Voluntary Sector Grants Consultation
Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector
Adult Social Care Contracts Consultation

Summary of the Consultation
Cheshire East Council gives grants each year to voluntary sector organisations that provide social care related services. Some examples include; the Alzheimer’s Society for a Dementia Support Worker and the 50 + Network to provide a voice for the over 50 population of Cheshire East. However, because the Council has a duty to ensure that public money is being spent in the best way we need to review these grants every so often.

The consultation was held to work out:

- How much funding should continue to be allocated to organisations for 2012/13.

- To understand views of organisations themselves, their service users and the Cheshire East general public.

Consultation Methodology
There were two methods used to gather feedback for the consultation. The organisations were given a consultation template to complete which was set out in two sections. The first part was to assess what the equality impact would be if their funding was reduced. The second part of the consultation was promoted through the voluntary organisations themselves to service users and there was a public online survey.

Prior to the consultation there were meetings with the agencies to talk about the consultation process and how it would work.

Consultation Analysis
The analysis aims to give a broad overview without going into specifics about the organisations.

An online survey was conducted to find out the views of the people who use the services provided by the Third Sector Organisations about social care related voluntary sector grants. The survey was made up of eight questions the first two questions were personal information.
Questions and responses:

Starting at question 3 they were asked if they use an organisation that we fund either in the past or present. 93% of the people who completed the survey use one of the organisations we fund.

Do you use a service that we fund or have in the past?
84 respondents answered this question and the majority were by people using Crossroads.

What would the potential impact be on you of a change in funding for this service in 2012 / 2013 (either decrease of increase)?
They were asked to let us know if they thought the impact on them would be greater due to; disability, race, religion, age, being a carer, being on a low income etc.

134 people answered this question, the majority being carers. Mostly the comments were that a decrease in funding would have a detrimental impact on the people who use the services. Carers’ comments:

‘If this was decreased it would take away peace of mind, adding to anxiety and stress of carers.’

‘If funding was to decrease my son would miss out on vital social skills and practice which is important to his severe needs. If funding was to increase it would give my son and other children more opportunities and gain more vital skills.’

‘A decrease in funding would have an enormous impact when we use the service as money is very tight and we have no savings. The possibility that we may have to pay extra would mean that we and many others would not use the services of Crossroads and this would have an impact both on the carer and the person they care for both mentally and physically with possible catastrophic results. Then less people may use the service less, rather than more and you get into a circle of less people, less funding.’
What do you value about this service?
The feedback was very positive about the value of the services used. The services were described as giving the carers, peace of mind, vital support and the knowledge that in the event of an emergency there would be help. The different organisations cover a range of provision from respite to helping children with social skills. They are not just specific to carers and have a large influence on the local community.

Open comments from the respondents were all very complimentary about the services and especially the staff, for instance;

‘The highly qualified and motivated staff. This means you could trust them to deal with whatever situations arose competently.’

There is a strong feeling that if the organisations lose funding and are unable to provide the services they do at present, a lot of people will be left without the support they need and thus potentially in a vulnerable situation.

‘This service is vital to me as a full time carer I can’t imagine life at the moment without it. I fully trust the people I leave my husband with, they are a carer to him and a friend to me! It is the only time I have to myself.’

Do you think the services currently funded meet the needs of people in Cheshire East?
The general opinion was that there should be more services provided in Cheshire East. The respondents said that there are still people who are not getting their needs met. Some respondents commented that there should be more provision for children and young adults. However some respondents agreed that there is a good provision of valuable services in Cheshire East.

Are there any other comments that you would like to make about the Council's social care related voluntary sector funding?
Not all respondents answered this question. However comments made were mainly about funding and the need for more services and not less. A lack of information and signposting was mentioned as was a request for more consultation to ascertain what Cheshire East residents need, want and expect from their social care services.
Voluntary Sector Grants Consultation Template

All third sector organisations with local authority contracts were sent a consultation template to complete. The following are the findings from the consultation templates.

32 current providers responded by completing and returning the consultation template, out of a possible 33 with some covering multiple contracts (52 contracts in total). All the providers gave a similar response to the question about the impact a change in funding would have. This was that a reduction of funding would have a negative impact on the outcomes achieved in proportion to the cut. For example a 10% cut would equate to a 10% reduction in their service provision. The effect of this would be longer waiting times for service users, increased isolation, less information provided at the critical time of need and an increased risk of escalation into social care need. This would ultimately result in increased costs on statutory services in the medium and long term. The responses highlighted that the impact would be greater on those who require services at home. These are mostly likely to be service users who are physically disabled and on low incomes who live in rural areas.

In contrast an increase in funding would allow providers to address barriers to service users, reduce the need for social or health care in the medium or long term and develop services that may further reduce the need for medium or long term social care.

Organisations were able to add further comments to the template. The majority used the opportunity to promote their service and emphasised the need in the community for what they do. The organisations cover a vast and diverse area of community need and said that in the present economic climate they are looking to expand and not cut back due to the increase in numbers of people that need their services. The general opinion is that without the correct funding they would not be able to put in place preventative measures and therefore would have to deal with a lot more people in crisis.

These organisations provide support to people which assists them in their day to day health and wellbeing. This reduces stress on both service users and carers. Most of the organisations are looking to develop their services because of the higher demands and several said that the services they provide are competitively priced giving good value for money. The majority rely heavily on
volunteers and provide training. These volunteers are often in the older age bracket and their volunteering helps their general health and wellbeing.

**Conclusion**
The general response to the consultation is that any reduction in funding would have a medium and long term impact. This is because it would lead to an increased spending by social care and or the reduction in the health and wellbeing of the client groups compared to the short term savings that will be achieved.