



## **Better Together Policy Forum Valuing Social Impacts of the VCSE Sector in County Durham Friday, 11<sup>th</sup> October 2024**

**If the VCSE are to be regarded as mainstream partners and contributors to the economy in County Durham, what do we need in place to evidence the impacts and strength of their contributions?**

### **Introduction**

This event provided an opportunity to continue developing a dialogue about social value, which began with looking at shared research agendas at last October's Forum. The aim of the event was to explore how procurement, commissioning and delivery is currently developing through the Durham Pound and commissioning models, and through the ways and means the VCSE can demonstrate their contribution, value and impacts. Representatives from 35 different organisations and agencies discussed the issues and opportunities, and how we are responding to them in County Durham.

There have been significant developments in approaches by public sector and the organisations which invest in the VCSE, in the context of their governance and funding priorities. Durham Pound is championing Social Value as an essential core to public sector procurement, with aims to ensure the communities of County Durham stand to benefit both directly and indirectly from all public spending programmes.

The VCSE makes an important contribution to social and economic wellbeing across County Durham, both as employers of local people, and as agents for community and voluntary action, building skills and vital social and cultural networks.

Kate Burrows, Executive Director of Durham Community Action and Chair of the Better Together VCSE Forum, opened the meeting by introducing the themes for discussion, to explore insights from the public sector, with an update from Durham Pound, and report back from consultations within the VCSE over the summer about how the sector is currently demonstrating the impacts of their work.

### **Presentation 1 – Richard Carroll Chief Procurement Officer and Debbie Howe Social Value Officer, Durham County Council**

Richard and Debbie presented with a comprehensive update on how the Durham Pound was established and has developed with a principled approach to embedding social value into procurement and commissioning in County Durham.

Their presentation illustrated examples of social value in practice, together with impacts on the businesses which are engaged, and the cumulative benefits accruing to the County in terms of community support, environmental improvements and a broader reach for skills and coaching support in work forces.

They described the “Holy Trinity” of Social Value, Quality and Price which underpins the Durham Pound procurement protocols. The approach in County Durham has been based on the national TOMs (Targets, Outcomes, Measures) model, which has been refined and tailored for County Durham on the basis of a robust local needs assessment.

The new Social Value Act, which was due to come into force from October, has now been deferred to February 2025. The Durham Pound has been working collaboratively to ensure the new Act, which requires open access and greater equity in procurement is well embedded into practice across the County.

Reviewing the achievements of the Durham Pound for the first year of operation, Richard and Debbie illustrated how priorities had been identified and a shared vision developed and communicated across all partners (Durham Pound Supporters). Tools for engagement and demonstrating added value have also been developed and a total of £305m in social value has been delivered.

32 Durham Pound Supporters are currently signed up for the Durham Pound partnership. There is a broader aim to reach further into local supply chains and enable smaller business and the VCSE to participate. Ultimately, there is an ambition to see Durham Pound Supporters producing individual Annual Reports which chart their respective social value achievements, linked to the TOMs framework, and benefitting County Durham.

Plans for 2024 include objectives to:

- Broaden the range of organisations involved and signed up to the Durham Pound as Supporters.
- Continuing to monitor and measure impacts and outcomes.
- Support partner organisations to embed social value into their business models.
- Engage more actively with local supply chains.
- Continuing with cross sector collaborations.

The full presentation can be found on the Durham Community Action website [here](#).

### **Presentation 2 - Jo Laverick Durham Community Action Associate**

Jo has been working as an Associate of DCA, specifically to explore opportunities and the VCSE roles in adopting Social Value. She presented a summary of the scope and applications for social value within VCSE settings, together with a report back from consultations conducted over the summer months with seven key VCSE providers in the County.

In terms of value and application of social value models in VCSE organisations, she set out some of the learning we have picked up from colleagues in other parts of the Country and from those who have adopted and embedded tools for measuring social value within their own organisations.

Lessons learned can be summarised as follows:

**Awareness:** Ensure you make the time and resources available to foster social value (process and principles) within staff, volunteers and trustee cohorts for your organisation.

**Align and Analyse your work:** Consider with staff and beneficiaries whether your approach is having the impacts you need and want. Do you need to change anything? Start any social value approach with a Theory of Change (What and Why) exercise to provide a baseline from which to plan and measure.

**Business Development:** Use social value tools to forecast and plan for your organisation.

Focus on storytelling and case studies: The VCSE is effective in producing case studies to develop a compelling narrative about their work and its impacts. The stories produced are an important element to showcasing the social value which your organisation creates.

**Seek Advice:** There are a number of agencies and organisations with expertise and know how in the applications for social value, so make use of the support they can offer to help integrate social value with your existing evaluation and measurement practices.

Jo went on to report back on the consultation outcomes with colleagues in the County Durham VCSE. Talking to seven key organisations, plus two VCSE infrastructure anchor organisations (DCA and Point North) the key focus for their activities was the relief of poverty and supporting families and individuals in crisis. They also provide preventive advice, information and social support services. All of the organisations involved are active contributors to the Better Together network and to the Advice in County Durham Partnership.

All seven organisations have significant experience in generating income through a mixed portfolio of commissions and contracts from the public sector and central government, and through grants from charitable foundations, public sector and national charities.

All of the organisations monitor their work carefully and have a range of approaches to demonstrating the impacts of their work, primarily for the funders and to fulfil contractual requirements. All also made it clear that their view of social value is that it has potential for them as a tool, however their interest primarily lies in how social value can be harnessed to get better outcomes for the people they work with and for.

As an outcome of the consultation, a snapshot was taken of the economic contribution from the seven VCSE providers to the social and economic infrastructure of the County.

As employers the organisations consulted collectively employ 360 staff, who are largely local and reinvesting salaries into County Durham as residents and consumers. In terms of the salary input to the County, the organisations contribute between £7m and 12m a year (based on national average wage: National Office for Statistics).

The same organisations collectively work with 1010 volunteers. A financial value to this in-kind contribution is calculated at nearly £5m (£4,621,760) in one year. This estimate is based on average volunteer hours and the national minimum wage for 2024.

Jo emphasised the nature of this consultation as a snapshot, primarily focused on the organisations which are working collaboratively through VCSE partnerships, however, it needs to be noted that there is also a large and diverse infrastructure of smaller, often volunteer led VCSE organisations and groups operating across the County. They are largely supporting local needs, providing social and community spaces and reference points. Reaching and supporting these organisations with feedback on their contribution to social value shouldn't be overlooked.

Most of the seven organisations consulted for this snapshot work closely and collaborate with these smaller local groups and anchors to deliver services, forming a supply chain which is inherently local and integral to the VCSE.

Finally, Jo outlined some of the potential applications of social value systems for the VCSE in County Durham, including increasing consistency and delivery collaborations between VCSE partners (e.g. Advice outreach and coordination); planning ahead and forecasting needs and resources; supporting volunteers; demonstrating value and influencing policy agendas; information and on-line resources. Coordinated approaches to the adoption of social value tools across the VCSE, particularly in partnerships and collaborative projects, will also provide valuable intelligence for policy makers and commissioners in targeting funding and investments into the sector.

The presentation can be found on the Durham Community Action [website](#).

## **Networking and Round Table Discussions**

Following a break for networking, delegates took part in table discussions. There was a lively set of seven round table discussions, based on set questions. The detailed responses from the tables were nuanced and varied, so have been transcribed and collated as an Appendix to follow on page 6 of this event note.

Before closing the event, Kate invited short statements from the floor as feedback from the discussions. The following points summarise feedback from the room:

- Why would this be of benefit to the VCSE and what does it mean for us in practice? The sector would need to have access to training and centralised support to ensure their engagement, and to support the VCSE groups with limited resources.
- How would/could AI influence and affect social value applications? Some funding/investment into buying time and further exploration to have a better understanding of applications and models is needed.
- Capturing the value of the “small” is really important, and a model for reaching through to smaller and local supply chains needs to be considered. Getting to some shared understanding about the scale and value of interventions, particularly in supporting high levels of need or dependency in some communities, is important. It should also be recognised that there are some areas of the VCSE which are significant in terms of their offer, but face challenges in engaging with large partnership approaches because of a lack of resources and back-office support.
- Perceptions, or potential issues of trust and power imbalances between commissioning bodies and the VCSE can get in the way. There needs to be on-going work to calibrate the balance better and bring the VCSE in as more equitable partners in investment decisions.
- Scale and targets for funding into the VCSE could be targeted more into core funding, given evidenced outcomes. There is a long-standing perception is that short term funding is easier for commissioning and longer term not so attractive (budgetary and policy constraints?) These perceptions could be usefully worked through in closer collaboration between VCSE leaders and Commissioners.

Kate closed the event by outlining the next steps to build on the discussions from the day:

Detailed notes, with links to the presentations, are posted on the DCA website, and a full report about social value and the VCSE approach in County Durham will be published in the new year. Any organisations wishing to look more closely at adopting a tool for measuring social value should get in touch with DCA, and a workshop to look at the mechanics, costs and resources involved for adopting a social value measurement tool will be arranged.

Kate closed by thanking everyone attending for their time and contributions.

### **About the Forum**

[The Better Together Forum](#) brings together senior representatives of larger or specialist VCS organisations with a countywide remit to share best practice and look for new opportunities to collaborate.

### **Contacts:**

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For further information click [here](#) or see [www.durhamcommunityaction.org.uk](http://www.durhamcommunityaction.org.uk)

## **APPENDIX**

The following notes are transcribed from comments and points raised and noted during the Round Table discussions. They have been set out under themes arising during the discussions.

These notes also include feedback from “**Messages from the VCSE to Commissioners**” and “**Messages from Commissioners to the VCSE**”.

## **ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS**

### **Questions and Responses:**

#### **I. How can we use social value evidence to make a case for better investment and strengthen partnership working?**

##### **Durham Pound**

Like cash donations to go into local communities.

Be careful how much cash is donated and how it is used – make sure not taking away from public purse. Could the contractor work the donation into the procurement bid.

Organisations who are not big enough to do procurement but still have resources – Durham Pound can still share data to local, smaller organisations.

How do rural, local projects harness the power of social value – work closer with Durham Pound orgs?

Big orgs/funders to offer pro-bono skills even if they can't fund – contribute to the local economy.

County Durham Care not on Durham Pound.

##### **TOMs**

TOMS is very restrictive – does not allow groups to provide evidence of all they do as an organisation.

Want TOMS to be more relevant to the VCSE sector.

TOMS designed for procurement. Other reporting tools fit better – time would need to be spent deciding which reporting tool to use.

TOMS as art of Mental Health Alliance measurement.

##### **Partnerships and Collaboration**

Better Together Group / Resilient Communities Group / Advice Partnership are some current strengths

Durham is the best umbrella for arts/culture organisations eg museums.

Faith Communities do a lot of work – should tap into this.

Engage more with further education colleges and universities.

University get in involved in research

Ensure have choice – not for people but with people – organisations have input in project planning.

Build a database / common themes within partnerships so there is a base to work off.

Funders / private sector brokerage could fund local/rural orgs to create social value.

Looking at Durham University/student basis – work experience/digital help but look at how we extend this.

Need to create understanding of the VCSE & what they do (incl roles of volunteers).

AICD Partnership, Better Together, Mental Wellbeing Alliance, Durham Employability Connections give us a collective voice.

Place based partnerships eg UTASS, East Durham also theme based partnerships.

Transformation from competitive to collaborative working together in partnerships.

Social value is what we do but how do we capture that and put it into a monetary value, looking at common metrics.

Funders should work together on how social value is requested.

Comparable/standard information

Better understanding of the long-term difference we are making.

Learning from each other – share experiences more.

### **Social Value Tools**

Believe £250,000 – HACT – VALUE INSIGHT – Social Value – 6M create from £250,000.

Other Social Value Engine models – further discussions – not a burden.

NEFirst CU – financial inclusion – identify volunteers in common – capture/measure vols output.

### **Mechanics / Social Value**

Find organisations that can support/facilitate – have common language / measurement tools / metric system.

Further exploration / aligning / working co-operatively.

Simple to collect – orgs not always interested in data.

Frontline staff enable them to do it / protect so that they do right thing.

Expectations of funders

Challenge of what we do is all social value.

Creating an understanding of the little things that bring social value – social value might look different as 'grass roots' organisation level.

Trading organisation that has schools buying services, so how do they show their value – could develop social value.

Recognition that the work you're doing contributes to society.

Resources to capture the information, the cost of gathering data.

Difficulty of balancing strategic priorities against delivery priorities.

Can resources be provided to small VCSE organisations to enable them to feed into this agenda?

Resource of skills & capacity to take data from the VCSE organisations & present it as social value.

Could there be a template that is the right size for different organisations in terms of how we calculate .

How to ensure we have comparable data, using comparable values to determine social value.

Smaller org working together – but they need the tools to development.

Need 2 templates – bigger & smaller.

How do you measure the impact?

There is a template used by DCC Comm Teams ie WBA contract.

Everyone needs to use the same tool.

Complimentary achievements eg actual cash spend & resources.

### **Queries & Observations**

Carers Trust has a social value tool but it does not help Durham County Carers Support win contracts / be sustainable

How to report within supply chains is a challenge.

Bid applications do not allow case studies due to word count limits.

Learning to be had from anchor organisations.

No health organisations signed up on list? Not clear – logo to add to presentation.

Current strengths – multiple partnerships, local & rural, more under radar but more awareness needs to be created to spread word.

Look at brokering system – ask on groups in Teesdale – look at how orgs can be used to expand skills & volunteering.

Age UK County Durham – research project – demonstrate with a common set of outcomes – ‘so what’ – evidence meeting it.  
Something around it being meaningful & needs to be appropriate.  
Challenge of short term funding.  
Reframe the question to ‘can we...’  
Concern at DCC level (MTPF) £1.45M eg why are savings being made at the ‘periphery’ hyper local level?  
Can this be a vehicle to just justify cuts.  
Fore environmental NCOs social value literacy is lacking within the VCSE sector.  
Social value is more natural environment formed.

## **2. How does the VCSE get best value out of both private and public sector County Durham Pound Supporters?**

### **Relationships**

How to make introductions to enable organisations to submit a particular request.  
Need relationship building exercise – who is doing what in organisations – Project match – managing time.  
Are there co-ordinators available in Durham Pound to liaise with VCSE and their wants/corporate offers?  
Larger funders/VCS – accountability, not just ‘partners’ but actually making a difference.  
Equal partnership, sharing accountability – helps to build relationship & rapport – not a tick box exercise.  
Larger orgs coming back to smaller orgs and asking ‘what can I do for you?’  
Locality mentoring – orgs buddied with private sectors.  
Not ‘doing to’ VCS / Not prescribing getting small group voice.  
Believe as supporter – TOMS model – wider, softer – not included.  
Influence of NR+EMCA – future programming funds – VCS more resilient – strengthen sector / sustainable for future.  
Collaboration between funders and what needs capturing.  
Get as many different private sectors to understand VCSE.  
Network between sectors.  
Speed networking.  
Some great examples – but still feel not great understanding between sectors.  
Need to increase awareness of the VCSE & how businesses can support.  
Private sector needs to know VCSE/ How can the orgs within Durham Pound understand VCSE.

### **Systems**

NECA has a new link system – submit your offer / schools match up.  
Is there an appetite from corporates to offer to VCSE – how to match up?  
Anchor organisations could have named people who could manage submitted requests.  
Dip-in to gain advice or access a professional eg architect would be useful.  
Sustainability of project – transactional, not relationship.  
Need revenue investment – role for DCA/Point North to have a more active role.  
Responsible sector = VCS – quicker response to money to make impact – doable as demonstrated through Covid and storms.  
Orgs not being afraid to change their procurement/commissioning policies to be able to work better with partners.  
Adding data into mix eg DION  
Clear pathways to get into companies for support  
Equity issue – Durham Pound – utilising DP to achieve ‘social value landscape’  
What does this mean for those who don’t understand the sector.

## Information

How do local groups know what is available in their area?

Need more knowledge on offers and wants – raise awareness.

Informing about expectations at start of project – so this informs procurement & documents created.

Bring voluntary orgs into the picture more – look beyond nature of sector and integrate more.

Tangible actions that portray procurement – to demonstrate impact that is ‘value for money’.

Promotion of work of VCS e.g Advice in County Durham portal.

Linkages is helpful – so ways these commercial organisations can learn about VCSE organisations and private & public orgs can benefit from VCSE.

“Value re those six organisations is more than Jo’s stats”

Can social value look at employing someone to grow local pots of funding. Would helping small organisations to ‘break through the barrier’ between small/large organisations – youth organisation.

## Volunteering

Corporate to understand what volunteering is eg not just x10 people volunteer for 1 day.

ESV – getting specialist skills.

What are the benefits to the VCSE groups for facilitating the volunteering.

Durham Pound supports to be investing in corporate volunteering for skills swap and coordination.

Corporate platform for volunteering.

Capturing employees for retirement and encouraging volunteering when people retire.

## Queries & Observations

VCS is ‘messy’ – knowledge of sector is important/allow sector to do what it needs to do.

Wider discussion – there are other measures – how orgs link in together.

Bigger impacts – job – illegal money lending not used.

Co. Durham Partnership – vehicle explore & shared.

Lived experience voice – promote self-help & resilience – get their stories eg numbers on screen not as effective as video.

Using social value tools = potentially very prescriptive.

Poss place-based approach but also knowledge-based eg if a housing org wants to work in an area; or around a theme.

Example of NE Ambulance Service coming to Aspire to do consultation, due to their knowledge & people they work with (+funding related to this!) – approached to provide something they do – value to the org is important.

Changing the narrative on all this.

Is it a paper exercise to some organisations – it needs to be meaningful.

Use of the forum?

What is the incentive or motivation for smaller groups to do this?

Contract may already have social value included.

Theres still a lack of understanding of what it is about.

Who in VCSE is it we need to contact?

EG Organisation being funded (Lottery) to deliver place-based youth provision rather than E.

Durham grass roots organisations. This reflects the weaknesses over the term ‘social value’

Biodiversity net zero (BnG)/carbon credits – appears to be a mistrust by the private sector over the ability of the VCSE sector to handle and measure BnG.

Multiplicity of how you capture social value (ie matrix) with some repetitive consequences ie ‘potentially meaningless & process to achieve on agenda’.

### 3. What resources (skills, tools, staff) do the VCSE need in order to evidence the impacts of their work more effectively?

#### Staff & Skills

Depends on what you are doing and why – who reporting to - need to understand the benefits.



Organisations would need more staff to provide the evidence as not all have available staff.  
Could anchor organisations provide support staff to enable reporting?  
Understand what is the purpose and why do it.  
Up volunteering hours so that more opportunities arise and social value can be recognised.  
Funding / Training / Support.  
Staff base that truly understands aims/objectives.  
How many orgs can keep up with employment laws – looking at care sector – performed hours vs contracted hours. How many people are orgs going to lose with this.  
Realistic outcomes for reporting – larger orgs with back office capacity working with smaller orgs.  
Never enough staff / specialised staff.  
Depending on funder – collation of social value – going on.  
Matching up people around themes – corp orgs to be able to match with VCSE orgs.  
Challenges of putting down what we do.  
Understanding why it is useful to measure social value is important.  
Opportunities to raise awareness at the right orgs incl employees.  
Social value officer in DCA?  
Motivation / Purpose / Benefit – why should we do more of this?  
Knowledge and skills  
Training around how to conduct social value measures (locally)  
The risk exists around the resources (time, staff) required to gather the necessary data – one method to address this is to do it through group work.

### **Consistency & Training**

Training/common language is needed.  
Use data collectively to evidence to bring funds into County and to be cascaded down to smaller groups.  
Balance what is realistic when tendering for contracts.  
Looking at consistent approaches – how do we provide sufficient evidence in a clear way?  
Commissioning doesn't follow the way the VCS – discrepancy between VCSE operational approaches and the way commissioners work.  
Social value reports differ across funders – giving some information in different formats take time.  
Interesting to hear how different orgs do this.  
Workshop on how you calculate this.  
Sometimes need to respond to an environmental/social/economic change eg poverty (cost of living).

### **Digital Resources**

Especially smaller organisations do not have a range of monitoring tools.  
Adopting a CRM structure that works & can capture data correctly.  
Extra systems need: funding, training & support, background support to capture data.  
Don't be afraid to challenge how we capture data – what works / what doesn't.  
Consent from individuals to share info – to share data that informs discussion.  
Quicker processes & emphasis what actually needs capturing data wise to move actions forward.  
IT support / digital skills needed in VCS without undermining people's contributions.  
Postcode – geographical info alongside anonymised case study – less GDP/personal info.  
NHS futures platform – Co Durham Pound / County Durham Partnership – connecting county.  
an engine that can value preventative work and value work.  
Need Common standard tool/engine.  
Tools to use to report – broad enough to capture all that we do – shows community benefit, individual benefit, organisational benefit.

### **Funding**

Costs to have tools could be a challenge.  
Ensure there is value for organisations taking part.  
Profit to go to social value – to support infrastructure.

AAP funding – hard monitoring systems for ‘small’ funding points! – why is this?  
Use friendlier models & easier routes to get funding/to secure longer term funding.  
Uplifts in contracts especially for long term contracts – in line with living wage too.  
Government changes – employers changes to law – who pays this at the end of the day?  
Background support to capture data – employ another member of staff – competitive salaries issue?  
% of contracts to go towards social value to fill a cash pot to help recruit staff to capture data, etc.  
Difficult time resource / pushed back eg videos.  
Central resource for sector – background support.  
Think creatively about pooling resources, advice & practical support.  
Orgs should be investing in/funding VCSE for presenters/events etc.

### **Further Research**

DCA put call out to organisations to establish paid head count and number of volunteers.  
Quality around social value – matrix & indicators are readily available (Manchester Authorising Cost Benefit Analysis for health interventions) & calculate ‘cash value’ of interventions eg E. Durham debt centre uses a social value matrix.  
More research beyond the network of 7 VCSE organisations with more grassroots organisations.

### **Queries & Observations**

Danger of double-counting in data.  
Impact for County Durham as part of NE Combined Authority.  
Organisations who work across NE region find it difficult to split information just for County Durham.  
A year plans don’t include VCS sometimes?  
Putting VCS on map and on agendas.  
Big aspect of sector.  
Not selling / tell a story.  
Believe – how can VCS be more resilient.  
Understanding the ‘triangle’ that procurement measured – cost, quality, etc  
Already have lots of things orgs measure that make a difference.  
Not all sectors TOMS is relevant for, not all organisations.  
Lots of different tools available  
TOMS procurement captures some elements.  
Hard to demonstrate long term value. Longer term impact of social value work important.  
Where is the motivation for VCSE to do this (purpose & benefit)  
What is in for the community?  
Where do we need share data already there.  
How do we increase the circulation of money in County Durham  
Give the means & production ‘away’ rather than a DCC led centralised model  
EDT have identified that their own matrix and analysis then accordingly.  
How do we instil a confidence and not a fear of the social value agenda.  
Is it done by the VCSE sector or done to – how can VCSE be resourced to do it themselves.

### **KEY MESSAGES FROM THE VCSE TO COMMISSIONERS**

<p>VCSE tell commissioners what their needs are. Commissioning needs to be more flexible especially for smaller groups. Do/could smaller VCS groups have support from procurement when bid writing. Anchor groups offer their expertise eg bid writing. Quicker &amp; friendlier routes to gather funding. Transfer of knowledge between larger funders and local organisations – training &amp; support so current staff base can demonstrate data and portray impact. Database with current themes would help to transfer knowledge between VCS &amp; commissioners.</p>
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VCS to see actions actually been made to make longer term impact.  
 Model NHS Futures as a platform.  
 Own social value system – NECA – powerhouse of universities.  
 Simple framework & toolkit to be used by small & large VCS  
 Can balance flexible & sustainable – meet different communities needs.  
 Language/develop common understanding each others skills & resources.  
 Communication is key & for big organisations/corporate organisations finding us.  
 Recognition that what we do might look small but the value is high – quality vs quantity.  
 Stay on course – has made progress so far (even if some orgs resist).  
 Theres a resource implication just to engage.  
 Some support around how to calculate social value.  
 Collective messages of value of sector his huge.  
 Can make working together within the sector happen?  
 Talk to us – not just about a specific thing now, but keep talking to us so we are aware of the landscape and changes.  
 How do we collectively learn from each other on case management tools, knowing what works and what is good is very valuable.  
 Confusion – social value against Durham Pound.  
 Why should we do this now?  
 How can we be provided with tools.  
 How can we share ownership & development of the approach.  
 What is the benefit of this to the VCSE community  
 We need a budget to include how do we measure this (tool)  
 To understand collection of data – how – tool.  
 There needs to be more scope to measure.  
 Useful tool for all partners – can it show the gaps – partners need to develop.  
 There needs to be investment.  
 To build relationships with commissioners.  
 VCSE would typically ‘procure’ locally but it is reassessing this approach is being taken at ‘Head of Procurement’ level.  
 Opportunity to expand the scope of social value with the grassroots organisations.  
 Social value is a ‘marker’ with all levels of complexity.  
 Does the social value system need to be centralised?

## KEY MESSAGES FROM COMMISSIONERS FOR THE VCSE

Commissioners advise what is needed regarding social value at the start of the tender process.  
 Need flexibility for organisations to fully tell their story – bid forms are very restrictive.  
 Lived experience – put it more on the agenda so sector and VCS recognises the real issues without one, personal agenda!!  
 Quicker, consistent, friendlier models to gather funding.  
 Look at background support to capture data.  
 Sharing accountability more.  
 Social value opportunities on ground not just for PR opportunities.  
 Timescales/long term reach – when people are asked for data, take into consideration people sometimes don’t know how they feel.  
 Model NHS Futures as a platform.  
 Own social value system – NECA – powerhouse of universities.  
 Can balance flexible & sustainable – meet different communities needs.  
 Generally do this well in Co Durham  
 VCS sector are proactive in coming around table & challenging.  
 Some of the language is different – coming at it from different angles.  
 We want to hear from the sector.

Commissioning – big change going from grants to commissioners.  
Social value as core delivery needs to be recognised in procurement frameworks.  
Additional funding brought in – how do we capture that as added value.  
Talk to us.  
We can talk about social value but it can never override the power of the story.  
Who decides what needs to be measured within social value matrices?