**National Survey Findings**

**Who responded?**

* The raw response rate based on actual returns as a percentage of local authorities was 28%. Adjusted for excluded authorities not eligible due to governance of children centres e.g. very high VCS representation already is 29% This gave a regional response rate of

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Region** | **Adjusted RR** |
| London | 32% |
| South East | 44% |
| East | 38% |
| South West | 42% |
| West Midlands | 17% |
| East Midlands | 14% |
| Yorkshire and Humberside | 8% |
| North West | 11% |
| North East | 55% |
| Total | 29% |

**What Resources are needed by LAs to meet the Challenges in engaging and supporting the local SM VCS in the Management of Children Centres and Service Delivery**

Five main challenges and a range of possible resources were identified after an extensive literature review, looking at the background of support for community bodies. Their chief complaint is that LAs don’t talk to them and what they want is practical support. This research was conducted to test these challenges from the perspective of the LA and provide hard evidence from LAs themselves for any later support offered. We need to make the case for practical support and assess the value of individual resources in strengthening support for each of the 5 challenges.

The 5 main challenges which we identified are:-

* Listening to the voice of SM VCS in Strategic Planning in the management of Children’s Centres or the delivery of services
* Identifying SM VCS for management of children’s centres and service delivery
* Avoiding disadvantaging SMVCS in the procurement process
* Improving SM VCS capacity by offering support
* Enabling, encouraging and supporting bids from SM VCS organisations

48% of LAs regularly map and monitor for possible SMVCS providers at local level of services and children centre management. 41% occasionally map and monitor for providers in the local area.

**Challenge 1 –Engaging SMVCS in Strategic Planning**

Q5-7 Nine out of ten (87%) LAs make it normal practice to help increase SM VCS involvement in the strategic planning of the management of children centres or delivery of services through processes such as consultation, advisory board representation and the SM VCS acting as advocates for users. Over 50% find the most important resources to help achieve this to be commissioning and procurement workshops (57%) and leadership and business skills workshops (55%). Nearly as important are ‘how to’ guides, policy briefings and governance workshops (48%,46%,42% ) but 74% of LAs do not value consortium models in this context.

**Challenge 2- Identifying SMVCS for management of Children’s Centres and service delivery**

Q8-10 Only 48% of LAs always or very frequently identify SMVCS for management of Children Centres and services delivery while 41% claim to do so only occasionally. Nearly 7 out of 10 LAs (67%) find commissioning and procurement workshops important to help with this and over half say business skills workshops and ‘how to’ guides (52%) are important here. Fewer than 4 in 10 find consortium models (33%) or governance workshops (36%) add value in identifying SMVCSs for management or service delivery.

**Challenge 3 – Avoiding disadvantage to SMVCS in procurement process**

Q11-13 77% of LAs take steps always or very frequently to avoid creating disadvantage to SM VCS in the procurement process. They do this by ensuring that procurements are streamlined with clear timetables and avoiding unnecessary information requirements. For this, 7 out of ten (67%) say that commissioning and procurement workshops are their most important resource. Less than half find ‘how to guides’ (44%), leadership and business skills workshops (39%) or consortium models (33%) help here. Policy briefings and governance workshops have a role in meeting this challenge for less than one third of LAs (33%, 22%).

**Challenge 4 - Improving capacity range and scope of support offered to the local SMVCS**

Q14-16 Only 25% of LAs always or very frequently provide support to improve the capacity of SM VCS organisations such as procurement training, policy briefings, strategic planning and business skills. These supports would include measures such as workshops, guidance sheets and web tools. Six out of ten (62%) provide this support occasionally or rarely. 65% think that commissioning and procurement workshops are important to help deliver this, four out of ten think that leadership and business skills workshops ( 41%) and ‘how to guides’ (44%) are important as a support to improve capacity. Consortium models, governance workshops and policy briefings are not considered so important ( 44%, 29%, 29%) for this activity.

**Challenge 5 – Welcoming and supporting initiatives such as consortia or partnership bids**

Q17-19 Nearly 7 out of 10 LAs (67%) actively encourage and support consortia or partnership bids as a matter of course. Three quarters find consortium models important for this (75%). 7 out of 10 use commissioning and procurement workshops (68%). Leadership and business skills workshops and ‘how to ‘ guides are important for nearly half of LAs (50%, 41%) while less than one in five find governance workshops an important resource (19%).

**What overall support do LAs want to meet these challenges?**

Overall commissioning and procurement workshops are in the greatest demand (61%) , followed by leadership and business skills workshops (44%), ‘how to’ guides (42%), consortium models (38%), policy briefings (32%) and governance workshops (29%).

**Overall conclusions**

* LAs identify the key weakness in their work with SM VCS organisations as the need to improve capacity including leadership of SM VCS organisations more consistently which they are failing to do as consistently as they would like. They need resources to provide support such as procurement training, policy briefings, strategic planning and business skills through measures such as workshops, guidance sheets and web-tools
* LAs identify consortium models as a necessary resource when supporting consortia and partnership bids, but of not so much relevance when meeting the other challenges.
* LAs are also weak on keeping up with identifying SMVCS organisations for the management of Children Centres and service delivery and say that all the resources , including workshops , ‘how to’ guides’ and policy briefings could be useful to support this. This weakness is confirmed in this research by LAs poor performance on mapping and monitoring for possible SM VCS providers at local level of services and children’s centre management.
* Further work within partner LAs is needed to assess if this is the VCSs and CC manager take on the same challenges.