identifies benefits to end beneficiaries and improves infrastructure support	Framework Partner agreement on activities to Mar 06 and on steps to be taken in line with Capacity Builders: Next Steps for ChangeUp Mar 05	Dec 05 Mar 06	All Priority Areas
A.2	Development of close working relationship with county consortia, national hubs and Infrastructure National Partnership across activities	Clear and effective links between regional, national and local work that suit all partners and that avoids unnecessary duplication	Development of protocols for the partnership that fit with sub-regional structures including involvement of county consortia with regional partnership	By Mar 06	1

¹ Appendix 6 full details of Change Up East Priority Areas that are referred to by the numbers in this table

AIM	OUTCOME	MILESTONES	DATES	ChangeUp Priority Areas ¹	
Aim B. EMBED QUALITY AND IMPROVE REACH					
B.1	Investment in networks to enable participation in strategic framework, policy development and service delivery and evaluation	<p>Properly resourced and inclusive partnership that leads to more effective regional input and delivery.</p> <p>ChangeUp aims of embedding quality and reach are implemented</p>	Four regional meetings to help the regional partnership assume leadership in order to achieve RVIP policy goals and roll out the strategic framework	By Mar 06	1, 2, 5
			Resources earmarked for specialist networks to hold policy forums to identify their regional priorities and service needs, and to build their capacity to engage across the region, and to identify infrastructure support provision	By Jun 06	1, 2, 5

AIM		OUTCOME	MILESTONES	DATES	ChangeUp Priority Areas ¹
Aim C. STRENGTHEN REPRESENTATION					
C.1	To co-ordinate and support effective VCS regional representation and participation. This item is cross-referenced to Item Strategic Direction 3: knowledge management	VCS presence on all targeted regional bodies, panels, subgroups and working groups to benefit the economic, social, cultural and environmental development of the region	The following established - partnership membership criteria; reporting, working and information sharing arrangements; protocols with partner organisations and secretariat; terms of reference and accountability guidance VCS partnership publishes list and agrees framework for coordinating and supporting representatives	Criteria Dec 05 Final protocols Jan 06 Reps on regional network Mar 06 List and support Apr 06	1, 4
C.2	Increasing recognition of VCS role	Visible VCS influence on all targeted regional plans, policies, strategies and investments	Establish process for baseline and how impact will be measured	By Jun 06	1,5
C.3	Widening participation of socially excluded groups in social, economic, cultural and environmental activity across the region	Increased social and economic inclusion leading to improved health, wealth, well being and quality of life of socially and economically excluded groups in the East of England	Establish process for baseline and how impact will be measured	By Jun 06	1, 2, 5

AIM	OUTCOME	MILESTONES	DATES	ChangeUp Priority Areas ¹	
Aim D. CONTINUE MODERNISATION					
D.1	Supporting VCS Workforce Development through the Continuing Professional Development of paid staff and volunteers	Improved Regional VCS Workforce Development	Production of Clear Vision: Clear Thinking strategies for the Future of the VCS in the East of England: Literature review Draft for consultation Draft report / action plan Plan adopted Workforce Development Plan	Mar 05 Sep 05 Jan 06 Mar 06 Mar 06	2, 5
D.2	Supporting VCS organisational development through innovation, enterprise, rationalisation and diversification	VCS organisations delivering high quality innovative social, economic and environmental services that meet the current and emerging needs of the changing population of the East of England Increased capacity of VCS partnerships to win tenders for the delivery of services	Organisational Development / Performance Improvement Plan completed Appropriate quality assurance and evaluation frameworks determined	Mar 06 Mar 06	2, 5
D.3	Supporting VCS performance improvement through the use of PI tools and ICT	More VCS organisations and networks using PI tools and pooling and sharing back office services; improved ICT functionality	VCS Modernisation / Development Plan Regional ICT plan including open source demonstration project	Apr 06 Jun 06	2, 5

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2: PARTNERSHIP, INCLUSION AND RESPONSE TO STRATEGIC REGIONAL DRIVERS

Aim: E. PARTNERSHIP AND CLUSTER DEVELOPMENT IN PARTICULAR TO ADVANCE PARTICIPATION AND SECTOR DEVELOPMENT

AIM		OUTCOME	MILESTONES	DATES	ChangeUp Priority Areas
E.1	To coordinate and support the development of VCS partnerships and cross sector partnerships at a regional level that further the Social, Economic, Environmental Inclusion interests and activities of the sector and its benefit	<p>An effective regional partnership in terms of VCS policy coordination and contribution, demonstrating increased regional VCS social, economic and environmental inclusion activity</p> <p>Fit for purpose regional clusters leading strategic VCS development in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equalities • Information and Advice services • Children and Young People • Health and Social Care • Older people <p>The details of the objectives of each cluster are on pp 21 & 22</p> <p>Mutually beneficial links to the work of the national hubs and county consortia</p>	<p>COVER secretariat support to partnership and representatives established</p> <p>Evaluation of Partnership contribution</p> <p>Five cross cutting VCS clusters developed</p> <p>Protocols defined in framework Links established</p>	<p>Oct 05</p> <p>Jun 06</p> <p>Jun 06</p> <p>Dec 05</p> <p>Jun 06</p>	1, 2, 5

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 3: CONSOLIDATE THE COLLECTION, MANAGEMENT AND DISSEMINATION OF KNOWLEDGE

AIM F: SET UP A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT TO BRING EVIDENCE AND VALUE TO REGIONAL STRATEGY AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT

AIM		OUTCOMES	MILESTONES	DATES	ChangeUp Priority Areas
F.1	To develop, coordinate, and maintain the regional VCS knowledge and evidence base	VCS evidence base for developing regional policy	Strategic Plan for Knowledge Management completed.	By Feb 06	1, 3, 5
F.2	To use the knowledge to support VCS RVIP Plan and contribution to regional strategy and policy	Improved VCS regional research, strategy & policy communication capacity with demonstrable improvements in quality of work with other stakeholders	Established regional archive of printed and digital data	Mar 06	
		Production of Annual "State of the VCS Sector in the East of England" report	Increased take-up of VCS regional research	Jun 06	
			Evaluation of improved VCS contribution	Jun 06	
			Collation & analysis of data re VCS size, shape, trends, economic activity, social value, environmental value, issues and concerns, achievement and impact	Jun 06	

5 Regional VCS Infrastructure Plan – Details

5.1 Strategic Direction 1: To enhance the regional VCS sector role as an effective partner in the East of England

5.1.1 Aims:

- Establish a Framework
- Embed quality and improve reach
- Strengthen Representation
- Continue the process of Modernisation

Lead Body

COVER

Rural Action East to lead on rural policy development and rural proofing
All partners to contribute to equality proofing.

5.1.2 Purpose

- Establish a framework for the RVIP with appropriate evaluation and monitoring
- Build participation and sector development to enable the RVIP to function as an effective partnership
- Revisit membership and terms of reference to ensure reach to all sectors of interest
- Ensure adequate representation on relevant regional and sub regional bodies
- Invest in modernisation of the VCS according to Change Up principles and individual regional networks' objectives
- Ensure that the final plan is relevant for the region in terms of regional policy and local developments
- Ensure the plan is equality and rural proofed

5.1.3 Evidence of Need

Because the RVIP has just been set up, it is too early to put together need evidenced by a survey of beneficiaries of the partnership. Key documents that show the need for a RVIP are listed here as evidence of need. Momentum is growing to build greater cohesion into the VCS infrastructure.

The following Key Reports show that the VCS infrastructure needs to be enhanced to make it an effective regional partner:

HM Spending Review 2002 highlighted the role of VCS infrastructure in supporting organisational capacity and being a voice for the VCS, giving opportunities for representation in policy making. It recognised that organisations in the VCS lack the information and skills needed to operate effectively in an increasingly complex world. All VCSOs need some help, advice and assistance to fulfil their objectives to a lesser or greater extent. A regional partnership can help bring together the coherence needed to simplify information assimilation and develop skills and voice.

White Paper 2002 Your Region, Your Choice noted that decisions affecting the regions are taken far away from the people and places that they will affect. This lack of local knowledge and sensitivity means that the VCS has a key role in increasing participation by currently under-represented groups. Regional VCS infrastructure must be able to demonstrate that it can give diverse interests a 'voice'. Specialist networks already operating at a regional level can ensure that that "diverse" voice is heard, allow for cross cutting work and liaise successfully with local and national levels.

The HM Treasury 'The Role of the VCS in Service Delivery 2002 sees an increasing role for social enterprise in the delivery of services. Overall the expectation is that all VCS activity, including those that are social enterprises, would operate in a more business-like and professional manner. This plan contains the elements necessary to improve functionality and rationalisation which will also aid the procurement agenda.

It is anticipated that there would be:

- Involvement by the VCS in the planning and delivery of services
- long term strategic partnerships between government and the funding agencies and the sector
- significant development of the capacity of the sector

Active Community Unit (ACU) Sept 2003, outlined a Government vision for a strong and vibrant voluntary and community sector, and specified that they do not expect the VCS to speak with a single voice and understand that infrastructure provision cannot be standardised too rigidly. However, they are also aware that a piecemeal development of infrastructure has left gaps and led to a degree of duplication at all levels. As stated before, a successful RVIP will aid joined up thinking and avoid piecemeal development. There are already good links between regional and local VCS organisations e.g. most regional network trustees are from local VCS organisations.

Defra Sept 2003 (Community Capacity Building and Voluntary Sector Infrastructure in Rural England) points out that people living in rural areas need to be fully involved in developing their communities and in shaping the decisions affecting them. The regional plan has an emphasis on rural proofing and the development of regional rural policy and information banks.

Capacity Building and Infrastructure Framework – ChangeUp (July 2004,) provides guidance for infrastructure investment:

- overlap and confusion between providers needs to be reduced
- infrastructure should gradually 'coalesce'; subject to local circumstances; this could be at the local, sub-regional or regional levels
- frontline organisations should have better access to high quality support

- infrastructure services to be configured to better meet the needs of users; are co-ordinated, deliver effectively and are more sustainable
- there is an increased engagement of voluntary and community organisations in priority public service areas

ChangeUp east notes infrastructure must look to ways of improving and enhancing face-to-face support at the 'frontline', and

- develop and support mechanisms that can share knowledge and information, promote collaboration and partnership – to include mergers, collaborations and co-location
- promote excellence – benchmarking amongst providers and overall for the sector, performance management and improvement and skills development
- the common themes that emerge are that the VSC infrastructure needs to enhance co-ordination within the VCS. To do this it needs to develop a route map from where the VCS is to where it needs to be. More effective co-ordination will improve its voice and ultimately benefit end users of services

5.1.4 Strategic Direction 1- Objectives

To apportion development worker time through secondment or consultancy plus COVER management and administration time to:

- Develop a route map for the regional VCS partnership to undertake a more in depth audit of needs and issues, get partner agreement for the main development areas, identify activities and partnerships to develop the plan, write protocols, identify steps to be taken after April 2006, set up the monitoring and evaluation framework, ensure this plan is rural and equality proofed, can deliver sustainable outcomes and will complement the work of other relevant national / regional and local plans
- Identify opportunities for linking local, regional and national work, sharing good practice and formalising working arrangements
- Invest in individual networks to enable them to participate in the partnership and to develop their regional priorities and service needs and requirements to engage across regional clusters
- Co-ordinate and support effective VCS regional representation and participation by identifying the key partnerships for the VCS RVIP, establishing representation criteria including reporting and information sharing arrangements, setting up terms of reference, accountability, guidance and support, tying in representation with both overarching regional priority and RVIP priorities to avoid unnecessary duplication

- To publicise the emerging regional VCS role within COVER's Clear Vision: Clear Thinking ten year forecast of the VCS sector
- To ensure that the regional VCS RVIP develops in a way that it secures participation of traditionally excluded groups; to ensure that the participation is broad based and reflects the diversity of the sector
- To set up a regional resource centre that can be used by all partners and the wider voluntary sector for conferences, meetings and events

5.1.5 Timetable

Sep 05	Draft Workforce Development Plan for consultation
Oct 05	Appointment of secondment or consultancy; allocation of funds to enable participation
Dec 05	First draft of framework, evaluation and proofing strategies
Dec 05	Development of criteria for representation and prioritisation of partnerships for regional VCS involvement
Oct - Apr 06	Meetings every two months of the RVIP; sector and cluster development meetings – input from development officer
Nov – Jan 06	Partnership evaluation of framework and analysis of results; start of meetings of specialist networks to develop policy; employment of staff for rural policy development
Feb – Mar 06	Implementation of recommendations from Partnership evaluation; VCS regional representatives in place. Agreement to key objectives of plan and next steps; agreement to protocols for the partnership that include work with county consortia and the national infrastructure partnership; literature review of workforce development and sector analysis; collation of relevant performance improvement toolkits and review; final Workforce Development Plan, Organisational Development and Performance Improvement Plan; review and recommendations on appropriate quality assurance frameworks
Apr – Jun 06	Bids to next phase of Change Up; final evaluation of project; final report on open source project and development of the regional ICT plan; development of ICT to meet the needs of the disability sector plus recommendations for future projects; report with detailed analysis of rural issues with further recommendations for long term planning on rural matters.

5.1.6 Outcomes

- Agreed framework for the development of a long term regional VCS strategic plan
- Investment in the development of the regional partnership and of improved infrastructure opportunities to partnership beneficiaries
- Guidelines round the development fund to enable all regional networks to participate fully in the regional partnership; plan of outreach to bring in members or develop networks where there are gaps in the partnership; development of ICT to ensure good reach to people with disabilities
- Effective links between regional, national and local work with agreements from key partners; identification of unnecessary duplication
- Opportunities to build partnerships to increase effectiveness of services; resources to enable these partnerships to happen
- Prioritisation of key partnerships and objectives; selection of representatives for these partnerships; development of representation guidance, especially round clarity of role and information sharing
- Baseline to measure impact of regional VCS influence on targeted regional plans, policies, strategies and investments
- Regional resource centre for the VCS

5.1.7 Budget summary (see p18 below for detailed breakdown)

	Revenue £	Capital £	Total £
Phase 1	89693	61640	151333
Phase 2	152000	61000	213000
	241,693	122,640	364,333

Additional resources from EEDA and LSC / ESF
for VCS analysis and workforce development

£ 300,000

5.1.8 Detailed budget

TABLE 1 STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1 BUDGET – CHANGEUP PHASES 1 & 2

Secretariat	Revenue	Capital	Total	
Manager support (30 days @ £250 per day)	7500			Phase 1
Administrator (80 days @ £150 per day)	12000			Phase 1
Office costs, communications, travel & subsistence	5000			Phase 1
Development work and events	5016			Phase 1
Policy development support worker for Partnership	20000		20000	Phase 2
Sub-total	49516		49516	
Specific Policy work and liaison with lead partners				
Rural policy development	27000	1800	28800	Phase 2
Homelessness pilot on benchmarking	10000	0	10000	Phase 2
Development of homelessness/social care forum	20000	0	20000	Phase 2
Sub-total	57000	1800	58800	
Regional Resource Centre				
Disability access improvements to existing premises		8000		Phase 1
Display boards for meeting room		1200		Phase 1
Regional resource centre server and remote access		3500		Phase 1
Digital projector and screen		2000		Phase 1
Digital photocopier		2500		Phase 1
Sub-total		17200	17200	
Modernisation/ICT				
Disability portal	48177	22940	71117	Phase 1
IT functionality improvements	12000	21500	33500	Phase 1
Regional Rural Information Warehouse	25000	35000	60000	Phase 2
Capital development fund	0	24200	24200	Phase 2
Revenue development fund	50000	0	50000	Phase 2
Sub-total	135177	103640	238817	
TOTAL STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1				
	241693	122640	364333	
PHASE 1	89693	61640	151333	
PHASE 2	152000	61000	213000	
	241693	122640	364333	

5.2 Strategic Direction 2: Address Partnership and Cluster Development

5.2.1 Aim: Establish Partnership and Cluster Development in particular to advance participation and sector development in the five clusters identified as regional priorities

Lead

Overall Partnership development: COVER

Cluster leads:

- 1 Equalities: MENTER
- 2 Children and Young People: VYSER, NCCVO
- 3 Older People: Age Concern; EROPAG
- 4 Information and Advice: adviceUK; Citizens Advice East
- 5 Health and Social Care: COVER, VHG

5.2.2 Purpose

- To build structure and guidance for the regional partnership to work together in a collaborative and cohesive way
- To encourage relevant “clusters” of partners where it is clear that the objectives of individual networks meet the same beneficiary group or overlapping groups
- To encourage further “cluster” development where it is clear that partnerships are a more effective way of meeting key regional needs
- To set up mutual hubs or bases of expertise to share good practice and avoid duplication of resources; to identify the areas that would be most beneficial for this hub development; to ensure that this hub development does not duplicate work at a national or local level
- To further equalities work
- To identify and develop the regional elements of each cluster

5.2.3 Evidence of Need

Not only is there a need for infrastructure development and modernisation, there is a need for resources and guidance to set the processes in motion. Regional partnerships exist but are still relatively few, and trust and cooperation will need to be nurtured to acquire the desired result. For some organisations working at this level will be an extension of what they already do, but for others it will require a new attitude and objectivity that goes beyond a partisan ‘fighting your own corner’.

In the region there are thousands of charities and it is estimated that there are at least three community groups for every registered charity. The VCS in the region is overwhelmingly comprised of Small and Medium Enterprises (SME). There are 14,000 registered charities and over 40,000 other charitable organizations and community groups (including over 18,000 sports clubs) in the region (Source: COVER report Clear Vision: Clear Thinking Chapter Six, pp 12-13).

As pointed out in the evidence for strategic direction 1, piecemeal development of infrastructure has left gaps and led to a degree of duplication at all levels leaving organisations in the VCS lacking the information and skills needed to operate

effectively in an increasingly complex world. In addition overlap and confusion between providers needs to be reduced and infrastructure should then gradually 'coalesce'; subject to local circumstances, Infrastructure services which meet the needs of users, are better configured, coordinated, and more sustainable.

Clusters create opportunities for synergy and efficiency such as mergers and co-location; mutual support and collaborative challenge can increase intelligence and capacity. By working in clusters the sector can promote excellence and draw on standards set in others sectors e.g. benchmarking and performance management to enhance skills development.

Each of the clusters has further evidence of need for better infrastructure support in surveys carried out by the individual networks. As this was not a co-ordinated partnership activity this is not included but can be provided as supplementary evidence if required. E.g. a MENTER survey in 2004 discovered that 30% of BME organisations interviewed did not understand the funding process and 23% did not understand the difference between the trustee and front line volunteer role. Forty-three percent had not accessed help to address these and other issues. The regional network therefore has a role in brokering arrangements to help local infrastructure organisations meet these needs, for example, this experience will add value to the equalities cluster. The regional need in most cases for the clusters was to contribute to policy development, develop a centre of relevant expertise at the right level, help communicate good practice and develop services where there were none e.g. in the equalities network there are no regional voices for gender or sexual orientation.

5.2.4 Strategic Direction 2 - Objectives

The project has been designed to coordinate and support the development of VCS partnerships and cross sector partnerships that will further the social, economic, environmental and inclusion interests of the region. The clusters were chosen by the RVIP to serve those areas where several regional networks existed for the same beneficiary group(s) or similar interests.

- Lead bodies will ensure that their clusters will be set up to develop services with common infrastructures, for sharing of information and good practice, and the avoidance of unnecessary duplication
- To meet key regional priorities, lead bodies will ensure that their cluster development plans for promoting regional activity and regional projects will include objectives, targets and milestones
- They will also be responsible for assisting in setting up effective information sharing and documentation mechanisms both within their clusters and with other regional and local groups operating at different levels within the region
- The RVIP will, as part of its ongoing monitoring process and data collecting analysis, take the initiative to encourage the formation of new clusters when appropriate for changing conditions of emerging need

Objectives for each cluster:

Equalities Forum

- To review the potential for the establishment of a regional Equalities Forum
- To co-ordinate work round equalities leading to better policy development and service delivery
- To influence regional policy, planning and service delivery to help address inequalities; to add consistency on equality issues across the region
- To create better reach to disadvantaged communities and improved infrastructure services to help meet needs
- To work in line with national and local equalities initiatives such as the Single Equalities Body or the creation of CRE regional hubs
- To promote the value of diversity to the private, public and VCS sectors

Children and Young People

- To bring VCS organisations, especially frontline organisations, up to speed with the requirements and implications of the Change Agenda for Children including Every Child Matters, Children's National Service Framework and the Youth green paper
- To identify and develop the regional element in the Change Agenda
- To research further partnership and networking potential; to complement work at national and local levels
- To act as an advocate and raise awareness of important issues in the Children and Young People sector

Older People

To build a VCS cluster which brings together the knowledge and experience of older people and the organisations that work with them to ensure:

- VCS services and activities reflect best practice, are responsive to older people's views and can learn from each other
- That older people are at the centre of the change process taking place in the public service agenda and can better deal with issues that affect and influence their well-being, independence, prosperity and choice
- That there is better understanding of issues arising from national policy developments directly relevant to the sector e.g. the CEHR, Age Discrimination legislation, the Social Care Green Paper
- To help older people's organisations link more effectively with other specialist networks, the statutory and the private sector
- To develop a "Voice of Experience" cluster that will be a key stakeholder in Future East

Health and Social Care

- To establish a regional VCS Health and Social Care baseline and database of activity in order to measure impact and contribution and help plan further services

- To ensure that Workforce Development, Performance Improvement and ICT development in the plan are relevant for and used in the regional VCS Health and Social Care sector
- To review and set up as appropriate regional brokerage for partnerships and collaborative working in the sector
- To review and encourage innovation and enterprise in service delivery
- To engage in the monitoring and contribution to key regional strategies
- To help the establishment of benchmarking clubs for quality standards, assist in identifying specialist infrastructure services to be delivered and help with setting up relevant consultation forums

Information and Advice Services

- To review the provision of information and advice services with particular regard to key priorities and hard to reach communities; to make recommendations, as appropriate
- To identify and develop the regional element of IAS with links to national and local provision
- To use the ICT development of the plan, where appropriate, to recommend action to improve services e.g. case tracking software
- To look at how the provision of IAS fits in with other key objectives of the regional RVIP e.g. making partners aware of needs that may not be represented by VCS organisations or community groups
- To contribute to the knowledge management agenda

5.2.5 Timetable

May 05	COVER secretariat support to partnership and representatives (arrangements, terms of reference and internal protocols) established
Aug 05	Start of Equalities Forum cluster
Oct 05	Start of cluster development apart from the Equalities Forum; recruitment of secondments etc. (Detailed timetables for each cluster can be provided if required)
By Jun 06	Establishment of the five cross cutting VCS clusters; evaluation of contribution to the Regional Partnership
Sep 05 –Jun 06	Appraisal of cluster development is standing item on RVIP agenda
By Jun 06	Protocols for work with national hubs and county consortia developed and links established

5.2.6 Outcomes

- An effective regional partnership in terms of VCS policy coordination and contribution, demonstrating increased regional VCS social, economic, environmental and inclusion activity
- Fit for purpose regional clusters leading strategic VCS development in:
 - * Equalities
 - * Information and Advice services
 - * Children and Young People
 - * Health and Social Care
 - * Older people
- Achievement of objectives set in each cluster
- Mutually beneficial links to the work of the national hubs and county consortia

5.2.7 Budget

TABLE 2 STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2 BUDGET – CHANGEUP PHASES 1 & 2

CLUSTERS	Revenue	Capital	Total	
Equalities Forum	45267	5000	50267	Phase 1
Children, families & young people	47200	2800	50000	Phase 1
Older People	32400	14000	46400	Phase 1
Sub-total Phase 1	124867	21800	146667	
Health & social care	15000	2500	17500	Phase 2
Information & advice	18760	8740	27500	Phase 2
Sub-total Phase 2	33760	11240	45000	
TOTAL STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2	158627	33040	191667	Phases 1 & 2

5.3 Strategic Direction 3: Consolidate the Collection, Management and Dissemination of Knowledge

5.3.1 Aim: Set up systems for knowledge and information management and processing

Lead: COVER

Key Partners: EEDIN; CITIZENS ADVICE - EAST; adviceUK; Rural Action East

5.3.2 Purpose

To establish and develop a regional VCS knowledge and information base that will be of use to the VCS and its regional partners, but which can benefit local and national infrastructure needs and service delivery

To manage this base to ensure the most effective support for both the RVIP and the individual partners

To ensure that this base provides good evidence for regional policy development and for measurement of the VCS contribution

5.3.3 Evidence of Need

Data collection is key to a strong infrastructure to support VCS frontline organizations in their delivery and especially important in engaging hard to reach groups.

The size, unevenness and geographical spread of the sector make data collection and analysis difficult, but easier and efficient where information sharing and data collection is via the internet. However, recent research (Disability East – EEDIN) indicates that IT provision in the VCS is patchy at best, and perhaps even more importantly, the level of IT literacy rarely exceeds ‘advanced novice’. While this needs to be addressed in a comprehensive way, it need not prevent the initial collection of information and the establishing of databases where the skill and resource exists. With so many charities and community groups in different sectors a first step in building cohesion and clusters is to develop a database and directory of front line and infrastructure bodies. Equally the database can be used to assess need and collate data to input into Government. In order to aid knowledge management, each network within the RVIP has been given a small fund to develop their individual strategic and policy framework and further identify how this contributes to the regional partnership.

In addition efficiencies can be made in the VCS as capacity (such as finance, marketing) can be delivered to frontline services. It is important to stress that the regional knowledge management will be worked in collaboration with local organisations to ensure that it fully serves a co-ordinating role rather than duplicate what is better set up at local levels. There will be a similar structure in place with regard to disseminating the information from national hubs or the Infrastructure National Partnership.

5.3.4 Strategic Direction 3 - Objectives

The project has been designed to coordinate, develop and maintain the regional VCS knowledge and evidence base in terms of:

- Data collection
- Data interpretation, analysis and evaluation
- Data holding, access, sharing, retrieval
- Data publication and dissemination
- Co-ordination of information gathering and publicity of relevant leads for particular knowledge and expertise

Use of this knowledge and evidence base to contribute to regional strategy and policy and to the development of the RVIP and its partners

5.3.5 Timetable

Mar 06	Establishing and maintaining the VCS regional evidence base; regional archive of printed and digital data Regional intelligence: Developing the VCS regional capacity for VCS regional policy development in terms of: a) Research needs b) Definition of relevant evidence bases and the collection of information for these
Apr 06	Knowledge Management Framework established: Developing the capacity to communicate regional intelligence through the partnership and the capacity based in the partnership secretariat
May 06	First publication of an annual “State of the VCS Sector in the East of England” report: VCS size, shape, trends, economic activity, social value, environmental value, issues and concerns, achievement and impact

5.3.6 Outcomes

- VCS evidence base for developing evidence led policy
- Improved VCS regional research, policy and communication capacity
- Improved capacity for VCS to make input to government and other research plans
- Annual publication of the state of the VCS in the region
- Better opportunities for the development of the RVIP and partners

5.3.7 Budget

TABLE 3 STRATEGIC DIRECTION 3 BUDGET – CHANGEUP PHASES 1 & 2

VCS interest	Lead body	Revenue	Capital	Total	
CVS network	CVSeast	3600	1400	5000	
Disability	Disability East	3600	1400	5000	
Gender/sexual orientation	MENTER	3600	1400	5000	
Faiths	EEFC	3600	1400	5000	
Faiths	EEFA	3600	1400	5000	
Homelessness	VHG	3600	1400	5000	
Health providers	COVER	3600	1400	5000	
Mental health	MIND East	3600	1400	5000	
Sports	NGB East	3600	1400	5000	
	CITIZENS				
Info/Advice	ADVICE - EAST	3600	1400	5000	
Volunteering	Volunteering East	3600	1400	5000	
Refugees/asylum seekers	VSRNE	3600	1400	5000	
Sub-total networks		43200	16800	60000	Phase 1

In addition in financial year 2005-06, £110k was given by EEDA for regional VCS Foresight Analysis (Clear Vision; Clear Thinking)

5.4 Outcome measurement for all three strategic directions:

- Appointment of secondments / consultants according to plan
- Regular supervision of staff by lead bodies of projects
- Reports to regional partnership meetings
- Regular monitoring to ensure targets are reached according to the plan
- Feedback from individual networks
- Commissioned feedback from external sources, e.g. beneficiaries, as appropriate
- Collection of views from stakeholders as appropriate e.g. from statutory and private stakeholders on the Equalities Forum
- Final evaluation report to measure achievement against proposed outcomes

The RVIP has already been given the following amounts:

£24,475 for early spend and participation costs

£27,267 for development of the plan and the start of equalities work

We would like these amounts to be considered as part of the Regional Partnership Early Spend and funded from any Government Office underspend on the Early Spend. We have, therefore, bid for the full allocation in this proposal.

In conclusion, investment in this plan will enable the RVIP to deliver on the following functions:

1. A facilitating function that encourages / enables a variety of VCOs and networks to come together and cooperate and develop a coordinated approach to engagement with the regional agenda
2. An intelligence function that pulls together relevant evidence for development of arguments / input into strategies and programmes and helps make the case for high quality, independent research where required
3. A scrutiny function regarding implementation of strategies and programmes
4. A support function for sub-regional intelligence needs (including an understanding of the links between generic and specialist networks) that ensures a two way flow of information and improves opportunities for sub regional organisations to engage in the regional agenda
5. An outreach function where required including awareness raising and campaigning
6. A liaison function with regional agencies and partnerships that ensures the VCS is well represented and engaged and can speak for their beneficiaries
7. A representative support function to those individuals from the VCS actually engaged around the decision making table.

SUMMARY BUDGET BY STRATEGIC DIRECTION					
Strategic Direction	REVENUE		CAPITAL		TOTAL
	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 1	Phase 2	
S D 1	89,693	152,000	61,640	61,000	364,333
S D 2	124,867	33,760	21,800	11,240	191,667
S D 3	43,200		16,800		60,000
TOTAL	257,760	185,760	100,240	72,240	616,000

6 FULL BUDGET – PHASE ONE

RVIP BUDGET - PHASE ONE					REVENUE	CAPITAL	NETWORKS		TOTAL
1. NETWORKS CAPACITY							REVENUE	CAPITAL	
Ref	VCS Interest	Lead body	Lead contact						
N5	CVS network	CVSeast	H Farley				3,600	1,400	5,000
N6	Disability	Disability East	R Boyd				3,600	1,400	5,000
N7	Gender/sexual orientation	MENTER	I Chandavarkar				3,600	1,400	5,000
N9	Faiths	EEFC	J Kartupelis				3,600	1,400	5,000
N10	Faiths	EEFA	D Capey				3,600	1,400	5,000
N11	Homelessness	VHG	E Daniel				3,600	1,400	5,000
N12	Health providers	COVER	A Cogan				3,600	1,400	5,000
N14	Mental health	MIND East	Caroline Coles				3,600	1,400	5,000
N20	Sports	NGB East	K Edwards				3,600	1,400	5,000
		CITIZENS	A Moynihan/K						
N22	Info/Advice	ADVICE - EAST	Bennett				3,600	1,400	5,000
N24	Volunteering	Volunteering East	H Rothwell				3,600	1,400	5,000
N27	Employment Forum	COVER	A Cogan				0	0	0
N29	Refugees/asylum seekers	VSRNE	I Chandavarkar				3600	1400	5000
2. CLUSTERS, MODERNISATION & ICT									
C1	Equalities	Equalities Forum	MENTER	I Chandavarkar	45,267	5,000	0	0	50,267
	Children, Families	Development/Link	NCVCCO/						
C3	and Youth	Workers	VYSER	D Read/M Sanders	40,000	0	7,200	2,800	50,000
C4	Older People	Older People's Cluster	ACE/EROPAG		28,800	11,200	3,600	2,800	46,400
		IT functionality							
M1	Info/Advice	improvements inc OSS	FIAC/ COVER	K Bennett	12,000	21,500	0	0	33,500
			Disability East,						
M2	Disability	Disability Portal, EEDIS	EDPA, yr 1	R Boyd	48,177	22,940	0	0	71,117
			Sub-total		174,244	60,640	54,000	22,400	311,284
3. SECRETARIAT & POLICY DEVELOPMENT									
SPD1	Secretariat	COVER	A Cogan		24,500	17,200	0	0	41,700
		RVIP devel. work			5016	0	0	0	5,016
	TOTAL	Total			203,760	77,840	54,000	22,400	358,000
TOTAL REVENUE		257,760							
TOTAL CAPITAL		100,240							
COMBINED TOTAL		358,000							

7 FULL BUDGET - PHASE TWO

PHASE TWO - REGIONAL PRIORITIES

	Project	Lead body	Contact	REVENUE	CAPITAL	TOTAL
M6	Rural Policy Development	RAE	D Wood	27,000	1,800	28,800
M3	Disability Portal, Circuit riders	Disability East, EDPA, yr 1	R Boyd	0	0	0
M4	Intelligent Keyboard Software	EDPA	R Boyd	0	0	0
M5	Regional Rural Info Warehouse	RAE	D Wood	25,000	35,000	60,000
C2	Health and Social Care	COVER	A Cogan	15,000	2,500	17,500
C6	Information and Advice Services	CITIZENS ADVICE - EAST		18,760	8,740	27,500
C7	Homelessness pilot on benchmarking	VHG	E Daniel	10,000	0	10,000
	Development of homelessness/social care forum	VHG		20,000	0	20,000
	Regional RVIP policy officer	RVIP		20,000	0	20,000
	Capital development fund	RVIP		0	24,200	24,200
	Revenue development fund	RVIP		50,000	0	50,000
	Total			185,760	72,240	258,000

APPENDIX 1

THE REGIONAL CONTEXT

The East of England is a diverse region with clear strengths and opportunities, entering a period of significant change. A sustainable future will only be achieved by tackling a number of serious challenges that are arising from this change.

Some of these challenges arise from the following drivers and statistics:

General

- One of largest and most diverse regions in the UK with fewer large cities and no obvious regional capital comparer to others
- Significant rural landscape, and is home to around a fifth of England's market towns
- 3 out of 4 national growth areas impact the region with major issues for housing supply and sustainable development

Population

- One of the fastest growing regions in the UK: population grown by over 11 per cent from 1982 to 2002 - forecast to be half a million in 2021
- Increasingly ageing population, especially in coastal areas - second highest number of pensioner households living in poverty. Half of all adults likely to be aged 50+ by 2020, including 30-40% increase in the 75+ population.
- A net in-migration of around 20,000 people per annum, but a significant out-migration in the 15-24 age group
- Steady growth in black and minority ethnic population - distributed unevenly across the region (Luton has a BME population of 28% while the average is below the UK average. Undercounting of minority ethnic communities is likely as a large number of migrant workers (primarily in agricultural industry) do not appear on census or other official statistical data. A recent Gypsy Caravan Count showed the region had 25% of the England total

Economy

- One of the strongest and fastest growing economies in the UK - a strong service sector is the source of much of the region's growth
- Concentration of internationally important businesses engaged in research and development (R&D) and housing over 30 of the world's leading research centres
- Traditional firms undergoing major transition as trend like elsewhere, is away from manufacturing employment towards the service sector
- Growth of the knowledge economy associated with the emergence of a dual labour market, with knowledge jobs and lower level jobs created simultaneously.
- Region plays an important role in complementing and enhancing the position of London as a world city
- With continuing economic growth there is a need to ensure that the gap between wealthy and poor neighbourhoods does not widen

Social exclusion

- Significant numbers of isolated groups in rural areas
- As many households living in poverty in region as in other 'deprived' regions e.g. North East
- Pockets of deprivation exist in some rural, coastal and urban areas. Structural changes including the loss of an estimated 60,000 jobs in agriculture, the closure of important industries and the decline of seaside towns are all contributing factors.
- Some population groups are particularly at risk of social exclusion. These include: BME groups, disabled people, lone parents, older people, carers, asylum seekers and refugees and ex-offenders

Climate change

- Effect of climate change is likely to be particularly significant - water shortages and increased storm intensity bringing flooding and impacting on coastal defences; summers are likely to be hotter and drier, milder winters may affect food production in rural areas

APPENDIX 2

OVERVIEW OF KEY REGIONAL STRATEGIES

A number of regional strategies have been commissioned over recent years, and all are in various stages of development and re-development. All have relevance to the Voluntary and Community Sector in the East of England.

Regional Economic Strategy (RES)
Regional Sustainable Development Framework
Regional Housing Strategy
Regional Social Strategy
Regional Health Strategy
Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) aka The East of England Plan
Regional Environment Strategy
Regional Cultural Strategy
Towns and Cities Strategy (including Regional Centre of Excellence)
Employment and Skills action plan (FRESA)
Refugee and Asylum-Seeker Integration Strategy
Sustainable Tourism Strategy
East of England Plan for Sport
Social Enterprise Strategy for the East of England tbc 2005

The Integrated Regional Strategy (IRS) provides a joined-up statement of regional priorities through reviewing and analysing regional strategies; it identifies and reconciles the main priorities incorporated in these other strategies. The purpose of the IRS is:

- To provide a joined up statement of regional priorities.
- To flag any areas where the regional strategies may conflict.
- To suggest processes through which tensions between regional strategies might be mitigated and resolved.
- To provide an overarching context for the development of regional strategies in the future, building on the current Regional Sustainable Development Framework.
- To provide a clear statement to central government of the East of England's regional priorities.

The IRS tackles the critical issues facing the region and combines a strong strategic vision for the region with the necessary co-ordination framework for all other strategies, regional partnership bodies and delivery mechanisms.

Integrated Regional Strategy (IRS)

Crucial Issues for the region

Crucial Issue 1: Housing supply, growth and sustainability

Crucial Issue 2: Transport, travel and infrastructure

Crucial Issue 3: Building the knowledge economy

Crucial Issue 4: Skills and Labour supply

Crucial Issue 5: Deprivation and access to services

Crucial Issue 6: Health and well-being

Crucial Issue 7: Rural issues

Priorities for the East of England:

- Sustainable solutions in Growth Areas and other areas facing growth pressures
- Harness the region's strengths in science, R&D & commercialization processes
- Address the causes and implications of persistent deprivation and social exclusion
- Ensure efficient resource use and manage natural and built environment assets
- Capture benefits/manage impacts of international gateways and national transport corridors

High level outcomes

1. An exceptional knowledge base and a dynamic economy in the region
2. Opportunities for all to contribute to/benefit from regional economic dynamism
3. Strong, inclusive, healthy and culturally rich communities
4. A high quality and diverse natural and built environment
5. A more resource-efficient region

Regional Economic Strategy (RES)

Strategic objectives:

1. A skills base that can support a world-class economy
2. Growing competitiveness, productivity and entrepreneurship
3. Global leadership in developing/ innovation in science, technology and research
4. High quality places to live, work and visit
5. Social inclusion and broad participation in the regional economy
6. Make most from development of international gateways & national/regional transport corridors
7. A leading information society
8. An exemplar for the efficient use of resources

Regional Social Strategy

Strategic objectives

1. To tackle poverty and reduce income inequalities
2. To promote access to work, tackle low pay and improve conditions of work
3. To improve the life chances of children from disadvantaged families and support vulnerable young people in the transition to adulthood
4. To improve the life chances of adults through learning and skills development
5. To promote active ageing and reduce social exclusion of older people
6. To support the development of sustainable communities
7. To improve access to services, especially for disadvantaged groups
8. To develop social networks, community assets and promote community cohesion

APPENDIX 3 - Regional VCS Partners

Summary of their purpose, strategic and service priorities

Advice^{UK} Eastern Region

Advice^{UK} is a national membership network for independent information and advice providers. Advice is given to members and potential members on organisational issues (e.g. constitutions, recruitment, staffing issues etc.) Advice^{UK} has just under 1000 organisations in membership. Members range from small volunteer only services run from makeshift premises, through to large national advice organisations. Members are either generalist services offering advice on a range of subjects, or specialist services offering in-depth advice in one area of social-welfare law. Some members specifically serve a particular community in society and for a number, advice is but one of the services that they provide. It is this diversity that makes Advice^{UK} a uniquely rich organisation, and able to speak with authority on a wide range of topics.

Age Concern Eastern Region (ACE)

Age Concern Eastern Region (AC East) is the federation of Age Concerns in the East of England. Each member of the federation is an independent, autonomous charity which is committed to the mission of enhancing the quality of life for all older people, and complying with the Age Concern Quality Standards and core values. Locally, Age Concerns are involved in direct service delivery to older people, including services delivered on an agency basis for local authorities, prioritising those activities which support and enable people to remain at home while they wish to do so. These include Information and Advice (including welfare benefits checks and support in application, and advocacy as appropriate), direct home support services, voluntary visiting and befriending projects, day care services, etc. The larger organisations are also involved as local strategic partners, influencing and campaigning on issues affecting older people, and involving older people in consultation activities. They are also specialist infrastructure providers to many local groups working with and for older people, providing support and guidance on charity and other legal issues, Health & Safety, community development, older people's involvement etc.

As the regional body, AC East works in partnership with others in the region to develop and maintain quality and standards in achieving the best possible outcomes for older people and their carers primarily through campaigning, education and influence,

while service delivery directly with and for older people is at county or local level. The Region also supports local development as set out below.

Policy Context

Opportunity Age, Choosing Health (the Public Health White Paper), Social Care Green Paper, Regional Social Strategy, Regional Health Strategy, Implications of an Ageing population (EERA/EEDA Study), Regional Plan for Sport, Local Government Modernisation.

VCS context

AC East has the following strategic priorities, identified in its current strategic plan:

- involving older people from diverse communities
- building trust and collaboration between federation members;
- increasing understanding about our diverse population as it ages
- influencing regional and national agendas
- working towards common standards, to improve quality
- maintaining support networks for staff and trustees
- ensuring that all Members can participate in the activities of the federation

Currently it addresses these in the following way:

- Working with partners in FutureEast (the Regional Forum on Ageing, which acts as a Regional Strategic Partnership for aging and older people), to develop effective strategies for raising awareness about the implications of an ageing population, and developing and supporting regional initiatives that combat age discrimination and the barriers to participation that older people frequently experience in all aspects of their lives. Current examples include support for the PRIME initiative, the research work of CIRCA, and the Fitter Futures project in which the Regional Assembly, Sport England East and Age Concern are collaborating with the aim of increasing 50+ participation in physical activity.
- Continuing to influence the development of regional planning and strategies to take account of older people's issues and of the ageing population by encouraging and participating in regional demographic research, identifying and sharing key issues in public policy that impact on older people in the region, responding to consultations, directly involving, and promoting the involvement of, older people where possible, and contributing to strategic planning and preparation, including age-proofing

- Acting as a broker to enable local Age Concerns to work effectively with regional and sub-regional partners: e.g. in the Commission for Social Care Improvement contract to deliver an Action Research Project on User Involvement in the inspection of services
- Providing Information and signposting to older people and their carers
- Working with other VCS organisations in reaching out to the needs of excluded older people, including MENTER, Ormiston Trust (re Travellers), disability organisations: reducing duplication and unnecessary competition
- Providing infrastructure support at local and regional levels: to local groups working with, for and often by older people; identifying gaps in information sharing, training and development, policy understanding, and enabling participation of local groups and individuals in wider regional and national developments and consultations,
- Supporting professional networks and networking within Age Concern - a Chairs' network, links between Chief Executives, and induction training for new staff and trustees of Age Concern
- Regionally supporting national campaigning activity, running own regional campaigns or events on specific topics, often in partnership with other regional agencies e.g. participation event for socially excluded older people to link in with Dept of Work and Pensions

AC East plans to support the development of the Older People's VCS by:

- developing a coherent regional platform for older people, bringing together diverse organisations operating across the region, and focusing on working effectively as a strategic regional partner;
- developing capacity to support regional VCS representatives on other bodies such as the EERA in providing technical advice and detailed briefings on issues affecting older people and the ageing population, in conjunction with FutureEast
- Seeking to improve its regional communications internally and externally: limited IT capacity and capability recently identified, needing both equipment and training for more capacity to process relevant information and guidance for local use, and linking with the FutureEast website to provide dedicated pages for older people and the organisations that work with them
- Building on current regional activity with regional partners by increasing capacity to participate as a regional strategic partner
- Enhancing capacity to provide specialist infrastructure support to the older people's VCS directly at regional level, and indirectly through the county Age Concern networks.

Citizens Advice – East

Across the East, more than 657,000 people every year use a Citizens Advice Bureau to help resolve money, legal, consumer or other problems. The 58 bureaux in the region, supported by the Regional Office in Cambridge (including a team of business, training and IT management consultants) and National Office, deal with issues ranging from benefits to bankruptcy, from homelessness to immigration.

Citizens Advice is one of the best-known organisations in the region – 95% of people in the East have heard of Citizens Advice – and it has very high levels of trust (75%+). Over half of all people in the East will be involved with Citizens Advice at some time in their lives, either as a client, a volunteer, a paid member of staff – or as the friend or family member of someone that is.

The Citizens Advice service does more than resolve an individual's problems. It makes a significant contribution to the political, economic and social fabric of the East. It is a force for economic regeneration, putting cash into the pockets of hundreds of thousands of people, many of them among the poorest in the East. It is a training agency, providing skills to over one thousand volunteers and paid staff in the region each year. And it is a campaigning organisation, arguing – and often winning – the case for better policy and practice by regional and national organisations.

- Client focused

Citizens Advice is open to the public almost 183,000 hours a year in the East are clients are overwhelmingly satisfied with the service they get. Over 90% of Citizens Advice clients say they were helped by Citizens Advice, and over a third find themselves financially better off as a result of help from a Citizens Advice Bureau.

- Open to all

Citizens Advice Bureaux exist to help anyone in the community, whatever their age, gender, religion, race, sexual orientation, nationality, disability, legal or financial status. Citizens Advice services are free to all clients.

- Voluntary

Every Citizens Advice Bureau is both an independent charity and a professional business. Of the 2,813 people working in the Citizens Advice service in the East, 80% are trained volunteers. This is the equivalent of 444 full-time posts in the East.

- Cost-effective

The financial value of volunteers in Citizens Advice bureaux in the East is estimated at more than £11.2 million per annum using current pay rates for employed staff. Citizens Advice provides free training and is an important source of work experience for unemployed people. Many of Citizens Advice volunteers move on to paid employment. People who consult the Citizens Advice service often end up financially better off. This extra wealth often stays in the community, boosting the local economy.

- High quality

All bureaux in the East meet the Citizens Advice stringent quality controls and all also have the quality mark for general help from the Legal Services Commission. In fact, Citizens Advice goes further and audits all bureaux for the quality of the actual advice it provides – the only advice agency to do this. All bureaux use the unique Citizens Advice electronic information system – over 11,000 pages of detailed guidance on virtually any problem, updated monthly and provided to all bureaux.

- Influential

Every year, Citizens Advice bureaux in the East generate thousands of reports on client problems caused by bad or unfair laws. This unrivalled evidence base allows Citizens Advice to campaign for policy change regionally and nationally.

COVER

The Community & Voluntary Forum: Eastern Region represents Regional VCS (through nomination to regional bodies and leverage of regional funds). It is actively involved in developing regional partnerships, carrying out research and policy development, communicating regional information and opportunities. COVER has representatives on: the Regional Assembly, the Cultural Consortium, EEDA advisory groups, Public Agencies Group East, RSCP, BSAB, ASB, and ESF operating group.

CVS East

CVS East is a forum for discussion of strategic developments impacting on the work and interests of Councils for Voluntary Service in the Eastern Region. The forum exists to support and encourage development and sharing of good practice and to ensure representation at a regional level to maximise opportunities for CVS participation. It is a member of NACVS. CVS East is new and plans its first formal full meeting in Autumn 2005.

Disability East

Disability East is a free association of 16 county/unitary based disability information producers with a management (information cascade) group comprising one organisation from each of the 6 county and 4 unitary areas; represented at Regional Assembly

Policy Context: Planning procedures for housing, transport, infrastructure and other developments must include disability as an obligatory issue on their agenda. Many governmental policies either contradict or overlap each other
Research: the EEDIN (East of England Disability Information Network) report produced an initial assessment of the current and future needs of disabled people in the East of England. The extensive findings included the following

- Projected rise in disabled people
- Life expectancy for disabled people will continue to rise
- Disability information and support network of voluntary sector providers across the region is of an uneven quality and structure
- Range of services is not coherent and substantial under-provision with overload on areas where provision exists
- The insufficient funding from local and central government

Proposed Future Activities: to produce a complete assessment of current and future needs in the East of England and analyse the amount of financial and human resource requirement to achieve the strategic aims of EEDIN arising from this research.

East NGB (National Governing Bodies of sport) Forum

Background

The overwhelming majority of sports activity is in VCS. However, sport has traditionally not seen itself as part of the traditional CVS and has limited history in engaging in the wider issues of the sector or in regional government plans. Despite the major restructuring of sport in education and the community currently underway it increasingly recognises its role and is reconciling the often competing interests of individual sports with the broader, common interest of sport: the Forum is an example.

Forum

The East Region National Governing Bodies Forum is an umbrella group formed from regional representatives of the 31 UK and Sport England priority sports plus other relevant representatives including COVER, Sport England, sportscoachUK and the

Federation of Eastern Sport (The Federation seeks to represent over 100 individual sports plus dance and other physical recreational activities however its future is currently uncertain mainly due to funding issues). Formed in early 2004, the Forum's aim has been to provide a collective and co-ordinated voice in the rapidly evolving landscape of sports structures, strategies and plans including Whole Sport/One Stop Plans, emerging County Sports Partnerships, Community Coach development programme, East of England Plan for Sport, Step into Sport, School Club links, Vision for Coaching and more recently successful Olympic bid, London 2012. One particular outcome has been a specification of the requirements and responsibilities between sports and County Sports Partnerships.

Future work

It has recently been to review the Forum's terms of reference to ensure its aim, purpose, objectives, membership and activities are fit for purpose and continue to be relevant for how VCS sport needs to enhance the development of sport and thereby the opportunities for all to participate and perform in sport through comprehensive and co-ordinated plans and activities in the East region. This is tied to both the national and regional government plans to increase participation at 1%pa and provide pathways to elite level performance.

Evidence Base

Research (CCPR/Sport England) shows some 15% of all adults volunteer in sport contributing some 1.5bn hours per annum, valued at £14bn. The sports sector makes the single biggest contribution to total adult volunteering in England at 26%. There is also substantial, documented evidence of the benefits, both physical and mental, from physical activity (See Wanless Reports April 2002 and Feb 2004), CMO advice (April 2004) Choosing Health (Nov 2004),) etc backed up by Regional work such as erpho report on Obesity (2004). These reports also quantify the financial costs to the NHS of physical inactivity through obesity (c£1bn pa in East), diabetes, increased coronary heart disease and certain cancers. There is more anecdotal support for the value of sport as a diversionary activity usually targeted at young people. Sport and recreation remain the most popular forms of physical activity providing not only health benefits but importantly enjoyment and fun thereby providing quality as well as quantity of life.

East of England Faiths Agency (EEFA)

The Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003 and the Race and Religious Hatred Bill 2005 make it imperative that everyone understands respects and appreciates the stance of those of a different religious outlook than themselves.

EEFA is able to provide contextual Diversity Training to encourage this to all working in the VCS.

EEFA is a fully inclusive organisation which welcomes involvement from all faith groups within the region provided that they do not overtly contravene the law of the land or infringe the human rights of others.

Current Functions EEFA provides updates to a large number of faith and inter-faith groups and to other bodies in the region on current topics of importance via its email network. It also provides Diversity Training to other organisations in the private, statutory and voluntary sectors within and without the region.

Research EEFA supports the research work (qualitative and quantitative) of its constituent parts as and when necessary. Some of its research is informal and ongoing, other research may be focused and for a limited period.

Proposed Future Activity

- To further build up its electronic network
- To facilitate regional electronic debate on current issues which affect the faith communities.
- To arrange regional conferences on faith / society related issues.
- To build up its team of tutors from across all of the faiths being practised in the region in order to further resource its Diversity Training programme.
- To remain a reactive agency quickly able to respond to issues as they arise

East of England Faiths Council (EEFC)

The EEFC brings together church leaders and other people of standing from the nine major faith traditions represented in the region, who have a public role in society and are able to speak with understanding of their communities at grassroots level.

Purpose: to ensure that faith communities are an effective stakeholder in the region, by making input to regional development and strategy, and facilitating dialogue with senior decision-makers; and to help those working at local level to be more effective.

Current work: EEFC is the nominating body for faiths representation on EERA and its panels, and meets as a full council four times a year to take information from, and give feedback to its representatives; also to debate issues of relevance and decide its position on these. EEFC holds conferences, publishes research and other papers, and participates in consultations such as the East of England Plan Examination in Public.

Research: EEFC has commissioned research - 'Faith in the East of England' - on faith-based community activity in the region. This was funded by EEDA through the Investing in Communities initiative, and will feed into EEDA's planning. It has given substantial evidence of the economic and social contribution made to the region by faiths; their engagement with public and other secular bodies; and has identified ways in which faith communities can address the regeneration agenda.

Proposed future activities: Continue current meetings and representational work. Undertake specific roles indicated by the research including: information gathering/dissemination and courses. Raise awareness of relevant issues and take an advocacy role. Be a catalyst in the regeneration process. Promote sustainable communities in the Growth Areas.

Eastern Region Older People's Advisory Group (EROPAG)

EROPAG is a network of organisations with shared mission, values and objectives that work with older people in local communities and advocate on older people's issues. Network members work in partnership with others at local, county and national levels designing and developing local older people's service strategies and service planning.

EROPAG works with regional partners and local authorities on joint projects and initiatives, supporting the development of effective and high quality older persons' forums. It is represented on the Future East Steering Group.

Proposed action: Its strategic directions include creating a strategic plan in line with emerging regional foresight analysis; establishing a central secretariat to oversee the partnership; establishing a communications and marketing strategy; pursuing cluster development in line with strategic and thematic regional drivers; reviewing regional older people's input infrastructure and dealing with barriers to involvement and engagement; developing means to share best practice across regional and sub-regional infrastructure agencies; developing an equalities framework; providing meaningful intelligence to sub-regional consortia partners and statutory authorities; creating a board with members from partner age organisations, and national, regional and sub-regional agencies.

MENTER

MENTER is the regional Black / Minority Ethnic (BME) network for the Eastern Region. Its key aims are to (1) develop the BME sector; (2) promote race equality and advocate for BME communities; (3) build a strong and representative BME network. There are 420 BME groups and over 600 interested agencies / organisations on the network mailing list. 40 of the BME groups have formally taken up membership. MENTER has representatives on the GO-East Regional Advisory Group, EERA (via COVER) and

the Health / Social Inclusion and Refugee panels, EEDA liC Advisory Panel and Adult and Business Strategy Boards. It has recently been invited to a GO-East led Rural Affairs Committee.

NCVCCO East Anglia Regional Group

The National Council for Voluntary Child Care Organisations East Anglian Regional Group is a forum for discussion of regional child care: a communication interface between local, regional and national levels on policy and practice related issues that

- Promote joint working between groups working in the region
 - Engage proactively in debate about child care policy
 - Ensure the regional perspective is put into national policy making
 - Facilitate NCVCCO's services to members – information, consultation and representation
 - Identify external regional developments which may have implications for NCVCCO members
 - Promote a wider understanding in the regional of the contribution made by the voluntary child care sector
- It runs an annual conference

Policy Context: The Children Act 2004 gives a clear focus and new status to children's services, requiring Local Authorities to make arrangements to promote co-operation between agencies and voluntary and community organisations. Its implementation must be part of a wider process of change, focused on outcomes and taken forward by local change programmes set within a national framework. **The National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services** (NSF) sets out a 10 year programme to stimulate long-term sustained improvement in children's health and well-being. **Every Child Matters** recognises that to realise this ambition for improved outcomes, radical change is necessary, including in the development of shared sense of responsibility for safeguarding children and young people across requiring the integration of services across all ages and abilities, settings and sectors. It also addresses quality assurance, training and joint working as areas for development.

Research NCVCCO map of organisations in the region and an associated data-base

Related VCS Context re Regional Delivery

Infrastructure groups such as NCVCCO and VYSER (see below) have a role to play in this long-term agenda to ensure that the Voluntary Sector remains a key contributor to the Children's agenda

- ensuring the Community and Voluntary Youth Services (CVYSs) are better informed of developments and in facilitating ways of engaging with this agenda

- being party to a more co-ordinated approach in the sharing and dissemination of information relating to Children's Trusts from the Executive to its membership organisations
- providing strategic guidance, clarity and leadership to local authorities to enable CVYSs to inform their membership of current thinking and changes
- in linking infrastructure such as NCVCCO and VYSER the gaps that exist between services for young people and children are more likely to be addressed at policy and strategy level
- in delivering services to meet the National Service Framework and Every Child Matters agenda

Rural Action East

Purpose: Rural Action East works for rural regeneration across the region and its overall strategic aim is to facilitate rural community development, enabling people to live and work in thriving rural communities. It seeks to achieve this through the following specific objectives:

- To influence regional policies and strategies for the benefit of rural communities in the east
- To promote and represent rural communities and the VCS
- To facilitate performance improvement of the RCC network enhancing their delivery capacity
- To enable and support collaboration between RCC staff across a range of thematic functions and services
- To improve the evidencing of rural needs

VCS Context

RAE and its RCCs manage projects and delegated funds accessible to all communities, urban and rural. In addition, RCCs provide general and specialist support to rural community groups and organisations across the east, cutting across all age groups, health, learning, social inclusion, housing, transport, etc. They provide information and advice, capacity development, advocacy, research and influencing of policy for rural areas. Examples include

- Community planning partnerships at town & parish level
- Disadvantaged groups (supported by a national social inclusion programme)
- Quality improvements to Parish Councils and Parish Clerks.
- Village Halls Management Committees
- Rural Transport schemes
- Affordable housing for rural communities through Rural Housing Enablers

Current Functions

Strategically driven by the Rural Strategy 2004, the planned Defra Rural & Social Community programme, the new RES and the revised VCS investment programme (Capacity Builders), RAE is looking at new ways to support rural communities and develop the regional RCC network. In its delivery it works as a single business organisation, managing and delivering region wide contracts and programmes for the benefit of individuals and communities.

Specific *regional* projects include:

- Management of Biffaward funding scheme for communities to access Landfill Tax Credit Scheme and funds made available by Biffa Wastes Services Ltd
- Management of accredited training for VCS people to gain appropriate qualifications
- Administration of funds for Parish Plans
- Regional Change-Up Fund Management
- Support for Community Champions Fund distribution

Research: Detailed analysis of government initiatives for their impact on rural communities and their relevance to the key objectives of RCCs

Proposed Future Activities

- Development of data capture and analysis to provide evidence base for rural policy development and programme delivery
- Business support and advice for rural and women's social enterprises
- Development of ideas to support rural older people

VHG (formerly the Voluntary Hostels Group)

VHG had a membership of 65 providers of accommodation, support and related services

Purpose: Its regional remit is to provide

- Representation
- Networking – events and meeting services
- Research
- Information – web, email, mailings, magazine, briefings
- An annual training programme and In-house tailor made training

- Conference
- Mentoring support
- Development of member benchmarking service

VHG represents the sector on Regional Housing Forum and the Regional Supporting People Forum and sub-regional Skills for Care forums.

Research: conducted research within voluntary sector providers of accommodation and support in Herts, Essex and Beds.

Established existence of needs at many levels on many fronts:

- More widespread understanding of Regional Housing Development Agenda and how to engage with sub-regional housing strategy development
- More understanding of the prevention agenda and implications of this for service delivery
- Understanding of the purpose and progress of the Supporting People programme
- Elimination of unnecessary competitiveness and lack of engagement with other supporting agencies
- Struggles with funding that were easily addressed with support from VHG
- Isolation of front-line projects

Proposed future activities: to extend provision of services to above counties and improve its reach into Suffolk and Cambridgeshire in 2 phases – the first to employ extra staff for extending reach and the second to employ Research and Policy Manager to improve ability to act as regional strategic force.

Volunteering England – East

Volunteering England works to:

- keep volunteering high on the policy agenda, working with government to promote opportunities for, and remove institutional barriers to, volunteering
- Provide authoritative, up-to-date research on volunteering issues
- Support volunteering development through:
 - Promoting accredited quality frameworks for volunteering management and local volunteer development agencies

- Convening national events and practitioner networks
- Mounting awareness campaigns
- Providing consultancy, education, training, publications, information and web-based services
- Providing grants and strategic support to the work of volunteers
- Identifying, disseminating and promoting good practice in the involvement of volunteers
- Advice

Policy context: Volunteering England is the integrated national volunteer development organisation for England, working across the voluntary, public and private sectors to raise the profile of volunteering as a powerful force for change. Building on Success is Volunteering England's infrastructure strategy for volunteering in England, which links in with the aims of Change Up. To help achieve the ChangeUp objectives Volunteering England has produced detailed plan for the development of a Volunteering Hub and is taking the lead on implementing this and establishing regional volunteering assemblies as part of the Hub work.

Related VCS context:

Volunteering England's membership is made up of Volunteer Development Agencies (VDAs) and volunteer involving organisations across all sectors.

Regional Delivery: In the East, the Regional Volunteering Development Officer aims to support the development of an integrated and effective volunteering infrastructure in order to:

- Develop the mechanisms to deliver regional volunteering infrastructure functions
- Support local and regional volunteer involving organisations in implementing Volunteering England's 'Building on Success' Infrastructure Strategy as part of the 'Change Up' process
- Raise the profile of volunteering amongst decision makers and opinion formers at a regional level
- Ensure that volunteering is high on the regional development agenda and appropriately represented in emerging regional structures
- Increase the amount and diversity of community involvement
- Increase the capacity of volunteer-involving organisations to extend access by under-represented groups to volunteering opportunities

Research:

- Research - Annual membership returns from VDAs provide information on volunteering within the region. This information is collected by the Institute of Volunteering Research (part of Volunteering England). Research is shown in 'Building on Success'

Voluntary Sector Refugee Network –East of England (VSRN-EE)

The VSRN-EE was created to enable voluntary sector organisations in the region to work together, and in partnership with statutory agencies to provide coherence to the support of refugees and asylum seekers. VSRN-EE provides a regional voice and infrastructure support through information sharing (newsletters and emails) and in the running of training seminars at both local and regional levels. The network is currently applying for funding for a Development Worker.

VYSER (Voluntary Youth Services Eastern Region)

VYSER is an umbrella group of the Eastern Region's counties' CVYS (Council for Voluntary Youth Service) and Field Officers for large nationals such as uniformed organisations, The Prince's Trust, The Duke of Edinburgh Award, and The British Trust for Conservation Volunteers. It has about 120 mailing members in total. Each CVYS now has a paid officer (5).

Purpose: To support the CVYSs in each county and the NVYOs working regionally and to bring them together on common issues, as recently on the children's agenda.

Recent achievements: VYSER has representation on EERA, Rural Youth Work Forum, Sport England East, Regional Learning and Skills Young People's Strategy Group. It has satisfactorily completed early ChangeUp spend projects on volunteering, rural youth work and work with NCVCCO and submitted reports to GO-East and various conferences, and it has recently completed a TYWDF (Transforming Youth Work Development Fund) mapping project of voluntary youth services across the region.

Work in progress: VYSER is also working closely with LAYSER (Local Authority Youth Services Eastern Region) towards a Regional Platform to bring the Eastern Region in line with others.

Future work: Long term infrastructure development partnership with NCVCCO to ensure that the Voluntary Sector remains a key contributor to the Children's agenda

APPENDIX 4a - REGIONAL ECONOMIC STRATEGY

– Strategic goals, priorities & key areas for potential engagement by VCS

	BME	Rural	Faith	Advice	Youth	Child/ family	Disability	H&SC	VCS	Refugee	Ageing/ older people	Regeneration	Volunteering	Housing & Homelessne	Environment	Arts	Sport	Social eninterp.	Relevant to all
Strategic Goal 1: A skills base that can support a world-class economy																			
Priority 1	X	X	X	X		X	X			X	X		X	X			X	X	
Priority 2				X	X												X		
Priority 3	X	X		X					X	X								X	
Strategic Goal 2: Growing competitiveness, productivity and entrepreneurship																			
Priority 1							X				X							X	
Priority 2									X									X	
Priority 3									X									X	
Priority 4	X	X	X	X					X			X	X					X	
Strategic Goal 4: High quality places to live, work and visit																			
Priority 1	X	X					X			X	X				X				
Priority 2	X	X		X			X	X	X	X	X	X						X	
Priority 3											X			X			X	X	
Priority 4			X								X			X	X	X	X		
Priority 5	X		X	X					X		X	X							
Strategic Goal 5: Social inclusion and broad participation in the regional economy																			
Priority 1	X	X	X	X	X				X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	
Priority 2	X	X	X	X			X		X		X	X						X	
Priority 3									X				X					X	
Priority 4		X		X					X									X	
Priority 5	X		X	X			X		X	X	X						X		
Strategic Goal 7: A leading information society																			
Priority 1		X							X									X	
Priority 2		X							X										
Priority 3		X		x					X		X							X	

APPENDIX 4b - REGIONAL SOCIAL STRATEGY – Strategic objectives & key areas for potential engagement by VCS

	BME	Rural	Faith	Advice	Youth	Child/ family	Disability	H&SC	VCS	Refugee	Ageing/ older people	Regeneration	Volunteering	Housing & Homeless	Environment	Arts	Sport	Social enterpri.	Relevant to all
To tackle poverty and reduce income inequalities (SO1)																			
SO1- 2	X	X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X			X					
SO1 - 3		X		X															
To promote access to work, tackle low pay and improve conditions of work (SO2)																			
SO2 -1	X	X		X					X										X
To improve the life chances of children from disadvantaged families and support vulnerable young people in the transition to adulthood (SO3)																			
SO3 -2				X		X												X	
SO3 -6		X	X		X														
SO3 -7		X			X			X											
SO3 -8					X														
SO3 -9	X		X		X	X													
To improve the life chances of adults through learning and skills development (SO4)																			
SO4-1	X		X	X					X	X			X	X					X
SO4-2	X	X		X					X	X			X						X
SO4-3	X	X		X					X	X			X						X
To promote active ageing and reduce social exclusion of older people (SO5)																			
SO5-1	X	X		X			X	X			X		X					X	
SO5-2				X					X		X								X
SO5-3	X	X	X	X							X		X						
To support the development of sustainable communities (SO6)																			
SO6-1	X		X	X						X				X					X
SO6-2	X			X						X									

	BME	Rural	Faith	Advice	Youth	Child/ family	Disability	H&SC	VCS	Refugee	Ageing/ older people	Regeneration	Vol	Housing & Homelessness	Env	Arts	Sport	Social enterpr.	Relevant to all
S06 -3															X		X		
S06-5			X		X			X						X			X		
S06-6	X			X										X					
S06-7				X				X	X										X
S06-8				X				X											X
To improve access to services, especially for disadvantaged groups (S07)																			
S07-1												X			X		X		
S07-2	X	X	X				X		X	X	X								
S07-3	X	X				X	X			X	X	X							
S07-4	X	X				X	X			X	X	X							
S07-5	X	X		X					X									X	
To develop social networks, community assets and promote community cohesion (S08)																			
S08-1	X	X	X						X			X	X					X	
S08-2	X	X	X	X					X			X							X
S08-3	X	X		X					X			X	X						X
S08-4									X										X
S08-5	X			X						X									

APPENDIX 5

Challenges in the VCS in the Eastern Region

Size and Diversity

In the last ten years there has been a huge proliferation of small charities working within any single sector. It is estimated that there are likely to be almost 60,000 charitable organisations operating within the East of England (Clear Vision: Clear Thinking, Sep 2005, COVER). With a regional population of 5.4 million people, this equates to one charitable organisation per 96 people. In areas of marked deprivation, usually of concentrated populations, the number of charities is significantly lower than in rural areas.

The character of the VCS in the Eastern Region is very diverse: registered charities vary in size from a national charity with an income of £53 million to a medical charity with an annual budget of £55K; 25 of the top 500 fundraising charities reside here, some of them operating internationally. However, the sector is overwhelmingly SME (Small and medium sized enterprises) in character. The community sector which comprises other non-registered organisations is much looser in structure and generally charitable in purpose; groups that are either not large enough or have no need to register tend to have no paid staff and are run exclusively by volunteers.

Professionalism

The VCS is working in an increasingly professional environment, competing not only with other VCS organisations, but with statutory and private sector providers as well. In order to operate in this environment a range of support services are needed which are allied but not directly related to the product provided. These 'Backroom' services include accountancy, trustee development, HR functions, network linkage and liaison with other sectors, representation of the voluntary and community sectors, gap and need identification, research, links to strategic partnerships.

Producer and consumer tensions

The RVIP has a majority of VCS service provider members and a minority of service users. These tensions are playing themselves out as the RVIP develops its role. All partners agree on the directions of travel in the current plan.

There is clear evidence of a need for infrastructure strengthening in the following areas:

Governance

Trustees have legal obligations, personal responsibilities and liabilities towards the organisation they govern. They need to be skilled and knowledgeable and not just interested in the substance of their organisation's work and the services that it provides. Whatever the size or the developmental stage of their organisation, trustees are an essential component, yet trustees are often not clear about their role nor do they work together as team.

In the BME sub-sector, research by MENTER (2004) indicates that 23% did not distinguish between trustees and frontline volunteer roles; 25% had five trustees or fewer

Good governance through leadership and management accountability is critical to the standard of service quality.

The Compact agreement

This agreement was devised in 1998 is an agreement of mutual commitments between government and VCS for mutual advantage. Since then local Compacts have aimed to do this between local statutory bodies and the VCS. In 2005 there is little evidence that principles and values inherent in Compact compliance are being subsumed into the VCS' work and practices.

Other challenges include

- The inadequacy of current volunteering opportunities to sustain the functions of the sector as the population ages and potentially becomes more disabled
- Addressing the wide variation in of volunteer centre capacity across the region
- Attention to/understanding key drivers – economic, social, environmental, political, technological
- Poor infrastructure because of funders' tendency away from core funding for management, administration and development, and towards projects where impact can be directly measured
- Lack of research – many networks have only started to map their communities of interest; where research has been done it has tended toward looking inwards rather than outward in the direction of regional implication

- A number of VCOs have been able to engage at the regional level with one or more partnerships involved in regional development – either in own right or through COVER
- Engagement has often meant deploying a considerable amount of resource
- Questionnaires indicate widespread incapacity to engage because on top of existing ‘day jobs’, there is no or limited funding for engagement in anything else
- Some organisations feel well integrated ; others feel sidelined, or frustrated or fatigued by consultation, the rate of change and the plethora of strategies beckoning
- Infrastructure provision cannot be standardised too rigidly. Yet piecemeal development leaves gaps and unnecessary duplication of services and activities. Planning of strategic investment needs to target where it can make the most difference
- Various communities of interest – with reference to own work/ communities of interest - expressed their need for:
 - Monitoring of national/regional developments (new legislation, policies, strategies) that impact their communities of interest
 - Better information integration/ mapping of own communities of interest
 - information and data that support the development of policy initiatives and proposals so as to move from reactive to proactive stance
 - Support of accurate research
 - Mainstreaming of the issues they are working with (e.g. disability - mainstream chronic sickness – and need for life-course perspective)
 - Learning across county level partnerships/programmes – given the freedom of interpretation at sub-regional level which may produce very different outcomes

APPENDIX 6

ChangeUp east Priority Areas

Priority Area 1: Modernising VCS Infrastructure

- Enhance the current capacity of the infrastructure bodies in the six counties to deliver a basic comprehensive service
- Further the relationships between generic and specialist infrastructure provision that enables equitable access to services across counties and the region particularly where targeted at marginalised groups
- Support long term-investments from public sector agencies and other funders to secure the sustainability of activities beyond March 2006
- Augment effective ways of delivering support functions including the potential for greater collaborative working, including the opportunities for sharing facilities, support costs and integration

Priority Area 2: Embedding Quality and Improving Reach

- Support the development of strategies and the subsequent delivery of activities across the following themes: workforce development; social enterprise support services; community development and volunteer support services
- Further plans that ensure accountability to users and extend the reach of services to current non-users
- Further the VCS engagement in sub-regional multi-sector strategic developments and regional strategies

Priority Area 3: Improving ICT support

Support the development of strategies and the subsequent delivery of ICT activities

Priority Area 4: Building capacity in key service delivery areas i.e. increasing engagement of the voluntary and community sector in geographical areas of deprivation and priority public service areas

- Engage purchasers of services in key service delivery areas.

Priority Area 5: Management and Evaluation

- Ensure formal structures are in place at a county and regional level to administer, coordinate, commission and, where appropriate, deliver activities that further the objectives associated with the regional investment in VCS infrastructure
- Provide for the appropriate benchmarking, monitoring and evaluation of all related activities

APPENDIX 7

The Regional Plan fit with County Consortia Plans

The full plans for county consortia are not yet published so it is not possible to provide a comprehensive picture of the fit. Early indications show that most consortia have the following sections:

1. County consortia development
2. ICT including website development
3. Volunteering
4. BME infrastructure development
5. Rural development
6. Workforce development
7. Children and Young People
8. Support for strategic development
9. Potential to share back office services
10. Social enterprise and / or income generation opportunities

The first is obviously unique to each consortia but there are the same components in the regional plan and work needs to be done to see how the two fit together. In addition, each county consortium has a range of projects that are unique from community development to older people. Again, the regional partnership can contribute to these.

The RVIP development officer will develop links with each of the consortia to define how value can be added from elements of regional achievement and duplication avoided. The officer will also work with the leads of the consortia to set up a formal framework to show the fit and to clearly define where it is best left to the local level to set policy and deliver services and where the regional partnership has a contribution and what that contribution could be.

There are already some areas of obvious benefit:

- The regional partnership has a range of specialist networks who can help bring members to county consortia or raise issues that are relevant but have not been fully considered. For example, only one county consortium has a specific project for organisations providing infrastructure for older people's groups and one for a similar scheme with disability. Regional networks can help with this. BME infrastructure provision is in five of the consortia plans (the sixth has found other funding for this) and the regional network can help with sharing good practice or consultation of beneficiaries.
- There is already a good body of work at regional level in terms of workforce development, social enterprise, income generation, strategic development, performance improvement, quality standards and evaluation schemes. This plan proposes to further develop this. This can complement work being developed at local level.
- It makes sense for a centralised regional unit to disseminate key information about national changes. For example, the Children and Young People's cluster will be collecting a vast amount of data on the Change Agenda and relevant sections can be easily sent to county consortia. This does not prevent county consortia making their own connections with national agencies or hubs should they choose to but it will at least mean that every consortium is equally informed.
- There is no irreconcilable division between regional and local VCS work. E.g. COVER, CVS East, Rural Action East and MENTER (and there are many more) all have good connections and work with local organisations. Trustees on regional networks are drawn from local organisations. We see the fit between regional and local to be one where there are obvious benefits in coming together to share practice and to ensure that there is consistency in required provision and in reaching disadvantaged communities across the region.
- Finally, the regional plan has considered county plans and dropped elements where these are more appropriately delivered locally. For example, the first version of the regional plan had a Circuit Riders scheme as part of the ICT strategy. It soon became apparent that it was better for individual regional networks to buy into their closest local scheme and this was dropped from the regional plan.