

Total Place and the Third Sector: Conference Report 23 March 2010

The Total Place programme is about transforming the way that public services are delivered: they should be more centred on citizens and outcomes in the local place and less on institutional boundaries and national targets. The Third sector has a vital and unique contribution to make to this way of working and this is recognised across government and the sector.

The Conference brought together nearly a hundred people with an even mix of councils, government bodies and third sector organisations to consider and debate the role of the third sector within Total Place.

In a written statement, Angela Smith MP, Minister for the Third Sector, welcomed the conference as the perfect time to discuss the third sector contributions to Total Place and how we can learn from their involvement in the Total Place pilots. The Minister reaffirmed the unique contribution of the third sector approach to delivering public services, recognising the value of their engagement and empowerment of communities and citizens, and their ability to involve these same citizens in the design of services that they use.

Two keynote speakers, Brian Carr, Chief Executive of Birmingham Voluntary Services Council and Lord Michael Bichard, Executive Director of Institute of Government, started the day. They were followed with three workshops from the pilot areas, with speakers illustrating the value of third sector involvement in their areas.

In the afternoon, the focus was on the changes needed to enable the potential to be achieved. Rob Whiteman, currently Chief Executive of LB Barking & Dagenham and from May the Managing Director of IDeA, spoke of the local government experience and chaired the afternoon sessions. Ben Cairns, Director of the Institute of Voluntary Action Research, Irene Lucas, Director General, Local Government & Regeneration, Communities and Local Government and Helen Bailey, Director of Public Services, HM Treasury all spoke from their differing perspectives. A short conversation exercise generated nine proposals for changes needed to enhance third sector participation.

This short report summarises the messages from the excellent speakers, the outcomes from the practical workshops, and outlines key opportunities and barriers to future third sector involvement in Total Place. Thank you to everyone who made this day such a success.

Brian Carr, Chief Executive Birmingham Voluntary Service Council, Be Birmingham LSP Board Member.

"Our Third Sector Assembly is key to being able to engage the sector. There is a need to create appropriate mechanisms to engage the third sector – properly resourced and sustainable".

"The third sector must take an increasingly active role in LSPs. The sector needs to think more about lobbying and campaigning role"

- Financial mapping in Birmingham has revealed that over 95% of budgets were spent on "downstream" interventions such as paying benefits, treating illness. A very small percentage was therefore spent on "upstream" prevention work; the balance needs to shift.
- We held a Third Sector conference in Birmingham to consider the Total Place pilot. Initially there was negative response, with participants questioning who had chosen the themes and why the sector had not been consulted earlier. They wanted to know whether Total Place is really new or is just a new name. However, the conference then went on to look at positive aspects and opportunities for the third sector in the future and the key messages for the statutory sector. The conclusion was that *"to fully engage the third sector, the Total Place approach must be about the stuff that comes **before** "better public service delivery", i.e. communicating about demands and needs as well as the strategic thinking.*
- The Conference had outlined four elements for engaging effectively with the public sector priorities: Delivery, Design, Decision and Discussion.
- The improvements needed within the third sector were also discussed. These included: gearing up for probable "cuts"; collaboration to share overheads and making savings; mutual support to ensure small groups and volunteers are not "lost" in the agenda; and getting better at "sector intelligence".

Lord Michael Bichard, Executive Director, Institute of Government and Chair of the Cross-Whitehall Total Place Group

"I am absolutely convinced that the third sector and wider civil society has to be at the heart of our thinking on Total Place."

We are currently failing to deliver services for clients, there's no lack of investment, but it is not well coordinated.

We are not going to get through the next 10 years by shaving a bit here and a bit there. It is not lack of investment, but lack of effective engagement that fails to produce results. Greater collaborative working between statutory and third sector is a very good way of developing innovation and designing solutions.

Problems/barriers

- The third sector is too rarely involved in policy development, and, even where it is, it is often a too late a stage in the process. The third sector is often involved in consultation, but only when the direction has already been decided.
- The third sector is too often contracted to deliver outcomes but does not receive full economic value.
- Too few of the most senior government administrators recognise the full value of the third sector's role.

Challenge to third sector

- Third sector organisations can do more to collaborate more effectively with each other and with the public sector.
- Defence of organisational boundaries is counter productive, the third sector needs to focus on innovating and collaborating, in the same way that local government is learning to do
- The third sector can be slow in seeing the possibilities and making an offer. Don't wait to be told what to do, or where you are 'allowed' to contribute.

Conclusion

All of us in leadership positions, in the public and third sectors, have a huge responsibility to make this work.

Morning Session Workshops

1. Improved information for commissioners John Hannen, Greater Manchester Health Partnership, Greater Manchester Centre for Voluntary Organisation

Greater Manchester has a large number of third sector organisations and a bewildering array of commissioners in local authorities, PCTs and other statutory bodies. This was proving a barrier to both third sector organisations seeking contracts and to commissioners looking to create effective services. Smaller third sector organisations were particularly disadvantaged by the lack of coordination.

It was clear that public sector interventions were designed around problems, while third sector interventions were designed around the individual. The two methods did not map easily on to each other.

The Plan

To create a directory of third sector provision in health and social care linked to care pathways that would enable commissioners to understand the offer of the third sector.

The Process

The six biggest causes of death in Greater Manchester were identified by local commissioners. The third sector additionally identified two areas that the third sector was particularly strong in, and that appeared to be of developing interest:

- the health implications of worklessness
- sexual health.

A description of each service was created, allowing commissioners to readily identify which providers were providing relevant services. Mapping days were set up through local infrastructure organisations and the approach was piloted by Wigan CVS. A template was agreed and completed for each organisation.

The majority of organisations were found to be delivering multiple services that would not have been expected from the organisation's name or objectives, or even necessarily articulated by the organisation to commissioners. One example of this was the sexual health charity Brook Advisory. The organisation was found to deliver the most effective smoking interventions within the locality, despite the service being billed as a confidence building programme to tackle the effects of peer pressure leading to sexual activity .

The result

- An affordable, online directory that provides easy access for commissioners and third sector providers alike.

- Commissioners are able to identify new organisations capable of delivering their services.
- Third sector organisations are able to identify partners working in complementary areas.
- No significant duplication has yet been found in service provision, dispelling perceptions that the existence of many small providers is inefficient.

Barriers

- The third sector is generally unaware of what it does, individually or generally. This leads to a perception of other organisations as competitors rather than partners.
- There were difficulties with sourcing information, both geographically and by specialism.
- Pathways were highly complex with no straight lines.
- It was impossible to quantify outputs or timescales, with pathway interventions ranging from a single appointment to lifelong illness.
- Some organisations do not want to identify themselves as delivering certain services as they feel it will damage the levels of trust between the organisation and their clients.

2. Refocusing services to local needs – Steve Place, Dorset Community Action

Dorset, Bournemouth & Poole pilot asked the question 'How can we secure improved outcomes for older people at less costs through improved collaboration between agencies, deeper engagement with citizens and communities and a genuine focus on place?' It is looking particularly at a shift from investment in acute to community services and prevention.

DBP has a significantly higher proportion of 65+ year olds than the rest of the country, and this is set to rise to around a third of the population by 2025 not just because of the ageing population, but because of retirement to the area.

Existing third sector work with older people

- At least 1000 third sector groups in Dorset benefit older people (33% of the sector).
- 60% of these provide leisure services and 40% provide advice services.
- They have a cash income of £35m (from a range of sources, not just statutory) and bring 14,000 volunteers valued at £1m.
- They are in contact with approximately half the older people in the county, compared to the LA, which estimates it is in contact with 12%.

Third sector contribution to the pilot

- Pushed for a strategic focus on improving outcomes and increasing engagement with communities, rather than a purely cost saving focus.
- Pushed for the use of existing data, such as the Dorset Ageing Well strategy, and using existing forums for consultation. Building on existing work by Age Concern on developing Senior Forums and organised older people attendees for various meetings.
- Held a third sector stakeholders meeting and provided papers on specific issues.
- Emphasised that older people are not 'a problem', not all will want or need services and many have a great deal to contribute to the community and to service design.
- Therefore the pilot is more focused on issues identified as important by older people.

Lessons

- The third sector has had to push for their involvement both in terms of involvement in decision-making and wider consultation, it is not yet automatic.
- The capacity issue of the sector can limit their contribution, even simple things like plenty of notice for meetings.
- It important to engage where it matters, and not where it doesn't. Careful construction of agendas can avoid time wasted, frustration and 'burn-out'.

But the third sector has:

- enabled engagement with a wide range and number of older people themselves (not just those in need of interventions)
- provided access to local knowledge and contacts
- been able to work across agency boundaries more easily and been a critical friend on joined up working
- provided added value both in cash and in-kind
- already working on prevention and empowerment.

Issues discussed with group

- There remains a need to develop more intelligent commissioning. Local agencies are tending towards higher level commissioning, which can exclude smaller providers that may be the best to deliver services locally.
- When reconfiguring services to better meet local need the third sector is vital in terms of intelligence, co-design and delivery.
- Many areas are building on what is already there in terms of community planning and engagement, such as neighbourhood planning teams and

Police Area Committees. What tools might be available for developing engagement and networks?

- How to develop and sustain third sector involvement and capitalise on the skills, connections, reach, intelligence and resources that the sector brings. What capacity issues will need to be addressed for this?
- Keeping the focus on older people and their needs, and being able to develop more personalised services should be complimentary. It is a challenge for the third sector to adjust to this form of service delivery.

3. People centred redesign of services - Pip Tibbetts – West Yorkshire Probation, Bradford District; Kevin Knott - Chair of SURF (Service Users Representative Forum; Gary Hill – former Chair SURF) / now working for the Cyrenians

Bradford's process of redesigning services for offenders leaving prison is a model for others working with multiple stakeholders and complex outcomes. The work is often quoted as exemplifying the Total Place approach to transforming services.

The probation service is more than 100 years old and has never been designed as a single entity, but over the years has evolved and had lots of "bolt-ons". Other services such as benefits and housing are critical to reducing re-offending but are not joined up. The end result is neither efficient nor client centred.

The Total Place project started with more than 40 people from all levels in the statutory and voluntary organisations involved, including SURF members, spending a day together process-mapping what happens now. This process, using sheets of paper and post-its, highlighted the duplication and gaps, but also where services were ineffective or counter productive. SURF surveyed their members to get honest feedback on their experiences of the services and what needed to change. Families of prisoners were also asked for their views.

Significantly, both the workers and users came up with the same views about what wasn't working and this helped to bring it all together and agree the key elements of a new way of delivering the services which put the user at the centre of the service design. The third sector – as providers as well as users – will be part of designing and testing the new arrangements.

Questions in the group

- What happens next? Bradford LSPs new multi-sector Transformation Board will oversee the changes, many of which are in the gift of the council or local services. National changes are needed too, such as the performance management framework. They have already achieved the reorganisation of the End Custody Licence system that meant people were released before their housing or benefit arrangements were in place.

- There was widespread recognition that service users i.e people with criminal records and who had been in prison, were fundamental to the redesign of the services. There had not been resistance to that idea.
- The local third sector are commissioned widely and will be crucial to the implementation of the changes generated by the Total Place process.

AFTERNOON SPEAKERS

Rob Whiteman, currently Chief Executive of LB Barking & Dagenham and from May 2010 the Managing Director of IDEA.

Total Place is a shared agenda to improve capacity in statutory agencies and the third sector to work together. Localism cannot stop at local government.

Improved outcomes cannot be achieved without collaboration between local government and the third sector. Rob quoted the example of women returning to work services to illustrate that people fall between the different sectors and that local government cannot afford to work like this anymore. Barking and Dagenham also identified difficulties with service interventions that cross local authority boundaries, as is the case with offender management.

Ben Cairns, the Director of the Institute of Voluntary Action Research.

"Partnership working increases the potential to develop and deliver improved services more able to respond to complex social needs because of the increased involvement of – and buy-in by- local people"

Ben reflected on the lessons about cross sector partnerships learnt through the IDeA/IVAR Partnership Improvement Programme (PIP)¹ which is a collaborative approach to improving partnership working across the statutory and voluntary sectors.

Cross sector partnerships will be critical to the effectiveness of a Total Place way of working. A recurring theme from the PIP work has been the expectation that public and third sectors will be able to work in partnerships without any prior preparation, sometimes without a clear rationale and often without additional resources. Despite the policy imperatives and the willingness to make it work, many people involved in the partnerships experience real difficulties in their relationships with each other. Some of these difficulties stem from things like cultural mismatch and power imbalance and others from a lack of mutual understanding, respect and trust.

The issues are not attributable to resistance or territorialism - the obstacles are real and profound. To overcome these difficulties, work is needed to improve mutual awareness and build relationships in order to achieve the levels of trust, respect and understanding that can provide the platform for learning and innovation and deliver better outcomes for local people.

¹ 30 places have taken advantage of the PIP programme so far. Participants in the PIP programme spend time considering the local and national drivers for partnerships as well as what is getting in the way locally; they jointly develop an action plan for improvement

Irene Lucas, Director General, Local Government & Regeneration, Communities and Local Government.

“As part of the allocation of £65 million for the third sector year of RIEP funding we have asked for an exploration of how the public sector could promote commissioning and procurement with both the third sector and SMEs”

There are three primary aims to Total Place, in this order of importance:

1. Better outcomes for people and place
2. The simplification of process around a citizen’s journey through public services
3. To reduce costs

There has been real buy-in from across Government, and it has been given traction by the December 2009 publication, *Putting the Frontline First*. Total Place is going to impact on the third sector as much as it does on the statutory sector. The third sector will be involved with the next stage as it moves forward.

Problems/barriers

The third sector has so many conditions on every penny that it gets that it stifles innovation and the ability to respond to changing needs. These are the very qualities that give the third sector its value.

Public sector organisations feel they suffer from too much ringfencing, but it can be even worse for third sector organisations. Total Place is not just about local government seeking freedom from restrictions, but about local government passing on those freedoms.

Challenge to the third sector

- There are opportunities developing through the trial of social impact bonds and the commissioning work of the Regional Improvement & Efficiency Partnerships.
- The third sector must engage with Government and the RIEPs to inform and develop this work.

Conclusion

The third sector needs to articulate the need for reduced funding burdens, improving their capacity to innovate and respond flexibly. It is vital to harness every talent and resource in the locality.

Helen Bailey, Director of Public Services, HM Treasury

“It is absolutely right that third sector organisations are getting involved with this and making it their own.”

Instead of just traditional cost-cutting, we need to explore ways of working that are more effective. The Total Place vision is about people coming together in places to make best use of public resources.

The third sector is an important route for enabling clients to do more for themselves and solve their own problems. There are already tremendous examples of third sector innovation and involvement in Total Place pilots.

Total Place is being picked up and used in over 70 parallel areas - these are voluntarily taking up the challenge to deliver a Total Place way of working.

Problems/barriers

The benefits and additionality that the third sector brings to the service delivery area is not always recognised. Third sector organisations need to get smarter about articulating this.

Challenge to the third sector

The sector needs to get organised, engaged and involved with Total Place. The sector needs to articulate its value and contribution more effectively, in a manner that policy makers can understand.

Conclusion

This is a new way of working that makes sense, both financially and socially. We need to look for new and innovative ways to provide services for the individual.

Issues raised in debate with the speakers

The implications of the move to local decision making

- Review our local governance arrangements and strengthen councillors and MPs ability to make unpopular decisions e.g. closing a hospital ward and reinvesting in prevention.
- Link finances to governance more effectively to improve accountability.
- Local priorities and solutions have to be supported nationally.
- People step away from unpopular decisions so need more formality to LSP decisions: how can we get more shared accountability?

Total Place for the long term?

- Too many partnerships without a clear raison d'être. We need to think about partnerships as the means to an end, rather than a solution in themselves. We need structures that are the servant of the outcome rather than inward looking processes.
- Structures don't deliver change. More attention to the relationships to make collaboration work. We have to win the hearts and minds of decision makers.
- Support for the third sector to co-create at the front end, and not just delivery.

- Government is too centralised to support the change at the frontline required for issues such as skills, parenting.
- Shared commitment to the medium term – recognise that the solutions will take time and we need to plan investment if we are to make substantial changes in services and outcomes.
- The funds to the RIEPS to support third sector recognises the sector as part of the improvement architecture. Will localities be able to redirect savings and spend on local third sector?
- In the move towards Total Place we should not forget programmes that already exist, such as the National Programme for Third Sector Commissioners, which already support effective working between statutory and third sector bodies.

Key Messages & Next Steps

- Moving to a Total Place way of working is a fundamental shift in mind-set. It is centred on the service users and seeks to improve ways of working as well as outcomes.
- The Total Place report *A whole area approach to public services* makes clear the importance of the third sector in this agenda.
- There will be particular opportunities around the 'Single Offers' and 'Innovative Policy Offers', which will be offered to localities or partnerships where the lead authority has a demonstrated track record in innovation. Applicants will be invited to identify community and third sector engagement with their application.
- A Total Place approach will be encouraged in all areas, and the third sector should be involved from the beginning at the policy formulation stage both in strategic and commissioning discussions. Commissioning remains a challenge for the third sector, but Total Place could be a catalyst for positive change.
- The third sector has an enormous amount to offer as Total Place continues. Local areas need to work in partnership to identify how to unlock this potential. Third sector capacity, community engagement, building cross-sector partnerships and networks are all valuable and need resourcing
- There will be challenges for all parties and the third sector needs to get up to speed and engage with this agenda. The third sector must look at itself and how it is operating if wishes to play a genuine part in achieving Total Place. Increased collaboration, greater innovation and flexibility will be required. This will need leadership from the third sector and from local government.

Each table was asked to consider the following question, and their responses distilled into a single list

WHAT IS THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT THING THAT COULD BE DONE TO ENHANCE THIRD SECTOR PARTICIPATION IN TOTAL PLACE?

1. One place one budget - a single budget for an area would remove the problem of ringfencing and enable local areas to design and commission their own solutions.
2. Outcomes based commissioning – commissioning still follows service silos and a move to outcome commissioning – enabled by a single budget or greater devolution and pooling – would direct resources to agreed outcomes and locally designed interventions.
3. Align governance – governance structures, including partnerships, follow the service silos. Collaboration working requires better aligned governance.
4. Local priorities and partnership-generated solutions should be supported nationally rather than undermined by nationally set priorities and indicators. This is about place and people not targets.
5. The early involvement of the third sector in strategic decision making and co-creating of services and interventions, as well as throughout the cycle of commissioning, procurement and citizen feedback.
6. One point of contact in the local authority for the third sector – to enable the sector to know what is going on outside their immediate service delivery relationships and to influence local decisions.
7. Investment is needed in research to gather evidence of the added value of involving the third sector. This is needed to convince councillors and commissioners.
8. Total Place way of working has to become a long term commitment. Then it is worth the investment in the relationships, skills and arrangements needed to achieve its potential.
9. Leadership in all sectors is needed to maintain the transformation and collaborative ethos of Total Place in the face of the danger of short term budget imperatives.

In response to this list, the following observations were made:

- The single point of contact was challenged. The third sector is not a single entity – with big differences between community sector and social enterprises. And on the other side, local government would then want the sector to have a single point of contact for them – which is unrealistic.
- The second iteration of Total Place will be more inclusive of the third sector. Attention must be paid to investing in the sector to free up innovation, for instance through Social Impact Bonds, and more innovative procurement.

- Changes in partnership arrangements need to recognise the distinction between strategic and operational relationships and the operational work done beneath the radar of the LSP.
- We cannot assume a single narrative about the impact of the third sector locally. Its complex.

Further Information:

Office of the Third Sector

www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/third_sector/local_government_partnership.aspx

Tel: 020 7276 6036

E-mail: ots.info@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk

Her Majesty's Treasury / Communities and Local Government

Full report – www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/psr_total_place.htm

Press announcement –

www.communities.gov.uk/news/localgovernment/1519132

Improvement & Development Agency (IDeA)

www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=1344957

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