

An Environment for a Thriving Third Sector – Good Practice Case Study

Norfolk (2-tier)	
LA contact & role	Eve Dewsnap, Norfolk County Council LAA Manager
Third sector contact & role	Claire Collen Third Sector LAA Co-ordinator, Voluntary Norfolk
What are the important elements of the way you work together? Can you give some examples of successful relationships/partnerships?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition that the LAA is an opportunity – a lever - for the third sector. • Funding for three years through Norfolk County Council for a LAA Third Sector Engagement Project. Includes a Third Sector LAA Co-ordinator post to promote active involvement of the third sector at both strategic and delivery levels. • LAA Engagement Project hosted by Voluntary Norfolk – the leading third sector infrastructure organisation in the county. Voluntary Norfolk is also the only non-statutory partner to hold the lead for 3 LAA actions (thriving third sector, volunteering and a locally developed priority on Advice & Advocacy) • Third Sector LAA Co-ordinator member of the cross-agency team that ‘drives’ LAA actions and informs strategic decision-making at the County Strategic Partnership. • The County Council’s LAA Manager is regularly engaged with the third sector in, for example, joint presentations, and attending the LAA Reference Group – the third sector strategic partnership which steers the sector’s engagement in the LAA (and which is the only third sector partnership with Indicator responsibilities). 	
How do you ensure that third sector organisations can influence local decisions?	
<p>Sector conferences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LAA third sector conference (Oct 2007) influenced the choice of indicators chosen for Norfolk’s LAA, including development of a local priority on Advice & Advocacy. • (Forthcoming – June 5th) third sector Comprehensive Area Assessment Conference will bring service user voices into the assessment process. • Joint third/public sector conferences e.g. on personalisation <p>Partnership arrangements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third sector engagement at top level strategic partnerships (county and district): e.g. CEO of Voluntary Norfolk is Vice Chair of the County Strategic Partnership Board • Increasing the range of third sector representatives on existing public sector partnerships e.g. county thematic partnerships (older people services; health & well-being partnership; joint health, social care & voluntary sector forum) • Maximise new opportunities for sector engagement e.g. third sector/adult social services forum on personalisation 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with local PCT to include third sector in existing decision-making structures
<p>How are you planning to use the information in the NSTSO detailed local reports help you focus work on NI7?</p>
<p>LAA Engagement Project has developed an NI 7 action planning template based on the National Third Sector Survey. It will be used as the framework through which we will engage with public sector partners to identify what actions are needed to deliver NI 7 and where ownership will sit. Some actions will sit with the statutory sector e.g. creating opportunities for influencing decision-making and financial relationships. Others will sit with the third sector e.g. capacity building to support effective tendering skills.</p> <p>A similar template will be used for NI 6.</p>
<p>What do you see as the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead in the next 2 years? How are you planning to approach these issues?</p>
<p>Third sector moves from being on the margins of public sector thinking at a local level to being in the mainstream of service planning, through, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commissioning – implementation of the Norfolk Guide for Public Sector Commissioning produced by Voluntary Norfolk – see attached PDF flyer. (The Guide has national recognition e.g. by IDeA.) • Greater opportunities for specialist service provider third sector voices in public sector partnerships • Public sector partners working jointly with specialist third sector organisations in action planning to meet the wide range of LAA targets the sector is delivering against (not just NI 7)
<p>What are the wider benefits of good relationships with third sector organisations? How do you plan to go forwards?</p>
<p><i>"The LAA engagement project has hugely benefited Norfolk County Council by providing a structured way of accessing the support of third sector partners in setting key local priorities and increasing the sector's capacity to bring a balanced view to decision-making in the County. Through the project, voluntary and community organisations in Norfolk have had a direct impact on the selection of indicators for the LAA and a ripple effect on the way the County Council does business with them."</i></p> <p><i>"We value the contribution that the voluntary sector makes to improving services for people in Norfolk - not only in delivering some of these services directly, but in guiding local public bodies in making decisions about where to prioritise improvements, with the benefit of their close experience of service users and their needs and desires."</i></p> <p><i>Debbie Bartlett, Head of Policy and Performance, Norfolk County Council</i></p> <p>Actions to take this forward include:</p>

- Joint action planning between the third and public sector to deliver NI 7 (see above) and other LAA targets
- Third sector utilising the opportunities the Comprehensive Area Assessment presents to advocate on behalf of the needs of vulnerable people at risk of homelessness, living in poverty, those with care, mental health or learning difficulty needs, vulnerable children and their families, young care leavers, ex-offenders, people with alcohol or drug problems.

Anything else you would like to share, or advice for other local statutory bodies seeking to develop their relationships with third sector organisations?

- Crucial to achieving effective engagement is the ability to sufficiently fund and resource a dedicated project to support the engagement of the third sector. An important aspect of this is locating the post in the third sector.
- Enhanced and quicker progress can be made where there are champions within public sector organisations with specific responsibility for liaising with the third sector.
- Ensuring the third sector is sitting at the right strategic tables

Note: Norfolk's LAA Engagement work – and its related strands, including the Public Services Development Project are already featured as best practice by NCVO, and more recently by IDeA in their Partnership & Places library.