**4CHILDREN RESEARCH AND DELIVERY FOR POOLE 2012-13**

4Children launched its children’s centres and Voluntary Community Sector (VCS) programme in April 2011 to work with commissioners, children’s centres and small to medium VCS providers in nine local authorities. It aims to explore and move barriers that the VCS have in managing children centres or delivering their services and those that the Local Authority and Children’s Centre managers have in the involvement, engagement and commissioning of the VCS.

Poole was selected to continue in 2012 as it wanted to explore the local VCS and parents willingness and capacity to form either a 'community' consortium or to be part of a lead partner consortium to provide children's centres and/or children's centre services.

**OUTLINE OF RESEARCH AND DELIVERY TASK**

The programme will work with Poole to assess three key questions:

1. Medium and small VCS providing possible children's centre services in a pilot area are willing and able with reasonable support to develop a community consortium within an appropriate time frame.
2. Large VCS providers are willing and able to develop a lead partner consortium with local small and medium VCS with reasonable support within an appropriate time frame.
3. Parents are willing and able to work with either consortuim to shape services with reasonable support within an appropriate time frame

The willingness of medium and small VCS assessed as able with reasonable support to develop a community consortium within a reasonable time frame was to be assessed via telephone interviews and a focus group. The second question through an activity workshop and the third through small focus groups with parent volunteers.

**Anticipated Benefits of Research**

A clear model of consortium working for future commissioning decisions that sustains the local VCS and is supported by parents.

**Types of VCS organisation - Characteristics and Levels of Possible Engagement**

Poole selected 26 VCS organisations for initial telephone contact for this research assessing them in terms of their ability with reasonable support to develop a community consortium within a reasonable time frame. Successful contact was achieved with two local commissioned children’s VCS, eleven local children’s VCS, nine area based VCS and three micro VCS, a total of 25 organisations. These were-

* Level 3 Local children’s VCS already commissioned to deliver a service to a children’s centre. Possible delivery partner in a consortia.

*Postman’s Pat Pre School and Cooperative Childcare Poole*

* Level 4 Local children’s VCS running services used by families in an area (may not know a lot about children’s centres). Possible delivery partner in a consortia/ part of advisory group

*St Andrew’s Creche, Homestart, Little Angels Holiday Club, Coping with Chaos, DEED, Hamworthy MAP, Hamworthy Outdoor Education Centre, Rev Goddard, Tony Funnell Sports, Little Pickles and SOS Penguin*

* Level 5 Area based VCS interested in providing services but not primarily children’s org (e.g. church or adult focused org.) Possible delivery partner in a consortia/ part of advisory group

*Relate, Poole Sailability, Faithworks, EDAS, Harbour Challenge, Richmond Fellowship, Infectious Academy, Rockley Watersports, Elite Karate*

* Level 6 Micro VCS/ Community Interest individuals - focused on their interest/mission May want to be part of advisory group. May link for very specific service delivery/ e.g. volunteering.

*Friends of Hamworthy Park; the Marine Base Chaplaincy and Autism and Aspergers Parents Support Group.*

**Local VCS’s Willingness (Intent) to Engage**

1. The 25 VCS organisations contacted offer a range of services across different service sectors, for example children’s, sports, education, mental health support, adult/parent support and substance abuse.
2. The characteristics of the VCS organisations for each possible level of engagement are confirmed and reflected in their awareness of children’s centre activities and their request for further information. Local children’s VCS and area based VCS were more likely to want information while commissioned children’s VCS did not require this (already working closely with the children’s centre) and the micro VCS were not sure they wanted it. They are the most remote from children’s centre activities.
3. The current incidence of partnership working is difficult to gauge because of some about confusion about what is a voluntary organisation and volunteering. Around half of the local children’s and area based VCS claim to be working in partnership with other voluntary organisations and this on an ad hoc basis. Neither of the commissioned children’s VCS works in partnership with other voluntary organisations in Hamworthy. None of the three micro VCS works in partnership with other VCS organisations.
4. The two commissioned children’s VCS are lukewarm about growing their activities with the children centre as they feel they are already as fully engaged as resources allow. However 70% (8 of the 11) local children’s VCS are interested in growing activities linked to the children’s centre (either through delivering a service at the children’s centre or linking what they want to deliver with the other services provided from the children’s centre) and 55% (5 of the 9) area based VCS are interested in growing activities linked to working with families in the Hamworthy area (either through delivering a service at the children’s centre or linking what they want to deliver with the other services provided from the children’s centre). Two of the three micro VCS are interested in growing activities linked to working with families in the Hamworthy area (either through delivering a service at the children’s centre or linking what they want to deliver with the other services provided from the children’s centre).
5. Both the commissioned children’s VCS are very interested in developing partnerships with other voluntary organisations. 55% (6 of the 11) children’s VCS are interested in growing their activities in partnership with other voluntary organisations. 55% (5 of the 9) area based VCS are interested in growing their activities in partnership with other voluntary organisations. 2 of the 3 micro VCS are interested in growing their activities in partnership with other voluntary organisations
6. There is less interest in the opportunity to join the children centre advisory board because this represents a time, money and people investment which they see as difficult to commit to. One commissioned children’s VCS is interested in this opportunity but needs to discuss it with their head office and the other is already on their children centre’s advisory board. 45% (5 of the 11) local children’s VCS are interested in having a representative on the children centre advisory board. 55% (5 of the 9) area based VCS are interested in having a representative on the Children’s Centre advisory board.
7. There is a high level of interest in attending the proposed meeting on the 24th July, however actual attendance could decline dramatically because of concerns expressed about lack of staff, money and time which may mean ‘no shows’ on the day. Both commissioned children’s VCS said they would attend, resources permitting, all the local children’s VCS said they would come, 7 of the 9 area based VCS said they would attend and two of the three micro VCS. The two organisations which said they would not attend asked to be kept in touch with information.
8. The attached table shows which organisations show the highest level of intent to engage in the development of children’s centres in Hamworthy. 44% (11 of the 25) can be described as having a higher intention to engage in these developments and they come from the local children’s VCS and the area based VCS. The two commissioned children’s VCS do not show a high level of intent to engage but two of the three micro VCS do show a higher level of intent.
9. Final assessment of which organisations have the most potential in terms of willingness and capacity to form either a 'community' consortium or to be part of a lead partner consortium to provide children's centres and/or children's centre services will become clearer at the next step of the process which is the meeting itself.

10 VCS opinion is clouded by lack of information and lack of vision and it would be simplistic to base an organisation’s potential on an assessment of possible engagement level only. There is a need to listen to these VCS organisations and explain the opportunity for collaborative working in a way which addresses their concerns. Keeping them all in touch with developments by email would be a positive contribution to changing perceptions and mind sets and encouraging engagement with the development of the children’s centres

Table Likely Willingness (Intent) to Engage with the Future Development of Children’s Centres in Hamworthy

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Level** | **Request for Information** | **Currently Working in Partnership with other VCS** | **Interest in growing activity with CC** | **Interest in growing activity with other VCS** | **Interest in potential of joining AB** | **Intention to Attend on 24th July** | **Total Score - Positive Intent** |
| **Level 3 Commissioned Children’s VCS** |  |  |  |  |  | 2 |  |
| Postman Pat Pre School |  |  |  | ✓ | n.a. already on it | ✓Yes but holiday time | 2 |
| Cooperative Childcare Poole |  |  | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓  Yes - discuss with HO | 4 |
| **Level 4 Local Children’s VCS** |  |  |  |  |  | **11** |  |
| St Andrew’s Creche |  | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 5 |
| Homestart | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 6 |
| Little Angels Holiday Club |  |  |  |  |  | ✓ | 1 |
| Coping with Chaos |  |  | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 4 |
| DEED |  | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 5 |
| Hamworthy MAP |  | ✓ |  |  |  | ✓ | 2 |
| Hamworthy Outdoor Ed Centre |  | ✓ |  |  |  | ✓ | 2 |
| Rev Goddard (St Gabriel’s/St Michael’s) | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 6 |
| Tony Funnell Sports | ✓ |  |  |  |  | ✓ | 2 |
| Little Pickles | ✓ |  | ✓ | ✓ |  | ✓ | 4 |
| SOS Penguins | ✓ |  | ✓ | ✓ |  | ✓ | 4 |
| **Level 5 Area Based VCS** |  |  |  |  |  | **9** |  |
| Relate |  |  |  |  |  | ✓ | 1 |
| Poole Sailability |  |  |  |  |  | but keep in touch |  |
| Faithworks | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 6 |
| EDAS | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 6 |
| Harbour Challenge | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 6 |
| Richmond Fellowship | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 6 |
| Infectious Academy | ✓ |  | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 5 |
| Rockley Watersports |  |  |  |  |  | ✓ | 1 |
| Elite Karate | ✓ |  | ✓ | ✓ |  | ✓ | 4 |
| **Level 6 Micro VCS** |  |  |  |  |  | 3 |  |
| Friends of Harmsworthy Park |  |  |  |  |  | send anyway |  |
| Marine base | ✓ |  | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 5 |
| Autism and Aspergers Parents Support Group | ✓ |  | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 5 |
|  | 13 | 10 | 16 | 17 | 13 | 22 |  |