

Ministerial Foreword

Voluntary and community activity is a crucial part of public life – connecting people and helping them to shape their communities.

Frontline groups and organisations are formed by and harness the skills, resources and passion of paid and unpaid activists. Enabling people to become active in their communities and supporting frontline organisations is at the heart of the Government’s commitment to renewing civil society and involving voluntary and community sector organisations in service delivery, especially in meeting the needs of those who are socially excluded.

Many groups and organisations, however, are prevented from achieving their potential because they cannot access the support and expertise they need to improve and expand. This Framework meets that problem head on. But creating the support system frontline organisations need takes years not months. The Framework therefore sets out a ten year vision for building the capacity of frontline organisations and putting in place the infrastructure support they need. It identifies the key actions which should be taken immediately and in the longer term to turn that vision into reality.

The analysis makes a coherent case for investment in capacity building and infrastructure provision. The Home Office has already invested £8 million of an £80 million fund set aside for catalysing improvement and reconfiguration in infrastructure support over the next two years. Sustainability can only be guaranteed if other funders ensure that their investment takes account of the capacity needs of frontline organisations and funds the infrastructure that supports them. The costs of infrastructure support should also be included in contracts and grant payments to frontline organisations.

The Framework came about as a result of consultation and close working between Government, the local public sector and the voluntary and community sector. That partnership must now continue if change is going to happen. One of the first actions will be to bring key stakeholders together at every level to create the best possible provision to support the sector across England. Success depends on the voluntary and community sector and the public sector working together to plan and fund provision which meets the needs of frontline organisations and focuses on the benefits to citizens and service users.

I am grateful to all those who helped to develop this Framework by giving their time, ideas and feedback. I am positive that the Framework sets out the right architecture for change. The challenge to the voluntary and community sector and the public sector together is to make it happen.



Fiona Mactaggart

Executive Summary

The voluntary and community sector plays a crucial role in delivering public services and in building strong, cohesive and self-determining communities. Frontline organisations often work with those most at risk from social exclusion, providing help and support, and meeting multiple needs in ways which not only give citizens and users a voice, but also the means to tackle themselves the underlying causes of their problems. This Framework is driven by the vision of frontline organisations playing their full potential in improving the quality of life of the communities they serve and so contributing to civil renewal.

This Framework sets out a bold but achievable aim – that by 2014 the needs of frontline voluntary and community organisations will be met by support which is available nationwide, structured for maximum efficiency, offering excellent provision which is accessible to all while reflecting and promoting diversity, and is sustainably funded.

The HM Treasury document *The Role of the Voluntary and Community Sector in Service Delivery 2002 – A Cross Cutting Review (CCR)* recognised that despite a revolution in the contribution of the voluntary and community sector to service delivery, many frontline organisations – especially the small- and medium-sized – are still unable to access the support they need. It recommended that the voluntary and community sector and central and local Government develop a shared strategy to underpin the capacity of the sector.¹ This Framework is the response. It sits alongside the forthcoming *Community Capacity Building Action Plan* which is being drawn up after the consultation document *Building Civil Renewal*.²

The Framework provides an architecture of how support should develop in the next ten years and highlights key strategic actions which will build that support. It should be used as a planning tool for Government, funders and voluntary and community sector partners at all levels and in different sub-sectors enabling them to develop action plans and providing a point of reference for future thinking.

¹ Recommendations 7 & 10, *The Role of the Voluntary and Community Sector in Service Delivery: A Cross Cutting Review*, HM Treasury, 2002 (CCR)
² *Building Civil Renewal, Review Findings from the Civil Renewal Unit*, Home Office, January 2004

The support needs of frontline organisations

Different organisations have specific needs which will vary with each stage of their development. There can be no 'one size fits all' approach, but this document sets out a strategic approach to addressing the key support needs shared by most organisations and highlights the actions which will make the biggest impact. By 2014:

Performance improvement – Frontline organisations should be better able to improve the performance of their organisation, make choices about which tools are right for them, and easily access support and advice. New performance improvement advisers, housed in regional or sub-regional organisations, should be trained for outreach work and infrastructure³ organisations should act as clearing houses for skills sharing, mentoring and *pro bono* opportunities.

Workforce development and leadership –

There should be a greater range of accessible professional development opportunities with increased take-up of learning opportunities and qualifications by voluntary and community sector workers. Employers should have improved access to support and advice on HR issues. Local workforce development strategies should reflect the needs of the sector. Each regional voluntary and community sector network should have a workforce development leader by 2005 and a regional strategy in place by 2006.



ICT – Frontline organisations and funders should share a common awareness of the costs and benefits of ICT enabling them to make informed choices about its use. There should be affordable and reliable support models in place with user friendly and relevant ICT advice available – including volunteer and *pro bono* support. A web-based information service and a national telephone helpline should be available by 2005.

³ Infrastructure comprises the physical facilities, structures, systems, relationships, people, knowledge and skills that exist to support and develop, co-ordinate, represent and promote front line organisations thus enabling them to deliver their missions more effectively.

By 2005 there should be national hubs of expertise on:

- Performance improvement
- Workforce development
- ICT
- Governance
- Financing voluntary and community sector activity

Governance – Board members should be aware of their responsibilities and good practice and have direct access to accurate and helpful information and development. Being a board member should be more attractive and boards themselves should be more diverse, better reflecting the communities they serve. There should be a framework of competencies and standards in voluntary and community sector governance by 2005.

Recruiting and developing volunteers – There should be a leaner, effectively marketed and high quality volunteering infrastructure reaching, recruiting and placing a greater diversity of individuals coupled with improved volunteer management. A commonly branded local volunteer infrastructure, linked to the achievement of quality standards, should be in place by 2005.

Funding voluntary and community sector activity – Frontline organisations should be able to take advantage of opportunities to diversify their income sources and should demonstrate increased skill in contract negotiation and better standards in more effective fundraising. Action at national level will raise awareness of the benefits of increasing asset ownership by voluntary and community organisations.



The provision of support

These capacity needs can be met by a variety of ways: by organisations helping each other, through *pro bono* work, from public sector and other funders of frontline organisations and organisations' own regional or national structures if they have them. But many frontline organisations rely on voluntary and community sector infrastructure which in some parts of the country is patchy in coverage and quality and lacks sustainable funding, particularly at the local level where what people need most is affordable face-to-face support.



Locally, sub-regionally and regionally stakeholders should come together to agree the shape and structure of provision which best suits the needs of frontline organisations and how it should be funded. Locally these plans should take account of community planning processes and detail how the needs of diverse organisations and communities should be met in a given area. Plans should be completed by 2005 so that good quality infrastructure provision is in place in all areas of England by 2009.

Diversity. Specialist infrastructure, including that working with marginalised groups, should be integral to the development of hubs of activity and diverse organisations should be represented in the management of generalist infrastructure. Diversity should be a core component of the standards for performance improvement in infrastructure including implementing the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 where organisations receive public funding.

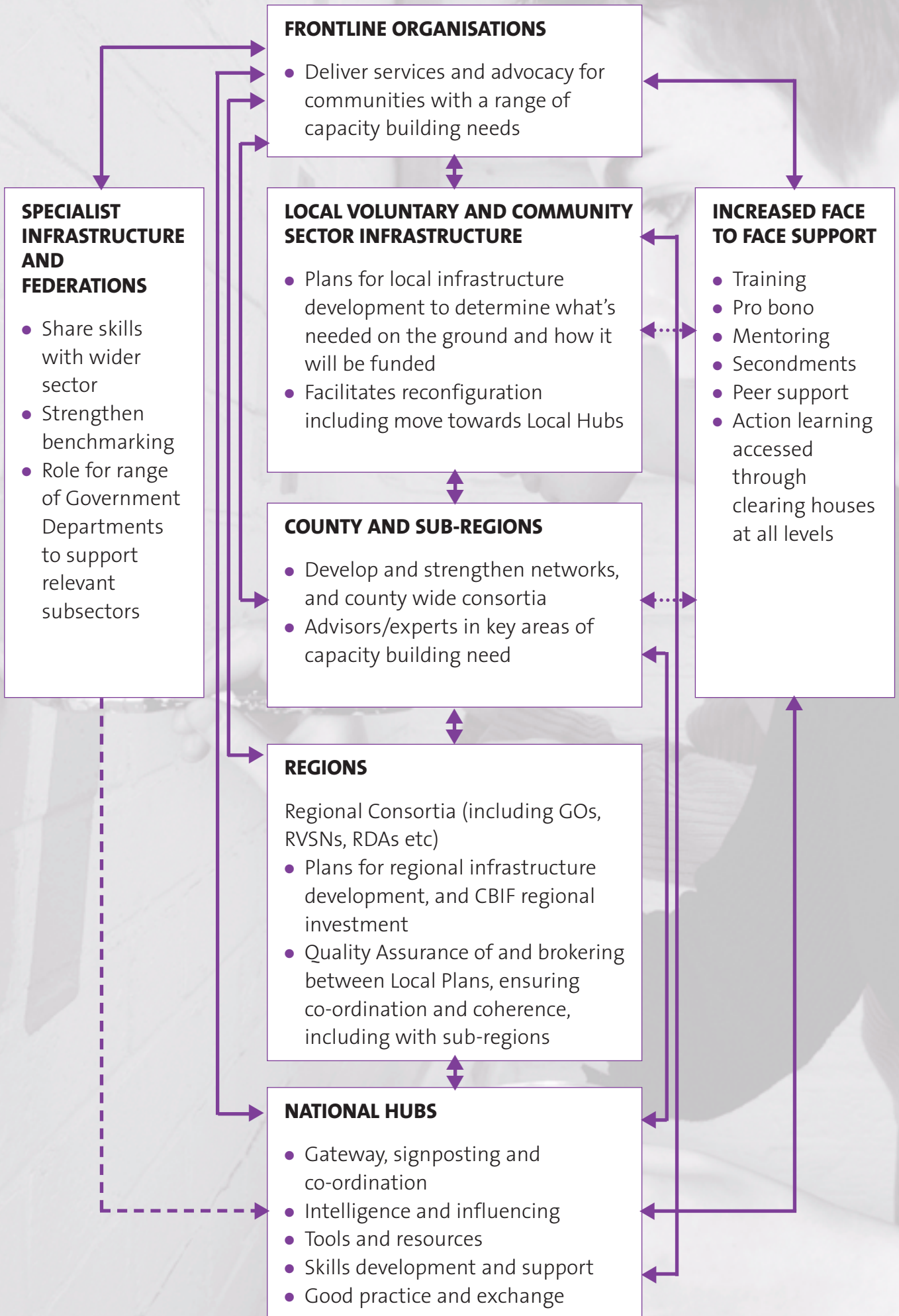
It is envisaged that at regional, sub-regional and local levels infrastructure should gradually coalesce into geographic hubs of activity with services sharing premises, back office facilities or merging depending on needs.

Nationally hubs of expertise, which will be set up by 2006, will bring key players together to provide strategic leadership and act as gateways and beacons of good practice on key areas, reaching directly to frontline organisations to develop advanced thinking and good practice.

An Infrastructure National Partnership should be created by 2005 to provide oversight and leadership. It should be chaired by a senior independent figure and work with partners in other sectors to deliver a step change in the delivery of support to frontline organisations. Tools and standards for performance improvement in infrastructure provision should be in place by 2006.

Funding. A higher proportion of infrastructure costs should be funded by frontline organisations through membership fees and the sale of services. The costs of infrastructure services should therefore be included in the core costs of delivery. The public sector also has a key role to play in maintaining the existence of strong and robust infrastructure. Public sector funding should be long-term, strategic and focused on clear objectives which infrastructure bodies should deliver to agreed standards.





Summary of Recommendations

High Level Aim of Framework

- This Framework sets out a bold but achievable aim – that by 2014 the needs of frontline voluntary and community organisations will be met by support which is available nationwide, structured for maximum efficiency, offering excellent provision which is accessible to all while reflecting and promoting diversity, and is sustainably funded

Performance Improvement

High level objective by 2014:

- Frontline organisations are better able to improve the performance of their organisations, make choices about which tools are right for them and easily access support and advice
- A National Hub of Expertise in Performance Improvement should be established by 2005

Developing a Highly Effective Workforce

High level objective by 2014:

- There is a greater range of accessible development opportunities with increased take-up of learning opportunities by voluntary and community sector workers. Employers have improved access to support and advice on Human Resources issues
- Each Regional Network should have a learning and skills leader by 2005 and regional strategy in place by April 2006
- There should be a National Hub of Expertise in Workforce Development by 2005

ICT

High level objective 2014:

- Frontline organisations and funders share a common awareness of the costs and benefits of ICT enabling them to make informed choices about its use. There are affordable and reliable support models in place, with user friendly and relevant ICT advice available, including volunteering and *pro bono* support
- A wide range of reference information, including basic support and signposting on ICT issues, best practice information, 'how to' guides, and strategic analysis of new developments in ICT should be accessible via the web and other formats by 2005
- A telephone helpline should be available for those organisations without significant ICT capability by 2005
- A partnership of national voluntary and community organisations should be formed to provide strategic oversight of ICT issues in the sector by the end of 2004

Governance

High level objective by 2014:

- Board members are aware of their responsibilities and good practice and have access to accurate and helpful information and development. Being a trustee is more attractive and boards are more diverse, better reflecting the communities they serve
- A National Hub of Expertise in Governance should be established by 2005
- A set of competencies and standards in voluntary and community sector governance will be developed by 2005

Recruiting and Developing Volunteers

High level objective by 2014:

- There is a leaner, effectively marketed and high quality volunteering infrastructure reaching, recruiting and placing a greater number and diversity of individuals coupled with improved volunteer management
- There should be provision for local volunteer engagement and organisational support and development, through volunteer centres, in all areas of the country by 2009
- There should be a commonly branded local volunteering infrastructure linked to the achievement of quality standards available from the end of 2005

Financing Voluntary and Community Sector Activity

High level objective by 2014:

- Frontline organisations are able to take advantage of opportunities to diversify their income sources and demonstrate increased skill in contract negotiation and better standards in more effective fundraising
- A National Hub of Expertise on Financing Voluntary and Community Sector Activity (incorporating fundraising, procurement and enterprise) should be established by 2005
- The National Hub of Expertise on Financing Voluntary and Community Sector Activity should work to raise awareness amongst local councils about the benefit of asset transfer to the voluntary and community sector, encourage consistent application of the rules affecting asset transfer and help build capacity within the sector to manage assets

Infrastructure

- Voluntary and community sector infrastructure should be made available nationwide structured for maximum efficiency, offer excellent provision which is accessible to all while reflecting and promoting diversity, and is sustainably funded
- Cross-sectoral and inclusive review and planning exercises will take place by 2005 to ensure good quality infrastructure provision is available in all areas of England by 2007
- There should be local hubs of infrastructure activity delivering generalist and appropriately configured specialist infrastructure functions and services in every local area and every region by 2008
- To avoid unnecessary duplication, a protocol on the creation of new infrastructure bodies should be established by the Infrastructure National Partnership
- By the end of 2006, as well as strengthening the role of existing national centres of expertise, there should be national hubs of expertise dedicated to achieving excellence in: Workforce Development, Governance, Performance Improvement, Financing Voluntary and Community Sector Activity, and ICT
- An Infrastructure National Partnership should be created by 2005
- Tools and standards for performance improvement in voluntary and community sector infrastructure should be in place by 2006
- A national web-based information portal should be available by the end of 2006

Reflecting & Promoting Diversity

- **Specialist infrastructure organisations should be integral to the development of local hubs of infrastructure Activity, leading to strengthened partnership work to deliver high quality services. This would include opportunities for specialist infrastructure organisations to deliver proven services more widely**
- **Local, sub-regional and regional Infrastructure Development Plans should detail how the needs of diverse organisations and communities are best met in a given area and recognise the need for independent and accountable structures to represent and advocate for communities of interest. This should be underpinned by the aim of strengthening community cohesion**
- **The Infrastructure National Partnership should:**
 - **Be inclusively structured and involve specialist infrastructure**
 - **Encourage ongoing dialogue about the roles and relationship of specialist and generic infrastructure**
 - **Report on progress increasing the reach and impact of generalist infrastructure services in meeting the needs of disadvantaged communities and promoting good practice to represent and advocate for communities of interest**

Sustainability, sub-regional and regional Infrastructure Development

Government Departments should apply to voluntary and community sector infrastructure the principles of the Compact on relations between Government and the voluntary and community sector in England. They should:

- **Ensure that current support for and investment in capacity building and infrastructure for frontline organisations contributing to achieving departmental aims is robust. This may require a process of review;**
- **revise support in line with achieving their priorities and ensure that gaps are addressed in line with the outcomes identified in the Framework and in accordance with its principles;**
- **adopt a strategic approach to funding voluntary and community sector infrastructure – with clear reporting requirements that reduce the burden on frontline organisations and which focus on the difference made to users and beneficiaries;**
- **passport information across departments working with the voluntary and community sector to build coherence and avoid duplication;**
- **build in consideration of capacity building needs at the planning stage of major policy initiatives and delivery programmes where the voluntary and community sector is a partner. Consult with infrastructure and frontline organisations to determine what their support needs will be and budget to contribute to getting these met;**
- **when strategically funding frontline organisations, and as part of full cost recovery, contribute towards their capacity building costs (staff training and skills development, good governance, implementing a quality system, etc.).**

Glossary

Capacity building

‘...empowering activity that strengthens the ability of voluntary and community organisations to build their structures, systems, people and skills so that they are better able to:

- define and achieve their objectives,
- engage in consultation and planning,
- manage projects, and
- take part in partnerships, social enterprise and service delivery.’⁴

Civil renewal⁵

The renewal of civil society through the development of strong, active and empowered communities, in which people are able to do things for themselves, define the problems they face and tackle them in partnership with public bodies. Civil renewal involves three essential elements: active citizenship, strengthened communities and partnership in meeting public needs. Its practical process is community engagement.

Community capacity building

Activities, resources and support that strengthen the skills and abilities of people and community groups enabling them to take effective action and leading roles in the development of their communities.⁶

Compact

The Compact was published in 1998. It is a framework for partnership between Government and the voluntary and community sector, for mutual advantage. An important principle in the Compact is the independence of the sector and its right to campaign. The Compact is supported by five Codes of Good Practice in which Government and the sector commit to particular actions. For example, in the Consultation and Policy Appraisal Code, Government has pledged to allow a minimum of 12 weeks wherever possible in consultation and the sector has pledged to ensure that the views of women and minority and socially excluded groups are included in their response. There are also Local

⁴ *Building Community Strengths*, Steve Skinner, 1997

⁵ *Building Civil Renewal*, *ibid*

⁶ *Building Civil Renewal*, *ibid*

Compact Guidelines to inform partnership working between voluntary and community sector organisations and local bodies such as local authorities, primary care trusts and local Learning and Skills Councils.

Frontline organisations

Voluntary and community organisations that work directly with individuals and communities in order to provide services, offer support and campaign for change.

Generic infrastructure

Infrastructure organisations who provide support to all frontline organisations within a particular geographic area.

Infrastructure

The physical facilities, structures, systems, relationships, people, knowledge and skills that exist to support and develop, co-ordinate, represent and promote front line organisations thus enabling them to deliver their missions more effectively.

Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)

An LSP is a single non-statutory, multi-agency body, which matches local authority boundaries and aims to bring together at a local level the different parts of the public, private, community and voluntary sectors. LSPs are key to tackling deep-seated, multi-faceted problems, requiring a range of responses from different bodies. Local partners working through a LSP will be expected to take many of the major decisions about priorities and funding for their local area.

Public services

Services that are wholly or partly publicly funded and are delivered by public, voluntary and community and private sector agencies.⁷

Social enterprises

Businesses with primarily social objectives whose surpluses are principally reinvested for that purpose in the business or in the community rather than being driven by the need to maximise profit for shareholders and owners.

⁷ It is acknowledged that many voluntary and community organisations are involved in delivering services to the public that are funded independently of the state, often using volunteers. Through the delivery of such services, the sector often fills gaps and pioneers new forms of delivery that may or may not become part of mainstream publicly-funded provision.

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| Specialist infrastructure | Infrastructure organisations that provide support to a particular ‘sub-sector’ of the voluntary and community sector, or offer a specific area of expertise. |
| VCS (voluntary and community sector) | For the purposes of this document the voluntary and community sector has not been tightly defined. It is intended to be wider in scope than general charities or the voluntary sector, inclusive of organisations reflecting the characteristics of social enterprise, but narrower in scope than nonprofit, the third sector or social economy. |
| Voluntary and community sector infrastructure | Voluntary and community organisations whose primary purpose is the provision of infrastructure functions (support and development, co-ordination, representation and promotion) to frontline voluntary and community organisations ⁸ . They are sometimes called umbrella, second tier or intermediary organisations. |

⁸ The distinction between infrastructure organisations and front line organisations is sometimes blurred at a neighbourhood or community level where some infrastructure organisations also deliver services direct to individuals or communities.

Abbreviations

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|---------------|--|
| ACU | Active Community Unit |
| BME | Black and Minority Ethnic |
| CBIF | Capacity Building and Infrastructure Framework |
| CIT | Capacity Implementation Team |
| CCBR | Community Capacity Building Review |
| CCR | Cross Cutting Review: The Role of the Voluntary Sector in Service Delivery |
| CDF | Community Development Foundation |
| CEN | Community Empowerment Network |
| CPA | Comprehensive Performance Assessment |
| CRU | Civil Renewal Unit |
| CVS | Council for Voluntary Service |
| DEFRA | Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs |
| DTI | Department of Trade and Industry |
| ICT | Information and Communications Technology |
| IDeA | Improvement and Development Agency |
| LLSC | Local Learning and Skills Council |
| LPSA | Local Public Service Agreement |
| LSC | Learning and Skills Council |
| LSP | Local Strategic Partnership |
| NACVS | National Association of Councils for Voluntary Service |
| NCVO | National Council for Voluntary Organisations |
| NDPB | Non-Departmental Public Body |
| NRU | Neighbourhood Renewal Unit |
| ODPM | Office of the Deputy Prime Minister |
| PCT | Primary Care Trust |
| PQASSO | Practical Quality Assurance System for Small Organisations |
| RDA | Regional Development Agency |
| RCC | Rural Community Council |
| RDA | Regional Development Agency |
| REC | Race Equality Council |
| SBS | Small Business Service |
| SEnU | Social Enterprise Unit, Department of Trade and Industry |
| SOTSP | State of the Sector Panel |
| VB | Volunteer Bureau |
| VCS | Voluntary and Community Sector |
| VDE | Volunteer Development England |

