FROM PLACARDS TO PARTNERSHIP

The changing nature of community activism and infrastructure in Manchester, UK and Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand

C. Milligan, R. Kyle, L. Bondi,
N. R. Fyfe, R. Kearns and W. Larner

The Research Team

Dr Christine Milligan and Dr Richard G. Kyle
Institute for Health Research, Lancaster University, Lancaster, UK

Prof. Liz Bondi
The University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, UK

Prof. Nicholas R. Fyfe
University of Dundee, Dundee, UK

Prof. Robin A. Kearns
The University of Auckland, New Zealand

Prof. Wendy Larner
University of Bristol, Bristol, UK

Further Information

Additional information about the study, a downloadable version of this report and other papers arising from the research are available from the project website:

http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/projects/placing-vol-activism/index.htm

Alternatively, please contact:

Dr Christine Milligan, Institute for Health Research, Bowland East, Lancaster University, Lancaster, LA1 4YT, UNITED KINGDOM, c.milligan@lancaster.ac.uk, +44 (0) 1524 592128

Acknowledgements

Manchester Steering Group Members

Hanif Bobat
Manchester Race and Health Forum

Khatidja Chantler
The University of Manchester

Atiha Chaudry
Equal Access Consultancy

Tony Durrant
Positive Action North West

Stephen Higgins
Voluntary Sector Policy & Grants, Manchester City Council

Stephanie Jones
Manchester Community Safety Network

Justin Larner
MIND, Manchester Advocacy Services

Neil McInroy
Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES)

Vera Martins
42nd Street

Kath Thomas
Victim Support and Witness Services Manchester

Auckland Steering Group Members

Jenny Clark
Ministry of Social Development

Judi Clements
Mental Health Foundation

Carolynn Day
Auckland Regional Migrant and Refugee Centre

Neil Kemp
Framework Trust Central

Kathryn Lawlor
Auckland Central Victim Support

Ngati Whatua O Orakei
Anahera Morehu

Betty MacLaren
Safer Auckland City

Cheryll Martin
Volunteering Auckland

Jill Proudfoot
Preventing Violence

Marcia Read
Phobic Trust

Junette Reilly
Maori Wardens

Deva St John
Urge/Whakamanawa

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Quotation Identification Key

All quotations have been anonymised and are coded by country, research phase and interview number (e.g., UK VSI 13 = voluntary sector interview number 13, conducted in the UK).

Codes used are as follows:

UK   United Kingdom
NZ   New Zealand

VSI   Voluntary Sector Interview
SSI   Statutory Sector Interview
ABI   Activist Biography Interview

NOTE: All personal names in quotations and vignettes have been anonymise using pseudonyms.

Executive Summary

This report details the findings of a comprehensive cross-national analysis of how new sites of local governance, particularly partnerships, act to encourage or discourage voluntary activism. It is based upon findings from a two-year research project 'Placing Voluntary Activism' conducted in Manchester, UK and Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand between 2005 and 2007.

The research design comprised a questionnaire survey of voluntary community organisations (VCOs) operating in the fields of mental health and community safety followed by 128 interviews with VCOs, key figures from the local, regional and national statutory sector and activists in these two fields of interest.

Key Findings

Issues common to Manchester and Auckland

Effects of the new landscape of local governance

▪ Those working in the fields of mental health and community safety indicate that **VCOs are engaging in 'soft', subtle forms of activism involving interaction and collaborations with the state.** Playing the game within 'the system' is a more frequently adopted strategy to effect social change than protesting from 'the outside'. However, demonstrative activism is still seen as a 'rapid response' tactic where specific issues warrant it.

▪ Though service delivery is a core function of the voluntary and community sector, engaging **in partnership working and networks is also viewed as a key role**.

▪ The use of partnership to describe a range of relational forms linked to new local governance arrangements has resulted in confusion stemming from the **lack of a universally accepted definition of partnership**.

▪ New organisational relationships and individual actors' cross-sectoral mobility between the statutory, voluntary & community and private sectors have resulted in an **increasing porosity of sectoral boundaries** that is encouraging the exchange of knowledge and skills between sectors.

Factors that enable and sustain community-based infrastructure and organisations

▪ Organisational and individual **vision** encourages a willingness to take risks despite, often significant, personal or organisational costs. VCOs are particularly successful when they have won the support of statutory sector champions who can assist in the realisation of their vision by providing knowledge and skills that enable them to reach their goals.

▪ Partnerships that place **relationship-building** at their core foster an environment of trust and mutual respect resulting in the capacity to embrace and realise a shared agenda.

▪ The growth of **porous sectoral boundaries** facilitates the inter-sectoral transfer of knowledge and skills.

▪ A **supportive political climate** that enshrines frameworks guaranteeing independence for VCOs fosters a sense of security as well as recognition that the place and contribution of VCOs is valued by the state.

Factors that constrain the development of community-based infrastructure and organisations

▪ **Risk aversion** results in a retreat behind traditional sector boundaries. This inhibits joint-working and the realisation of a *shared* vision.

▪ **Partnerships without relationship-building** at their core breed protectionism. Hierarchical power relationships are reinforced, or emerge, highlighting inequalities within the partnerships (e.g. the power of the statutory sector to select voluntary sector 'representatives').

▪ **A lack of mutual respect** fosters a culture of control by statutory sector agencies, closing down opportunities for cross-sectoral learning.

▪ **Ignoring or overlooking the increasing porosity of sectoral boundaries** leads to entrenched patterns of behaviour.

▪ **Failure by the statutory sector to fully enact guidance documents** (such as statements of intent) creates a gap between intention and implementation that gives rise to frustration and, potentially, anger.

▪ **Much statutory sector consultation is seen by the voluntary and community sector as a tokenistic 'tick-box' process.** This creates disillusionment and can result in withdrawal from the process. Statutory bodies need to develop meaningful opportunities for VCO input at a strategic level.

▪ **Legal frameworks** are not sufficiently flexible. A combination of confusion and fear prevents organisations from fulfilling their dual role as both service deliverers and advocates.

▪ **Despite Government acknowledgement of the issue, short-term funding** continues at local level. This continues to create a sense of insecurity and instability for VCOs.

Key points of comparison between Manchester, UK and Auckland, New Zealand

▪ The smaller population of New Zealand as a whole has two important impacts for VCOs in Auckland

▪ **Politics feel more informal**; with individual politicians being closer to their electorate. Personal connections to elected politicians and government officials ensure individual activists and VCOs are closer to key individuals who can open up avenues through which they can effect influence and social change.

▪ **In Auckland, sectoral boundaries appear more porous than those in Manchester,** due to more inter-sectoral working and greater movement of individuals between and within sectors during their careers. This aids knowledge transfer. Further, over the course of a career, individuals appear more able than their UK counterparts to

attain positions of influence through which they can continue their own activist activity or champion that of others.

- **Partnerships are being played out in different ways in different places**. The formal, mandated partnership bodies that have proliferated in
the UK are less common in New Zealand. Informal inter-organisational connections often take their place, sometimes bypassing the difficulties of representation and process that UK VCOs suggest frequently surface in more formal arenas.

- New Zealand's **cultural context** shapes the discourse surrounding partnerships. The 1840 Treaty of Waitangi, sets out a model of partnership against which all others are judged. The lack of such an 'ideal' model of partnership in the UK has led to panoply of informal working practices or formal agreements being described as 'partnership'. This makes it difficult to distinguish between different relational forms.

Sub-sectoral issues: mental health and community safety

- **Mental health and community safety organisations face similar challenges in both countries.** However, it is not always easy to distinguish between these two sub-sectors as there are many areas of overlap between the two. This is particularly true in Auckland where the porosity of organisational and sectoral boundaries is greater than in Manchester.

- **Individual mobility contributes to the blurring of sub-sectoral and sectoral boundaries.** People working in discrete fields are, thus, likely to have a greater awareness of issues in the other fields, this promotes cross-sectoral trust-building as well as the exchange of ideas, which, over time, can break down sectoral barriers.

- **The national policy context is important to the development of discrete sub-sectors.** This is particularly evident in the field of community safety. In Auckland this appears a less clearly defined sector than in Manchester. This is because in the UK, government legislative frameworks provide a clear discourse (and related funding) around which a discrete sub-sector can be built. In New Zealand community safety straddles several fields, hence, it is not just the preserve of criminal justice.

Recommendations from this study are set out on page 42 of the main report.

1. Introduction

Long regarded as a cornerstone of civil society, the renewal or further development of a vibrant voluntary and community sector is now seen as a key part of the solution to emerging welfare crises in many advanced capitalist countries (Salamon et al, 1999). In particular, neoliberal reforms from the last quarter of the 20th Century onwards, have resulted in significant shifts in the landscape of social welfare and the emergence of different forms of relationships between statutory, voluntary and private sectors. Commonly referred to as the 'third way' (Giddens, 1998), this approach to social welfare regards voluntary and community organisations (VCOs) as crucial in helping to bridge the gap between state and market. Further, their closer connection to citizens and local communities means that VCOs are also seen as enablers of a truly participatory democracy.

Emphasis on the 'third way' has encouraged the emergence of new spaces of governance that operate in hybrid forms between the state and civil society (Brown, 1997). In the UK, this has resulted in the appearance of a range of geographical and thematic partnerships that bring together local government, the public sector, the voluntary and community sector, businesses and local residents to work on key issues that include crime, health, education, housing, employment and the environment.

Partnership between the state and civil society is also an integral part of contemporary policy discourse in Aotearoa New Zealand, where collaborative responses to cross-cutting problems are now viewed as the preferred approach. So New Zealand too, has seen the emergence of a range of strategies and partnership approaches as a means of dealing with community-based social welfare issues.

To date, little is known about what impact these new sites of governance may have on *voluntary sector activism.* We also know little about how different social, historical and cultural contexts may shape the ways in which partnerships develop. This report addresses both of these issues, providing a comparative appraisal of how different forms of neoliberalism in different places act to shape voluntary sector activism. More specifically, it does so by ffocusing on VCOs working in the fields of mental health and community safety in the metropolitan cities of Manchester, UK and Auckland, New Zealand.

1.1   Context

The report focuses on cross-national understandings of voluntary activism in the context of new partnership modes of governance. It will be of particular interest to practitioners and policy-makers who are concerned to know more about what encourages or constrains voluntary activism at the local level, and who might learn from the experiences of those in similar positions within the statutory, voluntary and community sectors.

The report is informed by a two-year ESRC-funded study 'Placing Voluntary Activism' conducted in Manchester, UK and Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand - major cities with comparable population bases - between 2005 and 2007. The purpose of the study was to compare the experiences of people who are active in local VCOs in two major metropolitan cities.

Manchester and Auckland were selected as both cities are comparable in terms of size, population, and the political environment. Both cities are key urban sites for local partnerships (Larner and Craig, 2005; Husband and Jerrard, 2001). These partnerships are part of a shift from top-down government to more participatory styles of *governance* which have been adopted in many western countries over the past decade as a means of addressing locally-based social welfare issues. Brief profiles of both cities are outlined below.

Manchester

The city of Manchester is a metropolitan borough in the north west of England. It has an overall population of around 452,000, some 12.6% of whom comprise people from ethnic minority groups. The city lies at the centre of Greater Manchester - the third largest conurbation in the UK - with a total population of 2,240,230 (ONS mid-year population estimates, 2006). As the third most deprived local authority in England, Manchester has some of the highest levels of crime and poorest levels of health and life expectancy in the country.

Auckland

Auckland is also a metropolitan city and is situated on the North Island of Aotearoa, New Zealand. It is the largest territorial authority in the country, with a population of around 405,000 (Statistics New Zealand, 2006). Its population is characterised by cultural diversity, with a significant Maori (8%) and Pacific and Asian (38%) population. The city lies at the centre of Greater

Auckland - the largest region in New Zealand (population of 1.3 million). Auckland city has some of the most deprived neighbourhoods in the region (Salmond and Crampton, 2002) and some of the highest levels of crime and violence in the country (Auckland City Council, 2003).

Looking closely at the development of voluntary activism in both Manchester and Auckland, the research was concerned with three main issues:

     i) the extent to which local cultures and traditions inform the development of voluntary organisations and the people who are active within them;

     ii) how voluntary and community organisations, working within locally-based partnerships, are affected by differences in the political environment at local and national level;

     iii) the 'career pathways' that activists develop in relation to voluntary, governmental and private sector organizations (i.e. how they develop their expertise and the extent to which they move between sectors).

To consider these issues, the study focused on two cross-cutting sub-sectors of voluntary activity: mental health (defined broadly to include drug and alcohol misuse) and community safety (including crime and disorder reduction as well as harm prevention). These two sub-sectors are significant areas of community and voluntary activity in both Manchester and Auckland and are important for addressing social exclusion and deprivation.

The research was conducted in four phases, using both quantitative and qualitative methods. In sum, in each country we carried out a questionnaire survey of VCOs operating in the fields of mental health and community safety plus 64 interviews with key respondents from VCOs, the local, regional and national statutory sector and activists in these two fields of interest – 128 interviews in total. Full details of the research questions and research design are set out in the appendices.

1.2   Shifts from placards to partnerships

Within the sub-sectors of community safety and mental health, the definition

and practice of activism appears to be changing. Survey evidence[1] from VCOs working in these sub-sectors illustrates that organisations engage less in demonstrative forms of activism and more in subtler approaches based on strategic negotiation within the new local governance structures.

As **Figure 1** illustrates, VCOs in both the Manchester and Auckland view the adoption of 'goal-oriented strategies' followed by 'engagement with government to influence policies and legislation' as core to their definition of activism. Of the more direct activities designed to influence change (e.g., campaigning, lobbying, protesting), protesting comes at the bottom of their ranked list.

Figure 1: *VCO's ranked definition of activism*

Rank	Manchester		Auckland	
	Definition	$n^{(1)}$	Definition	$n^{(1)}$
1	Goal-oriented strategies	27	Goal-oriented strategies	21
2	Engagement with government to influence policies/legislation	26	Engagement with government to influence policies/legislation	20
3	Campaigning for public awareness	19	Lobbying government and statutory agencies to influence policies/legislation	19
4	Does not engage in activism so no definition	12	Campaigning for public awareness	15
5	Lobbying government and statutory agencies to influence policies/legislation	11	Demonstrating or protesting to influence government policies/legislation	8
6	Working independently of government and statutory agencies	10	Working independently of government and statutory agencies	7
7	Demonstrating or protesting to influence government policies/legislation	4	Does not engage in activism so no definition	2
8	Don't Know	4	Don't Know	1
9	Other	3	Other	0

Note: (1) VCOs could select more than one definition.

It is striking that many organisations excluded 'working independently of government and statutory agencies' from their definition of activism. This is

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[1] Overall survey response rates were 33% in the UK and 28% in New Zealand representing 53 and 30 returned questionnaires, respectively. Given the relatively small numbers, we draw on descriptive statistics only. The interpretation of these data should be read with this in mind.

reinforced by analysis of where VCOs position their actual practice on an 'activist spectrum' (see **Figure 2**). Here, VCOs were invited to place their organisation on a continuum ranging from 'working to change or improve "the system" from outside' on the far left, through to 'working within "the system" to help it to continue as it is' on the far right[2].

Figure 2: *The Activist Spectrum*

	Working to change or improve 'the system' from outside		Working to change or improve 'the system' from within		Working within 'the system' to help it to continue to function as it is

MAN

| 21% (n=10) | 40% (19) | 28% (13) | 6% (3) | 4% (2) |

*

89% (42)

**

68% (32)

[n=47]

AKL

| 23% (7) | 23% (7) | 43% (13) | 7% (2) | 3% (1) |

*

89% (27)

**

66% (20)

[n=30]
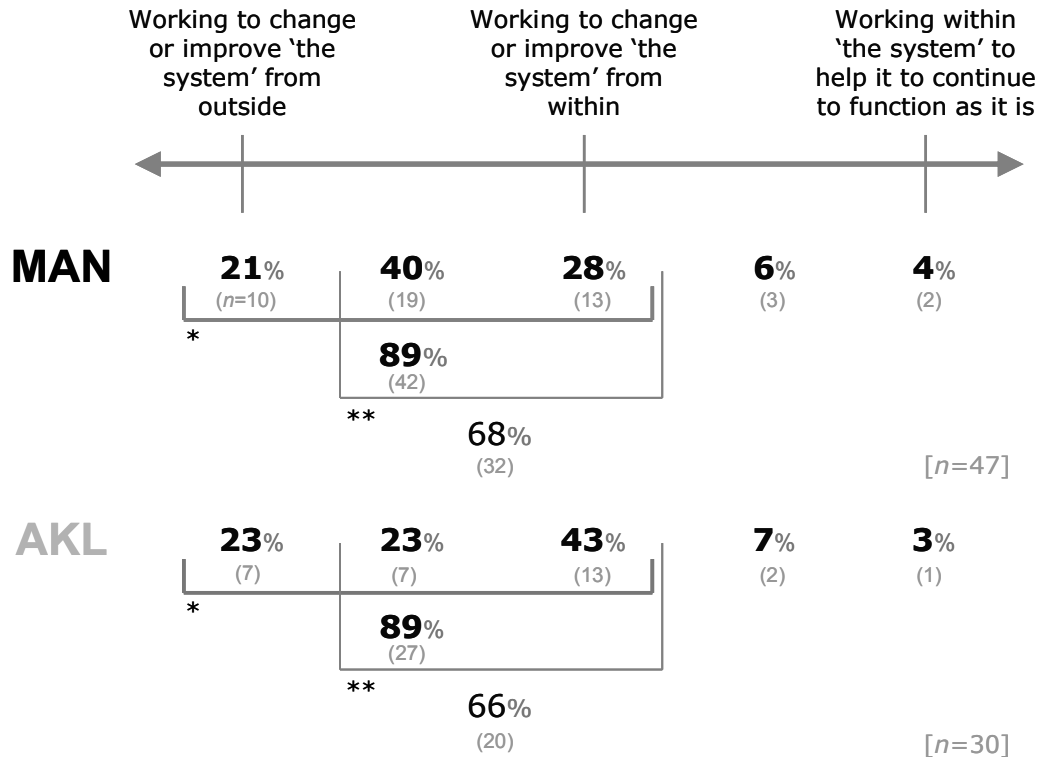
MAN = Manchester   *VCOs committed to change
AKL = Auckland   **Organisations not explicitly positioned 'outside the system'

NOTE: Due to the rounding of recurring decimals, percentages do not total 100%

The spectrum demonstrates two central points: First, in both Manchester and Auckland organisations are committed to changing 'the system' – 89% of respondents in each city selected a location that revealed their desire to influence change. Second, organisations' efforts to effect change are largely undertaken through an engagement with 'the system'.

In both the Manchester and Auckland only about one fifth of survey respondents (21% [n=10] and 23% [n=7], respectively) positioned

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[2] These options were developed through pilot surveys and consultation with Steering Group members.

themselves outside 'the system' whereas over three-fifths (68% [*n*=32] and 66% [*n*=20], respectively) located themselves either as working within the system or somewhere between the far left and the centre.

Organisations in Auckland also appear to be more embedded in 'the system' than their Manchester counterparts, with 43% [*n*=13] located in the central position. In Manchester, the most frequently selected location was between the centre and far left with exactly two-fifths of VCOs positioning themselves there.

Partnership, though subject to definitional complexities, is one potential form of engagement in this central position, or at one step removed in the 'mid-left gap' in the Manchester. This 'mid-left gap' represents a position occupied by those organisations that neither work wholly *inside* nor wholly *outside* the system.

Almost three-fifths of survey respondents in Manchester (58%; *n*=28) and nearly three-quarters of VCO respondents in Auckland (72%, *n*=19) engaged in activism according to their own definition. Of these organisations all of the Manchester VCOs and almost three-fifths (58%; *n*=11) of Auckland VCOs also engaged in partnership working.

Thus, for VCOs, working in partnership does not preclude the opportunity to engage in activism.

It should be noted however, that partnership is not a universally understood concept. The meaning of the term not only varies between countries but there is also evidence of considerable slippage in its usage within each country. Partnership is used to describe a plethora of different forms of intra- and inter-sectoral relationships.

Partnership, for example, is often used interchangeably with network, forum, alliance and collaboration. Strategic and operational partnerships are seldom separated out. Partnership is frequently used to refer to both formal agreements and informal working practices. Whilst individuals often provide definitions of partnership relative to these other terms, no agreed definition emerges. The lack of this core definition makes it acutely difficult to distinguish between bureaucracy, partnership and collective contracting.

In New Zealand, the bi-cultural context puts a slightly different spin on partnership discourse. The 1840 Treaty of Waitangi, the nation's founding document, contains three clauses that set out the relationship between New Zealand's indigenous Maori population and the British Crown. Hence, the 'big P' Partnership of the Treaty and the 'small p' partnerships of the social policy terrain can be more easily identified.

The Treaty provides a common reference point, enshrining in text a model for exactly what a partnership *should* look like. Anything falling short of this aspiration to power- and resource-sharing and joint decision-making may not be viewed as partnership. Although, this makes for less muddied waters in terms of the discourse of partnership, it also has a potentially detrimental impact on practice, privileging duality instead of fostering a multiplicity of relationships.

> When we talk about partnership we inevitably mean the partnership between Maori and the Crown, so it's a different kind. Often when people talk about partnership they mean between Maori and non-Maori, so you get a really different take on it. So the idea of and also the thinking very much sets the mood of that is the absolute duality of that. That doesn't allow then like a third alternative or another way of thinking about something. In a way partnership can often be seen as a polarising process because there is only two parties to it […] as opposed to, you know, maybe the partnership between organisations. Because we come from a bicultural model – Maori and non-Maori – [it] means partnership arrangements often get skewed by that, or not skewed, they get our own take on it …that would be really different if you were talking in say like Australia or the UK or something so there's something around that that's important in our cultural context (NZ ABI 17).

1.3 New (multiple) forms of politics

Against these new governance structures political action takes many forms. This is evident in much of the recent policy guidance, particularly in the UK. The Cabinet Office/HM Treasury Third Sector Review (2007), for example, gives a clear commitment to 'voice'[3]. Embracing the new localism agenda and encouraging the rise of participatory democracy has resulted in a Government desire to promote new strategies for engaging with a wider range of voices.

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[3] For example, the Final Report of the HM Treasury/Cabinet Office Third Sector Review (2007) states under a section entitled 'Enabling voice and campaigning': 'The vision for partnership over the next ten years is to ensure that third sector organisations are able to play a growing role in civil society, better engage with decision makers and are never hindered from speaking out and representing their members, users and communities' (HM Treasury/Cabinet Office, 2007: 11).

Local partnerships are seen by the UK Government to represent one route through which multiple voices can be heard and drawn on to shape welfare policy and local service delivery.

These strategies are underpinned by an explicit recognition of cultural diversity and the importance of the third sector for the reinvigoration and continued vitality of civil society. As a result, the rise of partnership working is seen to afford VCOs opportunities to engage with the state and statutory agencies in different and often more subtle ways.

Alongside the discursive shifts around voice and the establishment of new local governance arrangements, there is a concomitant change in the way that organisations speak about, and perform, their activism. As noted above, within the fields of mental health and community safety, overtly demonstrative forms of activism appear to be in decline. Individual activists and organisations with activist intent repeatedly refer to their adoption of an altogether quieter, softer and more **'gentle'** (UK VSI 12) approach to activism - one that involves 'playing the game'.

> I1
> I've got a few things that I think 'that's what we're working towards' and we might need to lose a few battles in order to get there, in order to convince people that… it's like the stuff about commissioning that's going on at the moment. My end goal is to actually get local people involved in budgeting and commissioning and all of that process but you've got to go through all the resistance that statutory people feel about letting go of control and devolving power and all that stuff. So if you hit them now with the idea of participatory budgeting and all that they'll just go 'woah' but if you sort of creep the idea in that's then, potentially you could get somewhere in the end. It's just, **it's a kind of softly, softly activism** I suppose.
> I2
> It's also more about being a kind of marathon runner rather than a sprinter isn't it? (UK ABI 08).

> I think there's another cultural shift which has been the way you get your message across, whatever that message might be, in terms of campaigning or lobbying, is that **you are more sophisticated**, that **you play the game**, that **you do it in ways that are less in-your-face**. (UK VSI 21).

Hence, alongside the more 'traditional' forms of activism such as lobbying, campaigning or protesting, we are seeing VCOs engaging in more tactical

'**incursions**' (UK ABI 12) or manipulations of the system. As exemplified below, these more '**sophisticated**' (NZ ABI 15) strategies are frequently linked with the 'maturing' of the activist over time - specifically the knowledge that is gained as a result of inter-sectoral shifts.

> Actually my philosophy is that we're all manipulative and manipulating systems is not necessarily a bad thing as long as you are very clear that you're not manipulating to the disadvantage of other people. .. I think **if you work in the voluntary sector today, you cannot work in it if you don't understand systems and you don't learn how to manipulate them.** And it *is* manipulation; it's not about working around them. That's the other thing I learned from being in the statutory sector, it's not about working round them because you can spend the rest of your life finding ways to climb walls and work around stuff, but it really is about understanding what the rules of the game are almost and then finding a way to actually twist and turn them in order to get what you want, and it's not always easy (UK ABI 01).

> 'I say to people who are activists, don't think you're in and out of this in five minutes - you're not. This is your life's work. And you'll change your view about it as you get older. And hopefully you get more sophisticated, more subtle, more kind of courageous' (NZ ABI 01).

It would be wrong to suggest that such sophisticated, subtle manoeuvrings within the system have superseded 'traditional' forms of activism. This new form of engagement, sparked by the shifting political terrain, is just one of a range of approaches. Nevertheless, in the fields of mental health and community safety, it seems clear that the primary form of activist activity is no longer the use of 'traditional' demonstrative tactics - though these may still be adopted for specific issues.

> No, it's not all softly, softly. Some of it is a lot more direct than that. The other thing is lobbying at government level and saying there is a huge gap in service here, or talking to Mental Health Services and saying, you know, how often are you using seclusion?[4] So, there are various approaches (NZ VSI 17).

> If an issue was big enough I would get out on the streets again (NZ ABI 10).

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[4] Seclusion is the compulsory detention of individuals for extended periods of time, often isolated from others with limited freedom of movement or action.

1.4 New forms of service delivery

VCOs frequently perform a dual role that includes both activism and service delivery. Though this is often a source of tension, shifts in welfare policy have opened up opportunities for VCOs to undertake the delivery of social welfare in new, often innovative, ways.

For example, in the UK, a move towards direct payments in the mental health field has provided an opportunity for VCOs to construct services that shift the emphasis from 'service recipient' to 'purchaser and consumer' of services. In the community safety field, the development of walking school buses in New Zealand illustrates how an innovative community-driven approach to road safety can shift responsibility for children's safety from individual parents to the wider community.

> In terms of policy there are a few things that have made that possible: the way commissioning services has changed and the way payment of services as well. Direct payments mean that people can now choose where they want, who they want to supply those services and the service will get paid for that person. So people have a consumer choice about it. If they prefer to go somewhere else, they can go somewhere else. (UK ABI 09)

1.5 New roles and relationships

Survey results indicate that VCOs regard service provision as their main role in both Manchester and Auckland (see **Figures 3a and 3b**). The primary additional role of 'participation in networks and partnerships' is also common across both countries (though in Manchester this is jointly shared with 'education and training').

Figure 3a: *VCOs Main Role*

Roles	Manchester		Auckland	
	$n^{(1)}$	Rank	$n^{(2)}$	Rank
Provision of support/services to individuals	**37**	**1**	**22**	**1**
Speaking on behalf of people unable to represent themselves	13	3	3	7=
Education and training	6	7	6	2=
Campaigning and lobbying	9	6	5	5=
Participating in networks and partnerships	15	2	5	5=
Participating in the development of government policy (local, regional or national levels)	12	4	6	2=
Research	2	8	3	7=
Financial aid (e.g., grant giving)	1	9	0	9
Other	10	5	6	2=

Note: (1) of 52 VCOs answering the question; (2) of 30 organisations answering the question.

Figure 3b: *VCOs Additional Role*

Roles	Manchester		Auckland	
	$n^{(1)}$	Rank	$n^{(2)}$	Rank
Provision of support/services to individuals	6	7	2	7=
Speaking on behalf of people unable to represent themselves	21	3	16	4
Education and training	**27**	1=	19	2
Campaigning and lobbying	17	4	18	3
Participating in networks and partnerships	**27**	**1=**	**22**	**1**
Participating in the development of government policy (local, regional or national levels)	12	6	12	6
Research	15	5	13	5
Financial aid (e.g., grant giving)	3	9	2	7=
Other	4	8	2	7=

Note: (1) of 52 VCOs answering the question; (2) of 30 organisations answering the question.

Engaging in service delivery, together with participation in networks and partnerships draws VCOs closer to the state and statutory agencies. Services are often funded through contracts and – especially in the UK – strategic partnerships are mandated and statutory-led. In Manchester 77% (n=41) of organisations had contact with the state in the form of government officials compared to 93% (n=28) of Auckland-based VCOs.
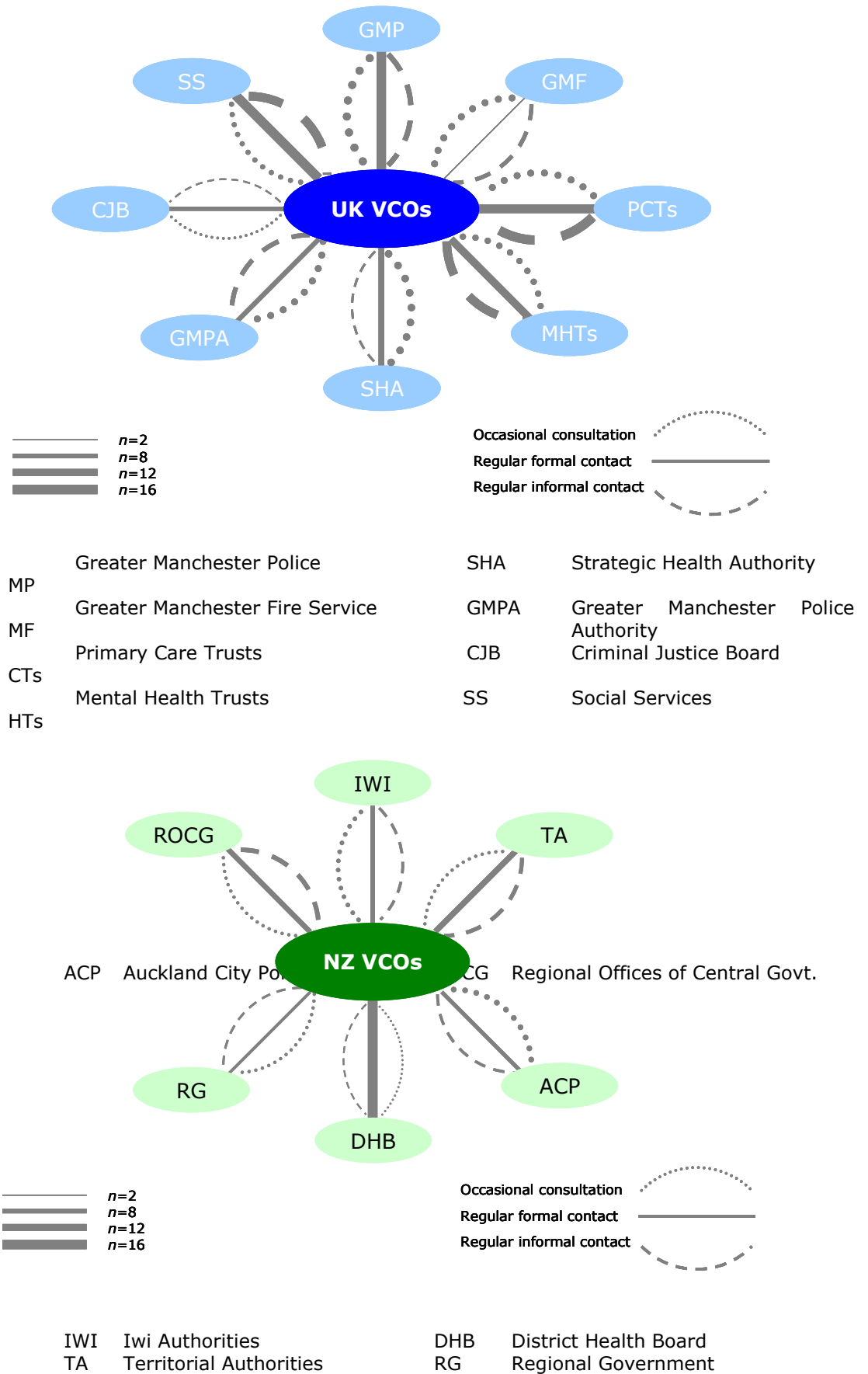
When seeking to exert influence over individuals working within the statutory sector, the main focus in Manchester was on those working at local government-level. In Auckland, however, organisations placed equal focus on influencing both local and national government. In the main, seeking to influence is effected without employing lobbyists; hence, contact is direct or through an intra-sectoral alliances or networks.

The nature of VCOs' engagement with the state is illustrated in **Figure 4**. VCOs in this study are engaged in a web of relationships with statutory agencies that vary in their levels of formality, offering opportunities for VCOs to influence change through both formal and informal mechanisms.

The importance of intra-sectoral partnership working is highlighted in **Figure 5.** There is also a significant two-way relationship between VCOs with consultancy/advice, training and services being both received by and provided to other voluntary and community organisations.

Knowledge transfer through the exchange of expert knowledge and skills across the sector is crucial to its vitality. Partnerships are emerging that formalise this process. It also demonstrates the traditional role of the sector as an innovator of progressive service delivery. The example below illustrates,

Figure 4: *Extent of VCOs' engagement with statutory agencies*

MP	Greater Manchester Police
MF	Greater Manchester Fire Service
CTs	Primary Care Trusts
HTs	Mental Health Trusts

SHA	Strategic Health Authority
GMPA	Greater Manchester Police Authority
CJB	Criminal Justice Board
SS	Social Services

ACP   Auckland City Po...   ...CG   Regional Offices of Central Govt.

IWI	Iwi Authorities
TA	Territorial Authorities

DHB	District Health Board
RG	Regional Government

how partnership can encourage mutual support and skills transfer – in this case in relation to those skills required to successfully manage the competitive contacting process.

> On the one end you're strengthening those organisations and the other end you're also making them more accountable. So for example with the [partnership], it's the first time some of those organisations have been put in a position of having to monitor their activity, to report their activity. And of course if you're getting into these tendering situations, that's going to be, if you can't do that you've had it. So there are real practical lessons that are coming out of it but real interesting stuff about the ways in which those organisations support each other within the partnership by crossing over staff or sharing different functions and… yeah, it's fascinating (UK ABI 05)

Figure 5: *Intra-sectoral relationships*	Manchester		Auckland	
	$n^{(1)}$	Rank	$n^{(2)}$	Rank
We provide services to other VCOs	25	4=	13	6
We provide consultation/advice to other VCOs	33	2	21	2
We provide training to other VCOs	25	4=	18	4
We provide funding to other VCOs	2	11=	3	11
We sit on the management boards of other VCOs	18	7	8	9=
We work in partnership with other VCOs	**43**	**1**	**24**	**1**
We receive services from other VCOs	16	8	9	8
We consult/get advice from other VCOs	31	3	20	3
We receive training from other VCOs	19	6	14	5
We receive funding from other VCOs	13	9	11	7
Other VCOs sit on our management board	10	10	8	9=
Other forms of engagement	2	11=	1	12

Note: (1) of 52 VCOs answering the question; (2) of 29 VCOs answering the question.

Erosion of sectoral boundaries is evident in the level of contact with the state and statutory agencies. This is reinforced, particularly in New Zealand, by the nature of engagement with the private sector. In Auckland just under two-thirds (*n*=18) of VCOs responding to the survey had links with this sector. Working in partnership and the receipt of consultation and advice from the private sector were the highest ranked roles. In Manchester this trend was reversed: only two-fifths of VCOs (*n*=22) had contact with business, while

three-fifths did not (*n*=30). Provision of consultation/advice and training emerged jointly as the primary nature of this relationship.

What is clear from this section is that **there is an increasing porosity between both organisations and sectors**. The range of inter- and intra-sectoral partnerships makes it clear that, within the fields of mental health and community safety, sectoral boundaries are being substantially eroded such that welfare provision is no longer the province of the state. Indeed, it appears that a symbiotic relationship between statutory and voluntary sectors is emerging – one in which both statutory and voluntary sectors are co-dependent in the delivery of social welfare.

2. Distinctiveness of the voluntary and community sector

VCOs share an understanding of the distinctiveness of their sector. Five key issues can be identified: i) innovative practices; ii) capacity to do things quickly; iii) reach; iv) diversity and connectedness, and; v) fostering civil society. The identification of these issues is not new, but it is important to recognise that they are both the source of VCOs' distinctiveness and form the core of a sectoral identity that shapes individual and organisational ways of thinking, being and acting.

2.1 Innovative practices

VCOs' positioning at the margins of, or in filling the gaps left by, mainstream service provision opens up opportunities for innovation. A long tradition of responding quickly to newly identified needs through the development of innovative services has resulted in an entrepreneurial spirit within the voluntary and community sector that encourages experimentation.

New models of service delivery are developed and piloted in the hope that funding for successful innovative practices will be sustained, or that the service will be mainstreamed. Creativity thus lies at the heart of the sectors' collective conscience: VCOs have the flexibility to do things differently, offering alternative solutions to new and existing problems.

As exemplified below, innovative practice can lie at the heart of the emergence of new practices of activism. Here, the performance of activism

can be seen to have shifted from demonstration on the streets to the active demonstration of better ways of delivering services that meet the needs of the communities and individuals they serve.

For example, one Manchester Tenants' and Residents' Association (TARA) demonstrated how community safety and improving the physical and social environment are inextricably linked. Community clean-ups and entries to the annual Britain in Bloom contest brought the community together in a creative way that not only encouraged a sense of safety but also facilitated community-led 'policing' strategies:

> 'Where I live no one knew each other. So that was when we started having the tenants' association public meetings. That kicked it off. Then we started with the gardening, so other people kind of got involved. So eventually it feels like, I was new here really and I knew somebody in every street, you know? When I walked to the shops people would go 'oh hello'. And I hadn't lived here long before I met [...] I didn't know anybody except my immediate neighbour. So the safety aspect, it started to feel safe for us. When next day we'd hear what had gone on in such-and-such a street, we had eyes everywhere didn't we? Once we'd got, you know, say after a year, people involved in the gardens and people involved in the tenants' association, our eyes and ears were everywhere then. 'Leanne' could take it to the meetings and tell them pretty much you know a good story of how to police this area' (UK VSI 05).

The way in which the leaders of this TARA worked towards the improvement of their local community rested almost entirely upon establishing new relationships at grassroots level. By adopting an attitude that refused to apportion blame, they not only garnered support for their gardening or clean-up projects but were ultimately able to build relationships with those individuals that the community itself had turned against:

> 'In the end I wouldn't blame the tenants. They would say 'it's this lot here' and I would say 'well it's not been cleaned up for 30 years. It would look the same anywhere if nobody, no council or whatever, cleaned it for 30 years. Knutsford [a middle class] town centre would look like that if nobody cleaned it for 30 years. You can't say that it's entirely the tenants'. So it got to a point with me where I wouldn't even acknowledge to anybody that the tenants were to blame at all. [...] I think that attitude was how I started getting support, because I think people thought 'she's for the people" (UK ABI 10).

2.2 Capacity to do things quickly

Strong intra-sectoral relationships enable VCOs to react quickly. VCOs forge *ad hoc* alliances to raise awareness through media- or politically-focussed campaigns with organisational connections deployed to mobilise diverse constituencies around a specific cause. Additionally, inventive solutions to nascent problems can be offered through rapid service reconfiguration.

> **They're good at linking up.** A lot of the groups that I've seen, either like the campaign groups, the voluntary sector groups, are good at linking up, that's very powerful so you're not working in isolation. There are other things that are happening that we influence and we manoeuvre round and **we join together and we separate when necessary, very organic process** (UK ABI 19).

In both Manchester and Auckland, demographic change arising from immigration has necessitated both the development of new forms of service delivery to meet the needs of migrant groups and campaign-based action. In both cases it has been VCOs' capacity to do things more quickly than the statutory sector that has been at the root of the sector's distinctiveness.

> I see that most particularly in the asylum-seekers movement in immigration, that immigration on the outside, [newspaper] readers, 'terrible people'. Manchester has been very active with challenge. Now I get e-mail bulletins saying 'join this demonstration, quick, quick, quick'. Manchester is very good at getting campaigns up and running very quickly …. I don't go to very many, I choose the ones I'm going to do, but Manchester has got a good reputation for that very quick response. And that's largely… that's not statutory, that's not people's work, that's not someone's job to do that. (UK ABI 19).

One statutory sector representative acknowledged:

> There's always been a Somali community within this country … but in the last five or six years it has grown enormously, and now within Moss Side, the Somali community is probably one of the biggest communities and that's a real change. **And myself and the Council were quite slow in recognising that change** (UK SSI 02).

2.3 Reach

VCOs have a pivotal role to play in reaching disenfranchised and vulnerable groups, especially those who distrust the state or its agents (e.g., police

officers, social workers, or Community Psychiatric Nurses. They are able to allay individuals' fear of stigmatisation by offering alternative, often non-hierarchical, approaches to service delivery with more equitable distributions of power. VCOs' ability to access hard-to-reach groups is recognised by both voluntary and statutory sectors.

> In my opinion I think the work that we do […] we pick up people who fall through the net within the statutory service providers' provision. **We pick up some of the people who are the hardest to reach and the most vulnerable and the most disadvantaged**, we pick up all, we pick them up – or the voluntary sector does – and support them because there is no-one else there to do it (UK VSI 19 C)

A statutory sector respondent noted:

> My own involvement has always been seeing the voluntary sector as identifying those areas of particular difficulty in terms of engagement, be it with young people who by-and-large don't engage with statutory services or who the statutory services fail. And **the voluntary sector have enough flexibility and innovation to define a whole set of services which might be more accessible** to those young people and consequently having a role to actually make sure that the lessons learned from that kind of work is taken onboard by better funded mainstream services (UK SSI 02).

2.4 Diversity and connectedness

The voluntary and community sector does not speak with one voice. Organisations that make up the sector provide a conduit to a diverse range of geographical communities and communities of interest. The voluntary and community sector, thus, represents multiple voices and can play a crucial mediation role between organisations, individuals and communities.

A commitment to polyvocality is considered to be one of the sector's strengths. Opening up space for differing perspectives to be heard prevents the foreclosure of debate about social reform. The ability to hold different viewpoints in tension also facilitates a respect for difference. This is most clearly apparent around issues of cultural diversity.

> We were talking earlier about that national forum and that's been quite a difficult process because what they're trying to do is pull together an impossible group of people. If you think about the community and voluntary sector in this country, it is huge.… We've got a complex mix… Now we are never going to be aligned. We range from an absolute left wing to right wing in our views, from Christians to anarchists. So **the only way you can do it, is actually find the point of agreement is usually right at the top; its values or principles** and that's all you can work with really because you can't work down here about the actual how-to, because people are going to do that differently. So if you can align people around values and principles and a bit of direction here then I think you've actually got some way forward. […] Everybody's got their own little canoe to paddle but we've got to find a way of actually getting them at least in the same bloody harbour [laughs] (NZ ABI 17).

Acknowledging diversity avoids assumptions that can mask underlying inequalities that surface when working with specific, particularly minority cultural or ethnic, groups. Equalities legislation, for example, can result in a tendency to overlook how accessibility to local governance structures and services continue to be restricted by ethnicity, class or gender. Several individuals mentioned the ways in which representation from such communities may serve to 'pigeon-hole' rather than increase awareness.

> I've been to meetings where I've heard the black voice is a man there and nobody's acknowledged that I'm a black woman sitting there and everything is then directed to that (UK ABI 01).

This same respondent further noted:

> …when I've sometimes gone out for meetings with my white colleague, who is a man actually, even with a member of the management team who is a white woman, where they've assumed that that person is the director. And also in the conversations you find that comments are being mainly addressed to my colleagues - and I'm not an unassertive person! (UK ABI 01).

2.5   Fostering civil society

VCOs are seen by governments to provide a barrier to the rising tide of communal dissociation by engaging citizens in individual or collective voluntary action (Daly and Howell, 2006). There is a further perception that VCOs have an innate capacity to create social capital. Indeed, the language of social capital has become part of a shared voluntary-statutory sector lexicon. Deployment of this discourse allows VCOs to demonstrate (and the state to recognise) both the distinctiveness and the added value of the

voluntary sector's styles and models of service delivery, particularly within outcomes-focussed funding regimes (e.g., commissioning, contracting).

> This is where the ability to make a difference comes in useful, because whilst most departments are now obliged to have commissioning processes, and are now obliged to offer a percentage of those commissions to the voluntary and community sector, they're not always on a level playing field and they're not always considering what the real options are. To give you a for instance, one of the projects we're working on at the moment is to look at factoring in what social capital comes with commissioning with a voluntary and community sector organisation, so that it's not just about the number of meals per day, or whatever, so there's a bit more of a holistic approach taken to what makes a good value contract. And through that we're able to put some of the less crystallised things back into the equation. It's not by any stretch of the imagination simple, but again we're giving consideration to things that previously would not even have been on the agenda and that people who are in the commissioning units haven't got the faintest idea about (UK ABI 02 located in SS).

> I2
> I think it's just also about what [VCOs] have to offer government. I think that it's just that basic fundamental role: this is the bit often where people get out and get active and participate in their communities and … all the building civil society stuff… so I mean that's a huge, that's a huge role (NZ SSI 09).

It is worth noting, however, that VCOs' ability to both foster and adequately measure social capital is still subject to debate, and gaps between rhetoric and practice are evident (see for example, van Deth, 1997; Campbell and McLean, 2002; Devine and Roberts, 2003; Smith et al 2004). Researchers have also noted that large, service-providing VCOs often have limited opportunities for volunteering, reducing their capacity for civic renewal (Milligan and Fyfe, 2005). Hence, while the potential of the voluntary and community sector as a vehicle for fostering a renewal of civil society may be a strength, assumptions about its ability to do so should be treated with caution.

3. What enables and sustains community-based infrastructure and organisations?

Sections 3 and 4 are designed to be read alongside each other. Section 4 presents the counterarguments to those presented in this section. Here,

factors that VCOs identified as enabling and sustaining their activities are discussed. Section 4 discusses factors that constrain voluntary organisations' ability work more effectively. The six factors are noted in this section: i) vision; ii) relationships; iii) mutual respect between sectors; iv) porosity between sectors; v); a supportive political climate, and; vi) enabling partnership. The counterarguments to these issues are mirrored by the first part of section 4. It is important, therefore, that these sections are not read in isolation. To do so, would present either an overly optimistic or overly pessimistic perception of the analysis.

3.1   People and vision

Vision precedes action. As individuals, voluntary sector activists envisage alternative worlds and futures and work towards their realisation.

A sense of social injustice is often stirred by personal experience, upbringing or events at a local or global scale. For example, for some people, it is their own experiences of mental health or community safety issues or services that triggers the desire to develop new or alternative services to support others who may find themselves in a similar position in the future.

Others are inducted into activism through their families. Such people develop an acute sense of injustice through the activities and discussions that take place within the family.

World events can also elicit emotional responses ranging from anger to frustration and this too can trigger individuals to act.

Regardless of the range of routes through which individuals come to identify themselves as activists, they are sustained by firmly grasping hold of their vision and taking risks to realise it. This is often at a significant personal cost in terms of time and energy and in some instances this can impact on their health, personal relationships or sense of integrity.

Many people are sustained in their activism through supportive personal relationships. These mitigate the most severe costs such as burn-out or, depending on the individual's position, selling-out. Indeed, over time individuals can learn how to offset potential burnout by recognising the

warning signs. In particular they come to recognise that their circle of influence will never completely overlap their circle of concern.

> I think I'm much more realistic as I get older about just where to strategically put my energy to try and actually make a difference but [I'm] always, always, always in danger of cycles of burnout because my circle of concern has always been bigger than the time and energy that I've actually got (NZ ABI 20).

> I can see it happening with others [in my position], well most of them don't come from where I come from anyway but its very easy to get sucked into a much more comfortable life because it is, and, you know, suddenly people are paying you more respect and all that kind of thing and you forget where you come from. If I do that, I've just got this whole group of people that I relate to and [who] will just tell me if I ever go off track, if I lose my principles, about why I went [into this role]. I can't stay [here] if that happens, try to keep me honest. I don't trust myself completely. No one should. Like I've got - from long before I went there - I had this group of people round me who say, always tell me, I don't care, just tell me straight, you know, if I start selling out, keep me honest (NZ ABI 13).

Activists are also sustained by those who share their vision and champion their cause or organisation. These 'champions' may be located in any sector. Frequently, formal working relationships provide a conduit through which those in the statutory sector develop a sense of an organisation's purpose and over time the vision may be shared. Activists can then draw upon the skills or knowledge of individuals in positions of influence to pursue their aims by, for example, **'calling in favours'** or **'pulling strings'**.

> We don't need to cultivate them [statutory sector officials] really, they are ongoing relationships we have with people that are of long standing. And they're not going to do anything immoral or illegal, but let's put it this way, if there were three pieces of paper in front of them and [we were] one of them, that would be the first one they'd go for, definitely. And if they thought there was some way they could help us they would ring up and say 'look, when you did this, what you should have said was that and don't do this and actually it's, it should have been in two days ago but don't worry, I'll change the date on it'. That's what they'll do. And yeah, so we have one or two champions. We need them, we'd be dead without them (UK VSI 18).

Champions located in the statutory sector may, themselves, be 'catalysts for action'.

> 'I think I embrace the way that the voluntary sector works: I like the notion that you can make a difference and you can identify issues and come up with solutions and make that happen. So because I'm not out there doing it with them, I try and make it happen from a different place. But actually I think in a way you need people like me as well to enable them to do what they do, so maybe that's my role to be a catalyst for action' (UK ABI 18).

3.2 Relationships

Whilst people are important, VCOs are also sustained by inter-organisational networks and environments that support relationship-building. Partnerships have the potential to provide one such environment. Despite a tendency to emphasise process, governance and representation, the effectiveness of any partnership relies almost entirely upon the quality of the relationships between individuals around the partnership table.

Solid partnerships are built on i) a recognition that the relational work of a partnership is 'core business'; and ii) an understanding that this work not only takes time, effort and resources, but it is fundamental to the development of trust and mutual respect. It is this that enables all partners to commit to a shared agenda.

> I think partnerships work when there is an equitable relationship. And there has to be a lot of time given to building that relationship, because effectively it's built on trust and if you don't trust that person it's going to be really hard for you to kind of let go of certain things and let them take the lead. Because it may be in some partnerships that it's not you that's taking the lead and therefore you have to be very confident and comfortable in your trust of the other organisation to enable, to allow them to do it (UK ABI 16)

> And managing, cause, I mean in one sense they kind of pull in opposite directions if that trust isn't central to that relationship because, I mean, of course once you've got, once you've got trust in some ways you can let down some of those accountabilities, the accountabilities relax slightly (NZ VSI 09).

3.3 Mutual Respect

Mutual respect is the cornerstone of a culture of trust and transparency between the voluntary and community sector and the statutory sector. From mutual respect flows a sense of security for both sectors.

Recognition that VCOs have a legitimate place in the planning and delivery of social welfare enables them to engage in advocacy or activism free from fears that funding will be withdrawn, or the suggestion that, by their actions, they are undermining representative democracy.

Relationships built on mutual respect also allow statutory agencies to set aside past disagreements or challenges to authority so that VCOs and statutory agencies can work together to achieve shared goals.

> In [one project] I had that relationship with [a VCO] but at the same time that organisation was part of [another organisation that] put out some press releases that were challenging in some ways. But that doesn't, it didn't, we could just say in our project meetings 'look we're not going to discuss that, this is about this'. So we could divide up because we knew that that was an important thing to be happening. But it takes a lot to get to that and you've got to be quite conscious about the relationship (NZ SSI 09).

Respectful relationships between individuals occupying different sectoral and organisational positions are pivotal in preventing the descent from a culture of trust to a culture of control. It is only by making transparent the different positions individuals hold within power hierarchies and, crucially, recognising the constraints of these positions, that their distinct contributions, knowledge and expertise can be truly valued and openly shared.

> I think the hierarchical authoritarian models of working are beginning to change and I think it is much more about collaboration and respect and valuing the contribution that everybody brings to a partnership (UK ABI 18).

For example, in New Zealand, the bi-cultural context offers an opportunity for cross-cultural and cross-national learning. Maori tribal structures provide a model for a process of intra- and cross-sectoral relationship-building that by placing mutual respect and obligation at the core of these relationships serves to sustain both VCOs and the wider voluntary/community sector.

> ..that's probably a sound basis for these partnership relationships because if it's done from a perspective of who we are and the respect that goes with that. You've got a discipline with that too, the reciprocity of obligation that goes with that. I mean that's a very Maori approach because people are related to each other so what they do together is governed by rules. There's a whole lot of social overlay around what you would do and what you're expected to do if you're an older person or a younger person in a

> relationship. So if that's applied to older and younger organisations and people in the wider community, you get responsibilities getting addressed like that... It's different from the more business type of relationships. But I think that's where some of that cultural reality and the personal element can be used quite powerful to both stimulate relationship development [and] regulate it. (NZ ABI 02).

3.4   Porosity between sectors

New relationships between VCOs, private companies and statutory agencies are eroding traditional sectoral boundaries. This increased porosity between sectors is also arising as a consequence of strategic shifts made between public, private and voluntary and community sector organisations by *individuals* during the course of their career.

> One of the things you can't ignore here in New Zealand is there's a lot, the fluidity of the movement between the non-profit sector, people working in the non-profit sector and government (NZ SSI 09).

Porosity between sectors is more than just rhetoric, it is realised through the considered choices made by individuals as they pursue their career pathways. Transfer of knowledge, skills and techniques is closely tied to the transition of individuals across sectoral boundaries.

In making these transitions between sectors, for example, individuals gain and carry with them distinct sets of knowledge, skills and relationships that can both increase their understanding of how other sectors work and which can then be tactically deployed to more ably perform their new roles.

> '...often I can identify with my colleagues because I understand the pressures that they work with, within the government. I also understand the pressures that community organisations are working in. Having worked in government for many years you can see where their frustrations build up, and also having spent quite a lot of time around community organisations you know where the bodies are buried, you know where the big problems are, you know the stuff that people are trying to struggle and manage with, and then being able to turn that into the language of government. So for instance organisations might say 'we haven't got enough money for whatever', so you just turn that into sustainability speak or whatever is flavour of the month' (NZ ABI 17).

The ability to speak in the language of the statutory sector is a crucial asset for any VCO that is seeking to exert influence.

> And I think that's what we're aiming to do, to be able to speak – in their language – to people who've got the money (UK VSI 02).

Individuals with the ability to engage in multiple arenas, with different sectors using that sector's terminology, become translators. While VCOs use such individuals to exert influence, for statutory sector agencies they help in gaining a route into communities it would otherwise find difficult to reach.

The capacity to deliver training to the statutory sector further strengthens VCOs by legitimising their role (and those of individuals within their organisations) as gatekeepers to, and holders of, knowledge about particular communities or groups. Training around issues of cultural diversity, for example, is frequently requested by statutory agencies in both mental health and community safety.

> We work in partnership with the statutory sector so for instance the statutory services might ask us to do some training on race and culture, which we do, and we also do training for student nurses, social workers, and medical students (UK VSI 23).

3.5 Political environment

The political environment is subject to change and, to a certain extent, VCOs' ability to sustain themselves and/or develop, shifts in accordance with changing (local and national) political priorities. A supportive political environment provides opportunities for VCOs to seize political moments and issues to establish their *own* agenda.

A genuinely enabling state goes beyond supporting the sector to mould itself to meet the social policy aims of the ruling administration. Rather, it entails a long-term cross-party commitment to the sector reinforced not only by the development of permanent state infrastructure with a specific Third Sector remit, but also by State recognition that the diversity of voluntary and community sector activity means **government policy across a wide range of social and welfare arenas needs to be 'voluntary and community sector-proofed'.**

To be effective, guidance documents governing the relationship between the state and voluntary and community sector, at both a city and national level, must have 'teeth'. They must provide not only the necessary 'hooks' and language that enables VCOs to key into political debates, but a truly supportive framework that recognises the strengths of the sector and guarantees its independence.

3.6 Characteristics of enabling partnerships:

To me a partnership is all about sharing of power, risks, with high level of trust (NZ SSI 09).

Enabling partnerships are those that are…	Disabling partnerships are those that are…
Prepared by all parties	Top down – power with the funder
Offer a flexible framework, based on what parties want to include and how	Accountable in only one way i.e. back to the funder
Accountable in two or more ways	Focused on risk minimisation
More willing to take risks, relying on trust, respect and process rather than legalistic clauses	Focused on compliance
Flexible, have faith in relationships and agreed processes	Based on a 'principal-agent' arm's length relationships
Interactive, ongoing relationships	Short-term, fixed upon completion of outputs
Based on longer term relationships and where the schedule of tasks is likely to change over time	Based on partnerships as universal solutions

4. Obstacles to the development of community-based infrastructure and organisations.

There are a number of obstacles that inhibit the development of a vibrant voluntary and community sector. These serve to undervalue the sector and reduce its ability to foster a renewal of civil society. Nine key barriers are identified here: i) risk aversion by both statutory *and* the voluntary and community sector; ii) poor quality inter-sectoral relationships; iii) a *lack* of mutual respect between sectors; iv); a perception that sectors are homogenous and discreet; v) a gap between statements of intent and implementation; vi) inhibitive partnerships; vii) a lack of *meaningful*

opportunities for VCOs to be involved in agenda-setting; viii) inflexible legal frameworks; and, ix) short-term funding.

4.1 Risk aversion

Statutory and voluntary sectors' desire to 'play it safe' not only prevents the development of new relationships between the two sectors but also diminishes the potential for innovation. This is particularly true with regard to the development of services, where risk aversion leads to a retreat into the relative comfort of their respective sectors.

> One of the difficulties that we do have in Manchester is commissioners who seem to 'play safe' and aren't willing to take risks. […] [O]ur evidence seems to be they seem to be very cautious and unwilling to take risks and somewhat unwilling to actually engage with the voluntary sector (UK VSI 20).

Evidence from VCOs suggests that statutory sector agencies are wary of engaging with the voluntary sector because of a continued perception that VCOs are unable to manage the rigorous processes of monitoring and accountability. A related concern is focused around fears that devolving service delivery to VCOs poses a threat to the professional identity of those working in the statutory sector and their perceived role as 'experts'.

> I think there are some civil servants, public servants actually, who are suspicious of the voluntary sector either for kind of political reasons, because they feel that certain things should be delivered by the state. There are some local authorities for example who clearly regard it as their job and **only** their job to provide youth services, say, and would regard it as a form of privatisation and a failure and too risky to allow anyone else come and provide it. There are some people who regard the third sector as too risky when they're comfortable with the private sector, so they just regard the voluntary sector as being amateur, a bit useless and they can't fill in forms properly and that sort of stuff (UK SSI 12).

Fear of losing funding or destabilising relationships with statutory agencies can also counteract VCOs' willingness to take risks in service delivery or the adoption of an overtly activist stance.

> There is that risk-averse mentality. Fear of losing funding and fear of upsetting people. Most of the people in these groups tend to want to be nice. You know it is not a union movement (NZ VSI 03).

Combating risk aversion is crucial to the development of good relationships between the statutory and voluntary sectors. It requires space for a shared vision to emerge and for this vision to be realised. This process relies upon a clear recognition, by both parties, of the respective strengths of each sector. This approach needs to be underpinned by an acknowledgement of *shared* risk.

> Some of it is the reality of political context amongst which we work. Government has become much more risk averse in the last 12 to 18 months, so the rhetoric for example is all out there, on collaboration, innovation, partnership and all these things (NZ ABI 22).

4.2   Failure to attend to relationships

Partnerships have the potential to be an arena for inter-sectoral relationship-building. If this relational work is not seen as core to the development of the partnership, frustration develops and the quality of these relationships inevitably suffer.

The opportunity to develop the open, honest relationships that are required if organisations are to embark upon potentially risky endeavours is severely restricted by the asymmetric power relations that exist around the partnership table. The ability of some parties to select particular community 'representatives' – to have 'the usual suspects' sit around the partnership table - serves as a constant reminder of this unequal balance of power. Trust gives way to suspicion, joint decision-making to a performance of 'going through the motions'. As one respondent put it, **'it's almost like people sit there with a mask'** (UK VSI 12).

Rather than fostering inclusivity, partnerships that are preoccupied with *process* over relationship-building risk **'becom[ing] a bit of an elitist club'** (UK ABI 04).

> I suspect that if your face didn't fit and relationships were not good then, maybe some organisations wouldn't get as far which you shouldn't really say, I know. (UK VSI 07)

> **They're selecting people rather than electing people** (UK ABI 07).

> I look at the kind of things like the, say the ward co-ordination structures that [Manchester City Council have] set up to, to try and look at local needs of a localised area, and I think on paper they sound great. And I've been to many of these meetings … and that's when your heart sinks because you actually see that the, the people making the decisions have got no feel for what, and have no interest and no real, no real care for what actually makes a difference in people's lives on a local level. So I was invited to the Moss Side ward co-ordination meeting, members of the public are not allowed to go, which I think is very telling, you have belong, you have to belong to an organisation and you have to be invited (UK ABI 20).

4.3   Lack of mutual respect

Failure to recognise and respect the different positions individuals and organisations hold in power hierarchies can lead to a climate of mistrust and a culture of control.

> I know the language and I know the systems and I know the constraints within the statutory service, but I can also see the potential and the passion and the energy in the voluntary sector and if you can marry those two together you can come up with something really exciting. But sometimes you have to take risks and sometimes you have to do things on trust and I think there's still a culture within big statutory organisations of wanting to control everything and direct everything. And sometimes you have to learn to let go and just trust the… if the goal's the right goal it'll happen and sometimes it doesn't matter how you get there as long as you get there (UK ABI 18).

Far from encouraging transparency and the sense of security that results from truly respectful relationships, a lack of mutual respect stifles inter-sectoral learning and knowledge transfer. Instead, sectoral boundaries are sharpened, prompting a retreat from cross-sectoral working. Ownership of resources is made explicit and their use restricted. Long-term shared goal-setting gives way to short-term needs analysis and contractualism. Creativity is quashed as mechanisms to roll out innovative models of service delivery into the mainstream are withdrawn.

> I'm a bit jaundiced about it really because I think there's been a terrific amount of political correctness about the importance of the sector. There's been a terrific resilience in the state's view that it is the master in that relationship. So they will emphasize law and they'd emphasize power and they'd emphasize resourcing as being what really drives influence in their relationship; and they would rate respect and service and being relevant as secondary in that relationship (NZ ABI 02).

This retreat to traditional roles and power bases also has significant impacts for the statutory sector's engagement with issues around diversity - a recognised strength of the voluntary/community sector. A lack of mutual respect and failure to recognise the value of the work undertaken by those engaging with diverse and hard-to-reach communities also closes down access to these communities.

4.4   Inaccurate assumptions

Despite evidence that sectoral boundaries are increasingly porous, *assuming* that sectors remain homogenous and discreet is detrimental and creates barriers to the creation of cross- or intra-sectoral consensus about the most effective ways to address particular issues.

As an example, the absence of consensus over the most appropriate way to deal with youth crime can lead to conflicting solutions that fail to take advantage of inter-sectoral learning. This can lead to entrenched patterns of behaviour.

> It doesn't help - the way that the government treats young people and youth justice as a political football. So on the one hand they talk about preventative work and put money into that side but then they're really happy to say prison works and they're really happy to say 'yeah we've got to be tough on young people', talk about yobs, hoodies, hooligans all the rest of it and that's a massive impact. So they're trying to have their cake and eat it really because it looks good to be re-elected if you're tough, but then you know they talk about prevention as well. (UK VSI 12)

4.5   The implementation gap

Guidance documents setting out the relationship between the state and VCOs have the potential to provide the voluntary and community sector with a supportive framework that values the sector's contribution to civil society. This potential is only reached, however, if such documents are fully enacted. The gap between intention and implementation is a source of frustration for VCOs.

> [The Statement of Government Intentions] was one of those highly political things that happened very soon after this government came in and I'm also on a group called ANGOA [Association of Non-Governmental Organisations of Aotearoa] and ANGOA has taken a pushing role with the government saying: 'remember the Statement of Intent, whatever happened to it? We're still not

> doing it... [The] Government when they first came in made some wonderful stuff...there's a thing called the Treasury Guidelines for contracting with non-government organisations... you'd give your eye teeth for these things, they're just wonderful from a community organisation perspective. We go 'wow bring it on'. […] But they're not implemented.   So we've got these fantastic guidelines for how to contract with organisations to build social capital and to build strong communities but yet they're not being enacted (NZ ABI 17).

In the UK, this implementation gap is perhaps most acute in relation to attempts to resolve the difficulties faced by VCOs due to short-term (often one-year) funding. Central Government's commitment to the implementation of three-year funding streams for VCOs is enshrined in recent government guidance documents. Evidence from VCOs suggests, however, that despite this guidance, short-term funding is still an issue that has yet to be fully addressed at local government level. As a central government official noted:

> The private sector wouldn't even dream of signing a one-year contract. So the more the private sector gets involved, the less that will be the case. No, they would just laugh, wouldn't they? So it wouldn't happen. But we are trying to get one-year contracts to be a thing of the past and trying to go for three years as a norm to give more stability [….] One of the recommendations of that [2002] review was that local authorities and government departments say to the sector 'oh no, we can't do that because the Treasury doesn't allow us to do that, it's against the Treasury rules'. And we would say well there aren't any Treasury rules, what do they mean? […] So we then put out a *Guidance to Funders* booklet which tried to set out you know, these things and say 'no, there are no hard and fast rules, it's really just about common sense, so there is no rule that says you can only have a one-year contract' (UK SSI 15).

4.6 Limits to meaningful involvement in agenda-setting

Government at all levels has sought to increase opportunities for consultation with VCOs. How *meaningful* this involvement is in agenda-setting and influencing the policy process is subject to debate.

In Manchester, the repeated reference by both voluntary and statutory agents to simply 'ticking the boxes' is a reminder that while the statutory sector has a requirement to consult, it is often seen as a tokenistic 'paper exercise' i.e., it simply rubber stamps a pre-determined programme of work.

> I2 And it is done badly in a lot of places and we're probably guilty of having done it badly too, and I'd say most public agencies are still probably doing it quite badly, still going down that consultation route (UK SSI 07).

Despite the proliferation of partnerships, scepticism also applies to consultation around the partnership table. This is due, in part, to problems of representation and process. There is also a perception that voluntary sector contributions must be 'safe', serving only to lend credibility to the statutory agenda.

> Sometimes we feel that although we are invited to the table at forums, we're not always taken seriously, or included in strategies, etc. We feel that when we give honest feedback about how things work at a grass-roots level, that if it challenges the provision that the city council offers then we sometimes get a hostile reaction, or we get ignored completely (UK VSI 11).

> I think usually the role of voluntary organisations in most of these partnerships is to give credibility to the local and national agenda rather than to particularly influence it (UK VSI 06).

While this view is also held in Auckland, it is a minority view.

In New Zealand the challenges around involvement and collaboration are different. As in the UK, the statutory sector places much emphasis on consultation. This is enshrined in the Statement of Government Intentions for an Improved Community-Government Relationship (2001). The Statement notes that: '**Government and the community sector will work together to develop and improve consultation processes through sharing good practice, guidelines, workshops and training**'. However, consultation in New Zealand occurs in a different arena to that of the UK. In the absence of multiple mandated partnerships, the process of making written submissions or verbal presentations to select committees of central government as part of consultative processes on policy and legislation is used more frequently by VCOs operating at all levels as a means of seeking to influence the agenda.

Though similar opportunities to make written submissions to select committees at central (Westminster) government level exist in the UK, VCOs in Manchester do not describe this as a key focus of their attempts to exert

influence. Rather, the perception is that central government is more distant and less accessible than in New Zealand. Organisational size and location are important factors. While larger VCOs with bases or Head Offices in London are often drawn into the select committee process, this is not an avenue all VCOs can (or wish to) exploit. For many UK VCOs, local government is viewed as the most important focus for their efforts.

Scale also plays a role in fostering a sense of informality within the political process in New Zealand. In a country with around 7.5% of the population of the UK, senior politicians are not only more accessible in everyday settings, but also fewer steps removed from individuals working within VCOs. For example, they may live in the same neighbourhood, have attended university together, or been involved in the same campaign or organisation in the past.

However, while on the surface the select committee submissions process appears to offer more opportunities for all VCOs to influence the policy agenda, where this more overt lobbying is conducted is as crucial in New Zealand as it is in the UK; a location in Wellington, the national capital and seat of government facilitates this work. As one respondent from a mental health VCO noted:

> In New Zealand we've got a very interesting political system which is actually that we have a lot of select committees. They are cross-party, they're often around specific issues or if there's a new piece of legislation coming up there'll be a parliamentary process whereby organisations and people can make submissions and then go talk to the select committee. And I guess its kind of like sussing out quite quickly which of the members of parliament are interested in the issues, for the sake of the issues not for the sake of the politics and that has been interesting. I mean we, having talked to our colleagues in the UK and having been to the UK a number of times just recently, we have huge political access that is just not possible in England. It just doesn't happen, whereas we can bump into the health minister in the supermarket (NZ ABI 17).

Another voluntary sector activist noted:

> The formal policy process and writing submissions on Bills and being aware of what legislation is going through the house and influence that legislative sort of side of the process, the select committee stuff has become more and more important and it's something that's much easier to do when you're in Wellington rather than Auckland (NZ ABI 20).

If consultation is conducted in a tokenistic fashion it can result in a failure to recognise and value VCOs' knowledge and experience in relation to the shaping and delivery of policy. As one statutory sector respondent noted:

> Even this morning we were having a team meeting and people said about a community meeting, 'oh we just got the usual lobby groups along'. So there is a bit of an attitude in health that if you engage with the voluntary sector, what you will end up rubbing up against is the lobby groups, and it's spoken as a pejorative term. Where say for me, in my training, I wouldn't have anything but the highest respect for lobby groups because lobby groups have shaped this country in terms of bringing about social change and spearheading things that really needed to shift (NZ SSI 06).

4.7 Characteristics of Disabling Partnerships

Enabling partnerships are those that are…	Disabling partnerships are those that are…
Prepared by all parties	Top down – power lies with the funder
Flexible framework, based on what parties want to include and how	Accountable only one way – back to funder
Accountable in two or more ways	Focused on risk minimisation
More willing to take risks, relying on trust, respect and process rather than legalistic clauses	Focused on compliance
Flexible, faith in relationships and agreed processes	Based on 'principal-agent' arm's length relationships
Interactive, ongoing relationships	Short-term, fixed upon completion of outputs
Based on longer term relationships and where the schedule of tasks is likely to change over time	Focused on viewing partnerships as universal solutions

4.8 Inflexible institutional legal frameworks

VCOs engage in a diverse range of activities. Rigid legal frameworks often force them into a single category that fails to reflect this range of activity. For example, many VCOs participate in service delivery and advocacy.

In both New Zealand and the UK, Charities legislation poses a challenge to VCOs' ability to perform these roles concurrently. Charity law does not preclude conducting both activities simultaneously so long as funding for each is kept separate to ensure VCOs cannot advocate against government. However, uncertainties about what constitutes the pursuit of political ends

(which charities may not do) means that this continues to be a source of confusion and doubt.

> So it's not only 'we know best', but what follows from that is all these massive expectations about accountability, on contracts and funding, the unwillingness to allow any to… well, really trying to repress as much advocacy as possible. There's been a lot of issues in this country about advocacy, around the setting up of the Charities Commission, modelled on the UK's Charities Commission [laughs]. We fought a big fight on the Bill that set that up, to try and allow organisations that have an advocacy function to still be registered as charitable - and it's still very, very dicey what's happening around that. There's a real tension. (NZ ABI 13)

> 'The seminal case study of activism and the State in the mental health sector actually began in the public health sector. And it arose out of, in my view, a massive over reaction by the Ministry of Health to a complaint - an enquiry about the group action on smoking and health. Essentially what happened was an opposition MP said, 'You as the Ministry of Health are not able to lobby individual members of Parliament. But what you've done is fund an organisation in ASH to lobby, and get engaged in the policy and advocacy around smoking and health. And that's not kosher, that's not okay.' The Ministry massively over reacted to it. And the first thing that they did was call in all of the Ministry of Health contracts and strike out the word advocacy, wherever it appeared all the way through. You know, huge… And then attempted to negotiate protocols of advocacy with the NGO sector, which was incredibly unwise, because they knew so little about it, and had no real appreciation of the NGO sector, and the degree to which advocacy was central to what they did. And a fairly limited understanding of the relationship between that sector and parts of it to the State, where they saw a kind of a semi-charitable model of… these are little voluntary organisations who are helping the Ministry achieve the Ministry's goals. So they had no understanding of organisational sovereignty, or that we might have agendas of our own. So coming from that position they then attempted to negotiate a set of protocols, which went nowhere. I mean people just said, 'F*** off we're not doing that - in your dreams.' And the Ministry got like really significantly off side in a way which it has never really recovered from, although it might not completely understand it, you know throughout all of itself' (NZ ABI 18).

The lack of a clear definition of what constitutes activism results in VCOs' expressing fears that funding may be withdrawn if they campaign on policy issues. Indeed, evidence suggests that VCOs *have* lost their funding as a result of engaging in activism.

> I'm sure you'll find community and voluntary sector organisations who will say that having spoken out against policy, their government

policies, has affected their funding. I'm sure there will be quite a few that will be quite vocal about that (NZ SSI 09).

I think there's an issue about you generating income which is about direct delivery beneficiaries and if you're going to use it for campaigning purposes then this could be a problem (UK ABI 01).

The difference between what central government says and what local government does surfaces again here. Indeed, echoing the UK government's commitment to 'voice', one central government official explicitly stated that a contracting relationship should not limit an organisation's ability to campaign:

So what we want to do in our review is make it very clear that the government thinks that it's fine for organisations to campaign and receive funding. I think again at the local authority level there's often some kind of 'well, if you're going to criticise us then were not going to engage with you'. And that's just a bit childish really and you know, that shouldn't really be the case, because big organisations that do engage with government, and particularly organisations like… well, there are lots of examples, but I mean the big ones that engage with DFES [Department for Education and Skills], the big ones that engage with DFID [Department for International Development] and they will say 'well we can play, we can campaign and complain and we are but a thorn in the side of government, but we don't find that stops us at all from being engaged with contracts'. So maybe it's something to do with size and the relationship being more equal and more grownup. I think that sometimes at the local level it's because the relationship is not equal, that people don't feel that they can do both campaigning and contracting. So I don't think, there shouldn't really in all truth be any problem with it, I think it's just that if you, if you don't have the relationship right then those things are just going to get in the way (UK SSI 15).

4.9 Funding

Despite the fact that the importance of longer-term funding contracts is enshrined in guidance documents (e.g., Local Government White Paper [UK], Third Sector Review [UK]) security of funding is a significant issue within the sector. There is a disparity between the stated commitment and fears expressed by VCOs over their longer-term sustainability. This is not a new issue and has been rehearsed repeatedly. Yet, given the shifts in policy, it is worth restating: funding is *still* an issue for many VCOs.

Not all organisations seek contracts. Some choose not to do so, either due to the strictures placed on them, because doing so would jeopardise their

independence, run counter to their ethos, or disenfranchise their target group.

5 Conclusions

Within the fields of mental health and community safety, marked changes have occurred in the voluntary and community sector in response to the shifting landscape of governance and the rise of partnership approaches to meeting social welfare needs. This conclusion identifies key similarities between Manchester and Auckland before turning to key differences. It also addresses some of the similarities and differences that have emerged around the sub-sectors of mental health and community safety.

5.1 Issues common to Manchester and Auckland

First, VCOs indicate that they are engaging primarily in softer, more subtle forms of activism involving interaction and collaborations with the state and its agencies. Playing the game within 'the system' is a more frequently adopted strategy than the 'traditional' tactic of protesting from outside. However, demonstrative activism is seen as a 'rapid response' tactic where specific issues warrant it.

Second, there is considerable slippage in the use of the language of partnership. The proliferation of forums, networks and alliances to describe a whole range of formal and informal agreements or working practices has resulted in the lack clarity about what constitutes partnership. This has made if difficult to distinguish between bureaucracy, partnership and collective contracting or, indeed, to evaluate the efficacy of each model.

Third, alongside service delivery, engaging in networks and partnerships is increasingly understood as being a key role for VCOs. New relationships have been forged between statutory, voluntary and community, and private sectors such that sectoral boundaries are increasingly porous. An exchange of knowledge and skills between sectors is developing as a result of organisational relationships or the career trajectories of individuals.

VCOs continue to accentuate a number of long-standing strengths that lie at the core of their sectoral identity. Briefly, these comprise:

I. innovative approaches to service delivery, which aim to shift the mainstream through the roll-out of creative service models;

II. responsiveness in terms of launching campaigns and rapid service reconfiguration;

III. the ability to reach vulnerable and disadvantaged groups that statutory providers cannot;

IV. commitment to including multiple voices to enable different ideas to be held in tension through a focus on process rather than the final product; and

V. the ability to act counter growing communal dissociation through their role in helping to develop and sustain a vibrant civil society and through the creation of social capital.

VCOs identified six sets of factors that both enabled and constrained the development of vibrant community-based infrastructure and organisations. Drawing these together demonstrates how organisations have addressed the constraints they identified.

▪ Risk aversion can result in a retreat behind traditional sectoral boundaries, inhibiting joint-working and the ability to embrace a shared vision. Nevertheless, organisations and individuals (from both sectors) with vision demonstrated a willingness to take risks, often at significant personal cost. VCOs that have won the support of statutory sector 'champions' who assist in the realisation of this vision are particularly successful.

▪ Partnerships without relationship-building at their core can breed protectionism. Hierarchical power relationships emerge that reinforce existing inequalities (e.g., the statutory sector's ability to select 'representatives'). This can lead to mistrust and suspicion. Conversely, partnerships that place importance on relationship-building are able to foster an environment of trust and mutual respect resulting in the capacity to embrace and realise a shared agenda.

▪ Fostering mutual respect opens up greater opportunities for cross-sectoral learning and joint working. This requires individuals and organisations from both sectors to respect the legitimate place that each plays within the partnership and to value the knowledge, expertise and distinct contribution that each can bring to the table. It is also important to

acknowledge the freedom of individuals and organisations to engage in advocacy or activism without repercussion.

▪ Increasingly porous sectoral boundaries enable the inter-sectoral transfer of knowledge and skills. Moreover, individuals who, over the course of their careers, move between sectors develop important skills that enable them understand and speak multiple sectoral 'languages'. These individuals potentially play a pivotal role in assisting VCOs by acting as 'translators' between the different sectors. Conversely, failure to recognise these increasingly porous boundaries can lead to entrenched patterns of behaviour.

▪ There is often a gap between policy guidance at the national level and implementation at the local level. This gives rise to frustration, insecurity and, on occasion, anger. The implementation and effectiveness of national policy needs to be monitored and independently evaluated at local level. Without such processes in place these difficulties will remain.

Three further obstacles that block the development of a vibrant voluntary and community sector have been identified:

▪ Many consultation processes are seen as tokenistic 'tick-box' practices. This breeds a lack of confidence in the process within both sectors and reduces the ability of the voluntary and community sector to make a meaningful contribution to shaping social policy agendas.

▪ Legal frameworks that suffer for want of a clear definition of activism create a potent mix of confusion and fear that prevents organisations from fulfilling their dual role as both service deliverers and advocates.

▪ Despite Government acknowledgement of the problem, short-term funding relationships continue in some areas and fail to cultivate a sense of security and stability for VCOs.

5.2 Comparative Issues

Given the comparative nature of this study, crucial cross-*national* learning is also important. Two key points of comparison between the UK and New Zealand have emerged.

▪ New Zealand has a significantly smaller population than the UK which has two important impacts. First, politics feels more informal in New Zealand. Individual politicians are closer to their electorate. Furthermore, though a formal process, petitioning select committees through verbal and written submissions provides what appears to be a more frequently used route to influencing policy than that existing in the UK. Second, sectoral boundaries in New Zealand appear more porous, not only due to inter-sectoral working but also because there is more movement of individuals between and within sectors throughout their career trajectories. Both aid the process of knowledge transfer and keep open 'back doors' that enable softer, more nuanced forms of activism. The level of informality in New Zealand also feeds through to partnerships. In the apparent absence of mandated partnerships, effective informal partnerships between sectors take the place of the formal partnerships. This is similar to developments that UK VCOs pinpoint as occurring outside the formal arena of the partnership. In short, formal partnership structures are seen as unnecessary.

▪ Despite the fact that partnership models of working in both countries are a product of neoliberal shifts and a move towards 'third way' approaches to social welfare, partnership plays out in different ways in different places. This is not just the result of how neoliberalism has been differentially rolled-out of in the UK and New Zealand, but also the fact that partnerships are shaped by the social, historical and cultural contexts within which they operate. Language is crucial to this. Partnership in New Zealand is clearly associated with the Treaty of Waitangi. This 'ideal' model of partnership is the 'given' against which all other forms of joint-working, be they networks, collaborations, alliances or forums, are judged. Less slippage in language occurs in New Zealand due to a widespread understanding of partnership as a continuum rather than static relational form and by the presence of a common reference point.

5.3 Sub-sectoral Issues

In considering our sub-sectoral themes of mental health and community safety two further points have emerged:

▪ Mental health and community safety organisations face similar challenges in both countries. However it is not always easy to distinguish between mental health and community safety organisations as there are

many areas of overlap between the two. This is particularly true in Auckland where the porosity of organisational and sectoral boundaries is greater. There is a clear relationship between an individual's mobility and sectoral blurring. People working in discrete sectors are likely to have a greater awareness of issues in the other sector due to a greater tendency to move between sectors. This can promote cross-sectoral trust-building leading to the exchange of ideas which may, over time, break down the sectoral barriers.

- ▪ The national policy context is important to the development of discrete sectors. This is particularly evident in the field of Community Safety, which in New Zealand appears to be a less clearly defined sector than it is in the UK. This is because in the UK, government policies and legislative frameworks have provided a clear discourse (and related funding) around which a discrete sector can be built. In contrast, community safety in New Zealand appears to be a 'looser' concept that straddles several fields and so is not just the preserve of criminal justice.

Neither country has found the key to the successful development of local governance frameworks that both enable participatory democracy and enable VCOs to shape or, ultimately, steer the social policy agenda. However, in openly setting out factors which enable and constrain the development of community-based infrastructure and organisations, this report offers an important contribution to this debate.

If those factors that enable the growth of a vibrant voluntary and community sector are further strengthened and ways to overcome the barriers are jointly sought, significant progress might be made. New sites of local governance *can* encourage voluntary activism, if their presence is recognised as a marker of a strong civil society.

6   Recommendations

There is a serious need for:

✓ City councils to commission independent evaluations of partnership models and processes.

✓ City councils to find ways of making examples of good social innovation visible in the city. This could be through the development of 'flagship' social innovation projects or through a 'partnership of the year' award.

✓ The city councils in Manchester and Auckland to build on established links to set up an exchange programme that can facilitate the transfer of knowledge and good working practices with the voluntary and community sector

✓ Opportunities for the VCS to be involved meaningfully in agenda-setting in relation to local and national policy.

✓ More formal recognition of experimental and practitioner knowledge and skills within the voluntary and community sector.

✓ All sectors to recognise that building mutual trust and respect demands time, talent and resources. Partners from both the voluntary and community sector need to engage in appropriate training and trust building activities to facilitate this development.

✓ Capacity building initiatives within the voluntary and community sector, for example, through the funding of professional development projects.

Appendices

Appendix 1   Key Research Questions

The two-year cross-national study adopted a case study approach, exploring our central questions across both the UK and Aotearoa New Zealand – countries that have both experienced neo-liberal shifts from the 1980s onwards. The research focused specifically on the cities of Manchester, UK and Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand, so avoiding the tendency to over-represent capital cities in comparative research.

Both cities are key urban sites for local partnerships and each have ethnically diverse populations for whom the establishment of local partnerships may be particularly significant (Larner and Craig, 2005; Husband and Jerrard, 2001). Both are major cities with comparable population bases.

We specifically chose to focus on two areas of voluntary welfare activity – mental health and community safety. We focused on these sub-sectors because:

i)   It is known that they both form significant areas of voluntary activity and activism across the two nation-states and within the two cities in which the study was located (Fyfe and Milligan, 2003; Larner and Craig, 2005);

ii)   Voluntary welfare activity in mental health and community safety are both areas recognised as being of importance in addressing social development and the alleviation of deprivation (Home Office, 2002);

iii)   There may be some interesting interfaces between these two sectors given that: a) community concerns have been raised in the past about the development of locally-based mental health facilities and community safety (Wolff, 2002); and b) many non-medical interventions stress the development of 'safe spaces' for those experiencing mental distress (Bondi and Fewell, 2003).

The study sought to examine three core themes:

Theme One: Voluntary organisations, activism and the shift from urban government to urban governance
Drawing on survey evidence and in-depth interviews with key actors, we sought to explore how the institutional environment within the UK affects the interplay between the political environment and the voluntary sector at local level. In order to investigate the shift between urban government and urban governance we focused on experiences with a range of partnerships in Manchester and Auckland, from the geographical to the thematic. Within these partnerships decisions around the development/provision of programmes and services to alleviate poverty are increasingly placed in the hands of local partnerships that operate largely outside of local government. Our analysis sought to examine their effectiveness, how and if voluntary activists view these as key sites through which to influence change; and how these governance structures are shaped by the local historical, political and cultural contexts within which they are embedded.

Theme Two: National-local relations and voluntarism
Our second theme related to national government and sought to explore how the national political environment is shaping developments at the local level. Through interviews with key individuals we explored how national state actors see the role of the voluntary sector at the local level. We examined how they view the state's relationship with the voluntary sector in the two sectors of interest and how this might differ. We also sought to explore the extent to

which state actors engage with voluntary activists and how they view the shifts in relationship between voluntary activism and the state.

Theme Three: Activism, management and governance in voluntary organisations

Our third theme took a biographical approach to examine the career trajectories of recent and current voluntary sector activists. Here we were concerned to investigate how activists move between, and forge connections among, voluntary organisations; how shifts in the relationship between voluntary activism and the state may be expressed in the formation of new sites of governance; and the permeability of boundaries between voluntary sector activism, the state and the for-profit sectors. More specifically, we focused on the following questions:

i) What kind of networks support or constrain the emergence of activists?

ii) How do they use that expertise they have acquired along the way and to what extent is the experience activists gain in their everyday lives important in facilitating their ability to engage in voluntary activism?

iii) What career pathway do voluntary sector activists develop in relation to voluntary, governmental and private sector organisations?

iv) Do activists change *with* the organisation as it develops over time?

v) To what extent do activists shift from voluntary activism to mainstream politics and vice versa?

We were particularly interested in teasing out the extent to which there may be a distinction between professional careers and voluntary activism within the voluntary sector; what kinds of voluntary organisations impede or facilitate the development of activism; and how the local and national contexts act to shape the development and career trajectory of voluntary activists.

Appendix 2   Research Design

The research design incorporated a combination of questionnaire and in-depth interview data aimed at maximising our understanding of the relationship between place and voluntary activism in the UK and New Zealand in general and Manchester and Auckland specifically.

The figure below summarises the research design adopted in both Manchester and Auckland:

Figure 6: *Summary of research design*

Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4
Postal survey to all voluntary organisations in Manchester and Auckland operating i the fields of mental health and community safety.	24 x 2 interviews with voluntary organisations operating in fields o mental health and community safety.	16 x 2 interviews with key statutory sector actors from local, regional, national government.	24 x 2 biographical narratives from activists operating in the fields of mental health and community safety.

In *Phase 1,* we sought to map out the extent of voluntary activity across our two specific sub-sectors of interest (mental health and community safety) within the two cities. We did so by drawing on existing lists held by: umbrella organisations, libraries, social services and telephone directories. In addition we collaborated with our steering group members and known organisations operating in the two sub-sectors to extend and update these lists.

A brief questionnaire was then sent to all organisations identified, with the aim of gathering basic background data on the organisation, its structure, the extent of its operation and activities, how the organisation defined activism and the extent of its engagement with activity it defined as activism. The information gathered from this phase enhanced our understanding of the shape and form of voluntary activity within the two sub-sectors and formed the basis for a purposive sampling approach to the subsequent phases of our study.

Phase 2 linked directly to our second theme and involved twenty four in-depth interviews in each city with key figures from voluntary organisations operating within the two different sub-sectors. In order to capture a range of views we interviewed people from organisations operating at differing spatial scales (e.g. local community-based, city-wide and branches of national organisations).

Phase 3 linked directly to our third theme and involved in-depth interviews with key figures from the local, regional and the national state. Sixteen interviews were undertaken in total in both the UK and New Zealand. Here, we sought to tease out how the shift from urban government to urban governance is being played out across Manchester and Auckland and how the social, cultural and political setting of each city impacts on the development of the two sub-sectors of the voluntary welfare. In this phase we also sought to explore the extent to which the national political environment in the UK and New Zealand is shaping developments at local level.

Phase 4 of the study involved the gathering of in-depth activist biographies from recent and current activists in the field of mental health and community safety. Twenty-four biographies were undertaken in total. This approach enabled us to gain a deeper understanding of the routes taken by these individuals, their current or past role in the organisation with which they are associated, and how their 'career trajectory' evolved (Acheson and Williamson, 2001).

The quantitative data emerging from the questionnaires was analysed using SPSS. The data has been used descriptively as numbers were not sufficient to warrant statistical analysis. All qualitative data was transcribed in full and analysed using Atlas.ti qualitative software, team-based data workshops and constant comparison methodology.

Copies of interview transcripts were returned to all respondents for validation of the data. Data reliability was checked using peer review of the analysis across the research team and through feedback to research participants during a one-day seminar event.

Before undertaking the research ethical approval was gained from Lancaster University ethics committee. Written informed consent was also gained from all participants.

Where scope for anonymity is limited, i.e., in the case of key figures, we have adopted a two-stage consent process as follows: i) consent to tape-record interviews; ii) consent to use material from the transcript.

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