

Joint Communication to VCS Organisations Directly Affected by Adult Health and Community Services Day Service and Low-Level Support Services Review

Warwickshire CAVA, VASA and WREP will be working jointly to ensure that the undertakings and assurances below are fully adhered to.

Q. Many of our members are concerned that in response to the County Council budget setting that previously grant-funded VCS groups providing preventative or low-level support services will be decommissioned with the minimum notice period of 3 months from 1st April 2010. Is this your intention?

A. This is categorically not the case. We have identified and have begun discussions with organisations that provide services and support which we as a single directorate will not be able to continue to fund in the long-term with our current allocated resource. We commit to the following:

- *No previously AHCS grant-funded organisation will be decommissioned without a full and proper equality impact assessment being carried out first.*
- *We will share the outcome of the equality impact assessment with our colleagues within other Warwickshire County Council directorates and other strategic partners including infrastructure organisations of Warwickshire CAVA, VASA and WREP to explore how the social value of these services and the support they provide can be sustained.*
- *Letters to the initial batch of 13 organisations were posted on 4th March 2010 to explain the situation in greater detail – only after an Equality Impact Assessments have been carried out and discussions enabled with strategic partners will we consider issuing notice of a decommissioning process to bring the grant funding from AHCS directorate to an end. We will give a minimum of 3 months notice of cessation of grant support in line with COMPACT.*

Q. Our members have become aware that the outline commissioning and procurement plan makes reference to the establishment of up to 7 ‘multicultural centres’ to be established across the County. Many VCS organisations understand this to be an attempt to create co-located services to replicate their existing provision in a centralised manner. Is this the intention?

A. No. The outline plans are that we will invest a proportion of the savings that we are required to achieve over the coming 2 years in supporting the development of around 7 multicultural centre “hubs” in key towns. These would support existing local community-based resource centres by promoting, signposting and increasing local awareness of the providers and the services available.

*We are also aware that the use of the term ‘multicultural centres’ has been interpreted as an intention to co-locate services that are targeted at different faith or cultural groups. This is **not** our intention – in this case we have used the term multicultural to ensure that the local community-based resource centres are ‘accessible to all’.*

Q. Our members are highly anxious that the social value and benefit of the services they provide and the additional activities the current funding enables including the ability in many cases to generate additional income to support vulnerable people is not being recognised.

A. We very much recognise the social value and benefit. Many of the day service and low level support providers were able to demonstrate this very effectively and clearly in the engagement sessions held. Unfortunately, many of these services are not addressing the strategic objectives of AHCS directorate and have not therefore been deemed best value for money from our perspective as we increasingly need to use our resources in a more targeted way.

We want to take a 'corporate approach' in implementing our directorate budget – sharing this information with our strategic partners and are committed to jointly exploring every avenue in an attempt to sustain the social value which we are aware assists and enables the strategic objectives of the broader County Council to be met

Q. The Personalisation agenda being driven forward at a national level brings levels of uncertainty for many of our members – the ability to compete, market services and invoice those eligible for personalised budgets will need to be supported and managed extremely carefully – how will you ensure that valuable sector organisations and groups are not disadvantaged?

A. As a result of national and local policy we need to drive changes including commissioning and procuring services that will enable individuals whose needs are "critical" or "substantial" under Fair Access to care criteria meet with personalised budgets to 'choose' appropriate services that meet their needs. We recognise that organisations and groups will be in different stages of preparation to respond to this challenge. We will work with every group and organisation affected with the support of infrastructure organisations and partners to assess both the eligibility criteria of their existing customer base and the potential impact that moving to meet the challenge of Personalised budgets will create. We are committed to ensuring that as a directorate we will phase the implementation over the coming two years to best support your affected members to continue to provide the social benefit that their organisations and groups provide. We envisage that some of your customers who have been assessed by AHCS and are eligible for support from us might opt for direct payments which they can then use to purchase your services. In addition we will be looking at tendering for framework contracts. These do not guarantee a volume of money to the provider but, if successful in tendering, providers are put on a framework list from which individuals can choose. It is important to note that these options would only be available for people who have been assessed as meeting the Fair Access to Care criteria (i.e. have "critical" or "substantial" needs).

Q. This process is driven in part by the reduction in your departmental budget. The services and support our members provide are of strategic interest to other departments within the Council and other strategic partners. With the preventative nature of many of these services, how are you working with these other departments and partners to ensure that your short term cost saving measures don't simply create greater costs and higher levels of need in a few years time?

A. We are committed to working with all relevant directorates and strategic partners to implement a package of 'transitional support' enabling your affected member organisations to position themselves so that their funding is not vulnerably reliant upon annual grant funding from AHCS but develops on a more secure basis.

Helal Shahid as Chief Executive of Warwickshire Race Equality Partnership (WREP) has convened a meeting for all of the 13 organisations currently grant-supported who have been written to by Jon Reading on behalf of the AHCS Directorate – the meeting will be held at the SYDNI Centre in Leamington Spa on Friday 12th March at 2:30pm