**Summary Report on Survey to Measure Change in Attitudes to Co Production or Working Collaboratively Draft January 2013**

**1 Background**

This DfE commissioned project is ‘to *work with the voluntary sector within selected authorities to ensure their organisations are sustainable and ‘fit for purpose’ to be commissionable by local authorities to run children’s centres or be commissionable by children’s centres to provide services for them.’*

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 15 local authorities over two years. It aimed 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.

In each area the programme explored the local VCS (and parents’) willingness and capacity to work collaboratively e.g. as a 'community' consortium, as part of a lead partner consortium to provide children's centres and/or children's centre services, or to work in a co-production model.

**2 The Attitude Survey**

2.1 As part of the series of workshops run in the participating local authorities, a survey was conducted in 2012 - 2013 to gain some insight into how co-production was viewed, to identify the benefits and challenges perceived in involving the VCS in this activity and to assess the ability to change perceptions of these benefits and challenges.

2.2 Surveys were self completed in the workshops pre and post the activity; 154 attendees completed the pre-survey and 165 the post-survey. The surveys derived from participating Local Authorities, namely Kent and Poole, both in their second year in the programme and Hillingdon, Greenwich, Northampton, NE Lincs and Telford, all of whom participated in the second year only.

2.3 The sectors represented in the survey were VCS organisations (76), Children’s Centres (46) and Local Authorities (14) and other sectors (28); health (9) and community advice (3). Seven parents in Poole and Telford completed the survey. This document focuses on the responses of the VCS and children’s centre participants.

**3 Conclusions**

* Understanding of co - production improved significantly after the Programme
* The two best features of co-production were considered to be extending service reach and improving service delivery
* Co-production was rated as more helpful (or as helpful) on all the impacts measured after the workshops
* The VCS look to their LAs for transparency in engagement and commissioning of the VCS, and children’s centres look to the LAs to support the VCS sector, share information and show more commitment to achieving a collaborative working environment.

**4 The Evidence**

4.1 For this survey, co-production was defined as ‘working with partners and the local authority to plan and deliver services’. At the beginning of the workshops 56% of the participants were confident that they understood co-production and 81% were confident after the workshops. 85% of children’s centre participants felt they understood the principles of co-production after the workshops compared to 77% of the VCS.

Q1 On a scale of 1 to 7 (1 being low) how confident are you that you understand co-production?

4.2 How VCS organisations changed their view on how co – production would help in a collaborative working environment

Participants were asked whether they thought working collaboratively, or co-production, would help their organisations on a range of impacts. The list of impacts was developed from on-going feedback from the programme and national research findings on concerns about achieving effective co-production.

The VCS sector rated the helpfulness of a co-production way of working higher or about the same on all the measures. There was a significant increase on how co-production would impact positively on improving service delivery, allow a VCS culture to thrive and provide opportunities for personal career development.

Q3 On a scale of 1 to 7 (1 being low) how confident are you that co-production will help….?

4.3 Best features of collaborative working - VCS opinion

From the comments provided by the VCS, the best feature of working collaboratively or partnership working was being able to share a wide range of attributes from information, physical resources, skills, experience and ways of thinking with their partner organisations. This was followed by being able to provide a better service for their service users or customers. Better understanding of partners and better communication and networking were also positive features.

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| **VCS Organisations** | **Pre** | **Post** |
| * Sharing information, resources, skills, experience and thinking * Better service delivery for users/ customers * Understanding and respecting each other’s learning, skills and challenges   through working in joint partnership   * Communication/networking * Honesty, openness and trust * Understanding local needs through feedback and signposting | 33%  24%  16%  15%  7%  5% | 33%  27%  16%  13%  5%  5% |

Q2 What are the three best features of working collaboratively for your organisation? Analysis based on number of comments.

4.4 How children’s centres changed their view about how co – production will help in a collaborative working environment

There was an improvement after the workshops in how helpful children’s centre participants thought working collaboratively with the VCS would be on seven out of the nine impacts or measures. There was little or no change on the other two. Opinion improved most on the helpfulness of co-production in resolving partners’ needs and providing solutions, allowing the VCS culture to thrive and enhancing the role of the LA as a partner.

Q3 On a scale of 1 to 7 ( 1 being low) how confident are you that co- production will help……?

4.5 Best features of collaborative working - Children’s Centre opinion

Aggregating the comments of children’s centres, the best feature of working collaboratively or partnership working was being able to share a whole range of attributes from information, physical resources, skills, experience and ways of thinking with their partner organisations. This was followed by a reciprocal and better understanding of the VCS sector and children’s centres and of knowing what local VCS services are available. Children’s centre participants saw a benefit from being able to offer a greater breadth and depth of offer to service users.

After the workshop, there was a higher proportion of comments from children’s centres about outcomes for children and families/users and reaching more of them, being a positive feature of collaborative working with the VCS.

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| **Children’s Centres** | **Pre** | **Post** |
| * Sharing resources, staff, best practice, expertise, funding, information, vision, accountability, knowledge, understanding, agenda, delivery and training, * Understanding of each other and what’s available * Greater breadth and depth of offer, more capacity in delivery from one ‘location’ * Partnership/joint working/collaboration * Outcomes for children and families/users and reaching more of them * VFM/cost/duplication * Communications * Evidence, data collection systems, analysis of need, prioritise services | 35%  18%  15%  8%  7%  7%  6%  4% | 26%  15%  15%  10%  **18%**  8%  5%  5% |

Q2 What are the three best features of working collaboratively for your organisation? Analysis based on number of comments.

**5 The Role of the Local Authority**

The role of the LA in supporting sustainable, effective VCS services through co –production is nuanced a little differently for the two sectors, with the VCS stressing the need for openness and transparency on the part of their LAs in their plans for moving to a co-production service delivery environment.

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| **VCS Perspective on the LA role** | **Mentions** |
| * Openness and transparency in participation and engagement * Review contracts to tailor for small VCS e.g. longer notice, support, size * Regular meetings and open discussion with VCS and other partners * More commitment and effort to achieve a collaborative working environment - listen, adapt, plan, lead * Look at funding possibilities and options * Set up local databases, help the voluntary sector to create critical mass * Manage change, allowing time and opportunities for change | 25%  18%  18%  15%  11%  7%  5% |

Q4 What do you feel needs to be done by the local authority to support sustainable, effective VCS services through co-production? Analysis based on number of comments

Children’s centres stress the need for the LAs to involve the VCS more, create more awareness of the VCS, share information and support VCS services and to evidence the LAs’ commitment to collaborative working.

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| **Children’s Centre Perspective on LA role** | **Mentions** |
| * Involve and improve awareness of the VCS; share information and support VCS services * More work and commitment to achieve shared delivery/co-production * Manage change through good communication and consultation * Clear vision of outcomes, implementation, framework for accountability and maintain quality * Establish local needs-led services as priority * Clarify and address VCS commissioning issues | 35%  18%  12%  4%  4%  4%  4% |

Q4 What do you feel needs to be done by the local authority to support sustainable, effective VCS services through co-production? Analysis based on number of comments