



Co-operative Councils

Innovation Network

COMMUNITY

Hull City Council

Building Forward Together: A new relationship with the Voluntary and Community Sector

Hull's VCSE sector did an amazing job in responding to the coronavirus pandemic, supporting communities by working with each other and alongside the council. In March 2020 we all had to quickly adapt and work differently, and as restrictions eased over last summer, the council took this opportunity not just to engage our VCSE sector in the recovery process, but to re-imagine and re-design our future relationship.

Hull City Council and the VCSE sector came together to co design the Building Forward Together programme, to improve how we work together and build a proactive, city wide, collaborative approach to shared priorities.

Four initial priorities were developed collaboratively by VCSE representatives, the council and local public sector organisations, focussing on commissioning, volunteering, workforce and sector support. These were endorsed through an Oversight Group and Hull's key public sector organisations made up of representatives from across the city.

Following agreement on the priorities, over 70 VCSE groups and public sector colleagues came together (virtually) to develop recommendations for better working. The recommendations include issues such as easier secondment processes between sectors, more flexible volunteering opportunities with different organisations, practical support and advice for smaller community groups and more inclusive and collaborative approaches to commissioning. The next step is to prioritise and identify how we work together to make them happen.

When we started this process in summer 2020 we did not envisage further lockdowns and restrictions, and all the organisational challenges that they have brought. The fact that despite this, the Building Forward Together work continues to move forward and all those involved from all sectors continue to devote time, effort and enthusiasm illustrates the value being placed on the future relationships.

Feedback from all involved has been that the approach of sitting round a (virtual) table as equal partners and having open discussions about what works, what doesn't, and what could be different in future is a productive and enjoyable process that they want to continue. We want this renewed spirit of collaboration, co-design and creativity to become the 'new normal' in the way we work alongside our VCSE sector in Hull.

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