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BACKGROUND

For some years the council has invested in important services delivered by the voluntary, community and faith sector, to improve the quality of life, the local economy and the health and well being of local people. The intention to protect the most vulnerable in our society is a thread that runs through all of the council's priorities.

The council's current Corporate Plan identifies that:

“Support for voluntary, community and faith (and arts and culture) groups has continued in 2011/2012 and the council wants to continue to work with these sectors in the future to consider how together we can ensure important services for the district are delivered”.

A **Commissioning Framework**¹ has now been developed, following substantial work with partners across the sector, as an approach to investment in community and economic outcomes through the Voluntary, Community and Faith sector. This framework sets out the Purpose and Principles of the council's approach as well as the commissioning cycle, Understand, Plan, Do and Review, that the council will use to manage the overall process.

It is important that the commissioning process is well informed and the council has undertaken a number of elements of work to ensure that needs and opportunities in the district are understood but also to seek the views of service providers and to call on their specific knowledge and expertise. These include:

- Monitoring of current Service level Agreements to determine priorities and trends
- A Local Assessment of the district to provide a snapshot of information on changing demographics, needs and opportunities for the local area, national issues that affect the district²
- Support for Lancaster University's 2012 research into “Economic Crisis, Need & Voluntary Organisations in Lancaster”
- Engagement and listening events with VCFS organisations in the district to consider current and emerging needs of local people, current and emerging gaps in provision, opportunities to work together, sector needs
- A local survey of VCFS providers to gain more insight into needs and what services of value to clients

¹ “Commissioning Framework: Lancaster City Council's approach to investment in community and economic outcomes through the Voluntary, Community and Faith sector and the Arts sector” <http://committeeadmin.lancaster.gov.uk/documents/s40382/AppC-Commissioning%20Framework-VCFS-2013-16-v1%2000.doc.pdf>

² “Lancaster District Local Assessment 2012” <http://committeeadmin.lancaster.gov.uk/documents/s40379/AppA-Local%20Assessment-Oct12-v2.0.doc.pdf>

These sources of information have informed the development of the Commissioning Framework and this Commissioning Plan, which provides more detail about services the council wishes to commission.

PRIORITIES FOR SUPPORT

The council has identified four complementary areas for support for which different arrangements are required. These include:

- Infrastructure Support for VCFS organisations – commissioned services
- Volunteer Coordination – joint investment with Lancashire County Council
- Advice and Information Services – commissioned services
- Small grants – annual bidding arrangements

This Delivery and Commissioning Plan provides broad delivery arrangements for each of these service areas, providing detail on the outcomes to be achieved, scope, delivery capability and capacity required, indicative levels of investment, performance requirements and contractual arrangements.

KEY PRINCIPLES

When seeking to commission services, the council will take an approach that secures the right services for the district as well as value for money but in a way that is open and inclusive to allow smaller organisations or low scale but important services to be included. Where possible, the council will seek a lead contractor but will emphasise the importance of other providers, including local communities, taking part in service delivery in the district. The council has identified key principles, which will be reflected in assessment processes, contractual and performance management arrangements. These are as follows:

Citizen focused

Ensuring the needs of the community are met, achieving positive outcomes for individuals and families.

Value focused – ensuring Value for Money

Social, environmental and economic value, not just transactional value, through prevention/early intervention, investment that secures benefits to a number of organisations, maximising match funding opportunities and the development of sustainable services.

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Working together

Encouraging and supporting collaboration and co-operation where possible/suitable. This could include joint working and the sharing of resources between organisations and local community groups to help protect important services and protect their viability for the future.

Engagement

To understand the needs of local communities and the opportunities and changes within the sector, alongside issues affecting service providers (both now and developing issues), to inform decision making as much as possible.

Transparency

Processes and decisions will be fair and open with clear information publicly available.

Further details on these principles can be found within the Commissioning Framework

PROCUREMENT

Procurement of services will be required in line with the council's normal procurement guidance and regulations and processes will be clear and transparent. Appropriate procurement underpins service standards and value for money.

To ensure that the procurement process is fair, transparent and inclusive the council will publish all relevant information and will publicise tendering or bidding opportunities as widely as possible. Impartial advice and guidance will be provided and workshops will be arranged and available to all applicants to provide opportunities to gain further details on procurement arrangements, quality standards and timescales.

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All submissions will be fully assessed before consideration by elected members and it is expected that evidence will be provided of:

Deliverability - No major barriers exist that could negatively affect delivery of services

Quality Assurance - Services can be delivered within budget, timescale and to the required quality standards

Value for Money - Services are economic, efficient and effective and the return on investment can be clearly identified. Leverage and match funding from other sources has been achieved wherever possible

Added value/ additionality - Opportunities to add value to other initiatives in the district have been sought and acted upon wherever possible and that duplication is avoided

Sustainability - Services can become more self sustaining in the future with a reducing reliance on public sector funding. Efficiencies have been achieved where possible

Collaboration - Opportunities for collaborative working and shared delivery of services have been sought and proposals/ joint submissions developed where appropriate

Service specific criteria – Any specific standards or particular requirements

PROCUREMENT TIMETABLE

The procurement timetable for commissioning is as follows:

Milestone	Dates
Publication of Commissioning Plan and service specifications	14 December 2012
Deadline for submission of bid proposals for service delivery	25 January 2013
Assessment of proposals	w/c 4 February 2013
Contractual arrangements in place	1 April 2013

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REVIEW - PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

The council will work with service providers to ensure that contracts are able to deliver effectively. This will include managing important changes, risks and capturing good practice. There is recognition that capacity, skills and knowledge can be developed as part of contractual arrangements and service delivery and this will be supported.

Detailed Outcomes and Success Measures will be developed with delivery partners as part of the procurement and contract development process. However, Review arrangements will allow for changes to be managed and new opportunities taken within the general purpose of the funding. Performance Management will be proportionate and will take into account levels of funding, risk and opportunity.

The council will seek to work with partners to capture and review lessons from previous delivery to inform future service delivery. The intelligence gathered through such evaluation will be invaluable in terms of designing future, high impact, services that are efficient, effective and economic that also add value to other existing provision.

DELIVERY PLANS

Delivery Plans for services identified for support are below and include:

- Infrastructure Support (commissioned services)
- Volunteering coordination (Joint financing with Lancashire County Council/One Lancashire)
- Advice and Information Services (commissioned services)
- Small grants (annual bidding arrangements)

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Delivery Plan VCFS Infrastructure Support (Commissioned services)

Purpose

To help secure the future capacity of the VCFS to deliver important services in the district by providing support for VCFS organisations to assist the development and resilience of the sector as a whole to deliver assured services that are relevant to the needs of the district.

Investment is focused at a strategic level to try to ensure that positive impact is widespread across the sector rather than limited to individual organisations.

An underpinning objective is the achievement of improved social capital in the district by supporting local people, groups and organisations to take part in and influence what happens in their areas.

Lancaster City Council Corporate Priority

Community Leadership

Lancaster City Council Corporate Outcomes

- The voluntary, community and faith sector has capacity to deliver services for the district
- Efficiency savings and service improvements achieved through joint working and shared services

The intention to protect the most vulnerable in our society is a thread that runs through all of the council's priorities.

Definition

For the purposes of this Delivery Plan, VCFS refers to all voluntary, community and faith organisations and groups, social enterprises and not for profit groups. VCFS infrastructure services are those that are provided to support VCFS organisations and groups to manage effective services, to develop additional capacity and to collaborate, share resources and jointly deliver services with others.

Scope

Services are required that will help to:

- Build the resilience and capacity of VCFS organisations delivering services in the district.
- Assist VCFS organisations to develop strong and efficient business models for the future and to meet appropriate quality standards.
- Support the sustainability of the VCFS in the district by the development of efficient, effective and collaborative ways of working.

Indicative services

The focus of the Infrastructure Support element Delivery Plan is on Outcomes and, as part of its dialogue with VCFS organisations, the council has asked for the views of the sector on those services that are most valued and achieve the maximum impact in relation to the Outcomes. However, the council expects tendering organisations to contribute further on the details of services to be delivered providing further information on the best means to achieve the Outcomes required.

Services identified include:

- Development of collaborative approaches/ joined up working
- Business start up and development support
- Peer learning opportunities
- Local training
- Support for relevant quality standards
- Sector communications / information sharing and awareness raising, including funding information
- Advice and support for financial management, HR management
- Advice and support on funding opportunities / bidding/ tendering and contracting
- Liaison with city and county council and other public sector and commissioning partners

Service Outcomes	Beneficiaries	Delivery capability and capacity required	Indicative investment	Timescale
<p>• The resilience of the VCFS in the district is improved</p> <p>• VCFS organisations in the district are working together to deliver services and share costs and resources</p> <p>• The VCFS in the district provides quality services to meet relevant standards</p> <p>Indicative Success Measures</p> <p>• Organisations achieving improvements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • new or adapted services based on need • improved services (quality) • improved income • reduced costs 	<p>VCFS organisations delivering services within the district (Direct)</p> <p>Individuals and communities receiving VCFS services (Indirect)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong positive links with VCFS organisations delivering services in the district • Track record of successfully delivering infrastructure support to assist VCFS organisations to operate effectively and to develop new business models • Ability to build collaborative and contractual relationships with other infrastructure service deliverers • Ability to monitor changing needs/ trends to inform development of services • Track record of attracting external funding to support delivery of infrastructure services 	<p>£25,000 p.a.</p>	<p>April 2013 to March 2016</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Efficiencies achieved by VCFS organisations ▪ VCFS organisations delivering collaborative services ▪ VCFS organisations sharing resources 				
<p>Contractual arrangements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Three year contract, subject to annual review and interim performance monitoring ▪ Contractual arrangement with a lead partner with responsibility to work collaboratively to ensure delivery of the relevant outcomes and success measures. This will potentially require drawing in the expertise of additional service deliverers as part of sub contractor arrangements. 				
<p>Additional requirements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Requires that infrastructure bodies operate at a level that means they can support but are not in competition with the organisations they assist. •Requires a focus on high demand / critical services that achieve the maximum impact across the sector but which may change over time. The council will work with service deliverers to ensure that the most appropriate services can be delivered and that performance criteria for the contract reflect this. •The council's investment is a part contribution towards a range of services but it is expected that additional funding will be required to cover total costs. Value for Money will be affected by the anticipated total funding available. •Investment available is linked directly to outcomes to be achieved. However, the council recognises the need for organisations to cover central costs in order to deliver services. As such, funds available will be unrestricted and not tied to specific project activities. Performance will be measured on success in relation to the identified Outcomes and Success Measures for the contract. •This service plan does not include support for volunteer coordination and training, which are covered as part of a separate service plan. 				

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Delivery Plan
Volunteering Coordination Services
(Joint financing arrangement)

Purpose

To increase levels of volunteering in order to increase the capacity of the VCFS to deliver services in the district.
To provide effective coordination of volunteers at a central point, to support a wide range of VCFS organisations.
To reduce costs of increasing levels of volunteering and numbers of volunteer opportunities, whilst maintaining important standards.
An underpinning objective is the achievement of improved social capital in the district by supporting local people, groups and organisations to take part in and influence what happens in their areas. In respect of this delivery plan, the role of volunteering in the development of social capital is particularly relevant.

Lancaster City Council Corporate Priority

Community Leadership

Lancaster City Council Corporate Outcomes

- The voluntary, community and faith sector has capacity to deliver services for the district
- Local communities are actively working with partners to improve where they live in ways that matter to them
- Efficiency savings and service improvements achieved through joint working and shared services
- Impact of welfare reforms is managed well to avoid any unnecessary negative impact for local citizens

The intention to protect the most vulnerable in our society is a thread that runs through all of the council's priorities.

Definition

For the purposes of this Delivery Plan, Volunteering Coordination includes services to attract, recruit, check and provide basic training for volunteers as well as services to identify, plan and manage volunteering opportunities. Provision and management of information, including IT, are relevant support functions. Quality assurance for volunteering coordination services is recognised as an element of overall provision. Specialist volunteer training may be required where volunteers have specific responsibilities but this is likely to be driven by the detailed requirements of volunteer's roles and is not covered by this Delivery Plan.

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Scope

This Delivery Plan is designed to partly address the identified needs of large number of organisations in the district for volunteer support by complementing a contribution from Lancashire County Council (via One Lancashire) towards volunteering coordination in the Lancaster District, dealing with both volunteers and volunteering opportunities. Overall, this will not fully address current high levels of need, although it offers an opportunity to considerably increase both impact and Value for Money.

Indicative services

As part of its dialogue with VCFS organisations, the council has asked for the views of the sector on those services that are most needed. Volunteer capacity is a crucial to the work of most VCFS organisations yet volunteering coordination is one of the critical areas that many organisations require help to address.

Reflecting this and the council's Corporate Plan, the focus of the Volunteering Coordination Services Delivery Plan is on Outcomes relating to VCFS capacity, VCFS services and the involvement of local communities in what happens in their areas.

Relevant services will be those related to:

Recruitment

Training

Quality assurance

Services to attract, plan and manage volunteering opportunities

Management of information

Data quality requirements

Effective communications

Monitoring the value and impact of volunteering

It is not expected that specialist volunteer training, which is detailed and intensive, can be addressed as part of this Delivery Plan.

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<p>Service Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> VCFS capacity to deliver services in the district is improved by increased levels of volunteer support Impact of welfare reforms and economic challenges is mitigated Quality of life for individuals in the district is improved by access to important services Cost and resources required to recruit and manage volunteers are reduced Local people and communities are engaged in what happens in their areas <p>Indicative Success Measures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volunteers recruited Volunteers provided with entry level training Organisations assisted with volunteering coordination support Volunteer coordination services meet relevant quality standards 	<p>Beneficiaries</p> <p>Individuals in the district</p> <p>Local communities</p> <p>VCFS organisations</p>	<p>Delivery capability and capacity required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Track record of delivering volunteer capacity Ability to work to relevant quality standards Strong positive links with VCFS service providers in the district Ability to build collaborative relationships and develop opportunities to work together with other organisations Ability to monitor changing needs/ trends to inform development of volunteering coordination over time Track record of attracting external funding and developing income streams to support the development and delivery services 	<p>Indicative investment</p> <p>£15,500</p>	<p>Timescale</p> <p>April 2013 to March 2016</p>
<p>Contractual arrangements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Three year contract, subject to annual review and interim performance monitoring Lancaster City Council to contract directly with Selnet, on behalf of One Lancashire, with all funds to be passed to the selected local provider Lancaster City Council expects to work directly with the local provider to support performance management and to identify any changing requirements 				

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Additional requirements:

- Requires significant collaboration with VCFS organisations requiring volunteering coordination support
- Requires a focus on high demand / critical services that achieve the maximum impact across the sector but which may change over time. The council will engage with service deliverers to ensure that the most appropriate services can be delivered and that performance criteria for the contract reflect this.
- The council's investment is a part contribution towards a range of services but it is recognised that levels of additional funding will impact on performance and Value for Money.
- Investment available is linked directly to outcomes to be achieved. However, the council recognises the need for organisations to cover central costs in order to deliver services. As such, funds available will be unrestricted and not tied to specific project activities. Performance will be measured on success in relation to the identified Outcomes and Success Measures for the contract.
- Social Value is a key element of this Delivery Plan, to be achieved by the involvement of citizens and communities in volunteering opportunities across a range of services and activities

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**Delivery Plan
Advice and Information Services
(commissioned services)**

Purpose

Specialist advice and information services to help reduce levels of debt, poverty, personal distress and isolation, to increase access to existing services and to help reduce need for other crisis services. This is an area of critical need and service provision needs to take account of predicted huge increase in demand as a result of Welfare Reforms.

Advice and information services provide an opportunity to focus on early intervention and prevention, helping to avoid crisis needs with the accompanying effect on the lives of families and individuals but also reducing the potential need for mainstream and crisis services.

An underpinning objective is the achievement of improved social capital in the district by supporting local people, groups and organisations to take part in and influence what happens in their areas. In respect of this service plan, the role of volunteering in the development of social capital is particularly relevant.

Lancaster City Council Corporate Priority

Community Leadership

Lancaster City Council Corporate Outcomes

- Impact of welfare reforms is managed well to avoid any unnecessary negative impact for local citizens
- Local communities are actively working with partners to improve where they live in ways that matter to them
- Efficiency savings and service improvements achieved through joint working and shared services

The intention to protect the most vulnerable in our society is a thread that runs through all of the council's priorities.

Definition

For the purposes of this Delivery Plan, Advice and Information Services are those services that provide advice and/or information relating to benefits, debt, housing, employment and other personal, family, social and health issues. Such services may be delivered either individuals or groups and may be general or specialist. Support services, such as care services and equipment, are not included. However, signposting, or referring to other services, is recognised as an important element of advice and information and is included in the broad definition.

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Scope

Services are required that will help to:

- To provide accessible, appropriate and complementary advice and information services for people in need within the district
- To reduce levels of debt, poverty, personal distress and isolation
- To reduce potential demand for crisis services by early intervention and prevention

Indicative services

The focus of the Advice and Information Services element of the Commissioning Plan is on Outcomes and, as part of its dialogue with VCFS organisations, the council has asked for the views of the sector on those services that are most valued and achieve the maximum impact in relation to the Outcomes. However, the council expects tendering organisations to contribute further on the details of services to be delivered providing further information on the best means to achieve the Outcomes required.

Services identified include:

- Advice and information on a range of issues, including:
 - Benefits,
 - Debt/ financial management
 - Housing
 - Employment
 - Personal, family and social issues
 - Health related issues
- Specialist training for staff and volunteer advice and information workers
- Development of collaborative approaches for advice and information services
- Communications for advice and information service providers
- Liaison with city and county council and other public sector and commissioning partners

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Service Outcomes	Beneficiaries	Delivery capability and capacity required	Indicative investment	Timescale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Impact of welfare reforms is managed well ▪ Quality of life for individuals in the district is improved ▪ Efficiency of Advice and Information services is improved ▪ Advice and Information providers are working together to deliver assured and effective services <p>Indicative Success Measures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Individuals achieving a positive outcome ▪ Individuals provided with knowledge/ skills to make positive choices ▪ Efficiencies achieved by Advice and Information service providers ▪ Collaborative services delivered by Advice and Information service providers ▪ Advice and Information service providers sharing resources ▪ Advice and Information Services meet relevant quality standards 	<p>Individuals in the district</p> <p>Advice and Information service providers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Track record of delivering a range of assured advice and information services ▪ Established quality standards ▪ Strong positive links with Advice and Information providers in the district ▪ Ability to build collaborative and contractual relationships with other advice and information providers ▪ Ability to monitor changing needs/ trends to inform development of services over time ▪ Track record of attracting external funding and developing income streams to support the development and delivery of advice and information services 	<p>£190,000 p.a.</p>	<p>April 2013 to March 2016</p>

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Contractual arrangements

- Three year contract subject to annual review and interim performance monitoring
- Contractual arrangement with a lead partner is preferred, with responsibility to work collaboratively to ensure delivery of the relevant outcomes and success measures. However, the council recognises that collaborative arrangements in the Advice and Information sector are at a relatively early stage of development and will consider complementary contracts whilst supporting the development of more formal joint working arrangements for the future. It is expected that this Delivery Plan will require drawing in the expertise of a number of service deliverers in line with local needs, to which relevant service standards would apply.

Additional requirements:

- Requires significant collaboration between participating advice and information providers
- Requires a focus on high demand / critical services that achieve the maximum impact across the sector but which may change over time. The council will work with service deliverers to ensure that the most appropriate services can be delivered and that performance criteria for the contract reflect this.
- The council's investment is a part contribution towards a range of services but it is expected that additional funding will be required to cover total costs. Value for Money will be affected by the anticipated total funding available.
- Investment available is linked directly to outcomes to be achieved. However, the council recognises the need for organisations to cover central costs in order to deliver services. As such, funds available will be unrestricted and not tied to specific project activities. Performance will be measured on success in relation to the identified Outcomes and Success Measures for the contract.
- Extensive volunteering support is required to ensure advice and information services are viable and effective. This Delivery Plan does not include support for general volunteer coordination, including recruitment, references /checks and basic training, which are covered as part of separate arrangements. However, specific support to train and develop volunteers to be able to deliver specialised advice and information services is included.

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**Delivery Plan
Small Development Grants
(Annual bidding arrangements)**

Purpose

- To support development of VCFS organisations and community groups
- To protect or develop critical local services
- To deliver local improvements in line with community aspirations
- To test the feasibility of new local initiatives

Lancaster City Council Corporate Priority

Community Leadership

Lancaster City Council Corporate Outcomes

The voluntary, community and faith sector has capacity to deliver services for the district

Local communities are actively working with partners to improve where they live in ways that matter to them

The intention to protect the most vulnerable in our society is a thread that runs through all of the council's priorities.

Definition

For the purposes of this Delivery Plan, Small Grants are individual grants offered to local VCFS organisations and community groups as part of an annual competitive bidding process. The overall total offered will not exceed the available budget but the level of individual grants will be considered on merit and level of priority.

Scope

This element of the Delivery Plan is designed to complement other more strategic VCFS investment by providing specific and individual support in the form of small one off investments where an appropriate impact can be achieved.

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Indicative services

Services provided will related to those proposed by bidding groups and organisations, although in line with the council's annual bidding process which will provide details of any criteria and exclusions. It is expected that early priorities will be clearly different to the support identified in other Delivery Plans within this document and will be likely to create opportunities for proposals from very small organisations and community led initiatives to be considered.

Management requirements for small grants will be proportionate to the levels of grant offered and it is specifically intended that any unnecessary administrative requirements will be avoided. However, feedback on any learning, new developments, improvements and achievements will be sought.

Service Outcomes To be determined annually Indicative Success Measures To be determined annually	Beneficiaries Individuals in the district Local communities VCFS organisations	Delivery capability and capacity required To be relevant to proposals but proportionate. Organisations/ groups proposing work in new areas where expertise needs to be developed will not be excluded.	Indicative investment £12,500	Timescale Annual bidding in 2013, 2014 and 2015
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Contractual arrangements

- The council will initially establish scheme arrangements but will consider in-house or external management on the basis of Value for Money and effectiveness
- Individual grant offer letters with proportionate requirements

Additional requirements:

To be identified as part of scheme arrangements

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