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Themes for this presentation

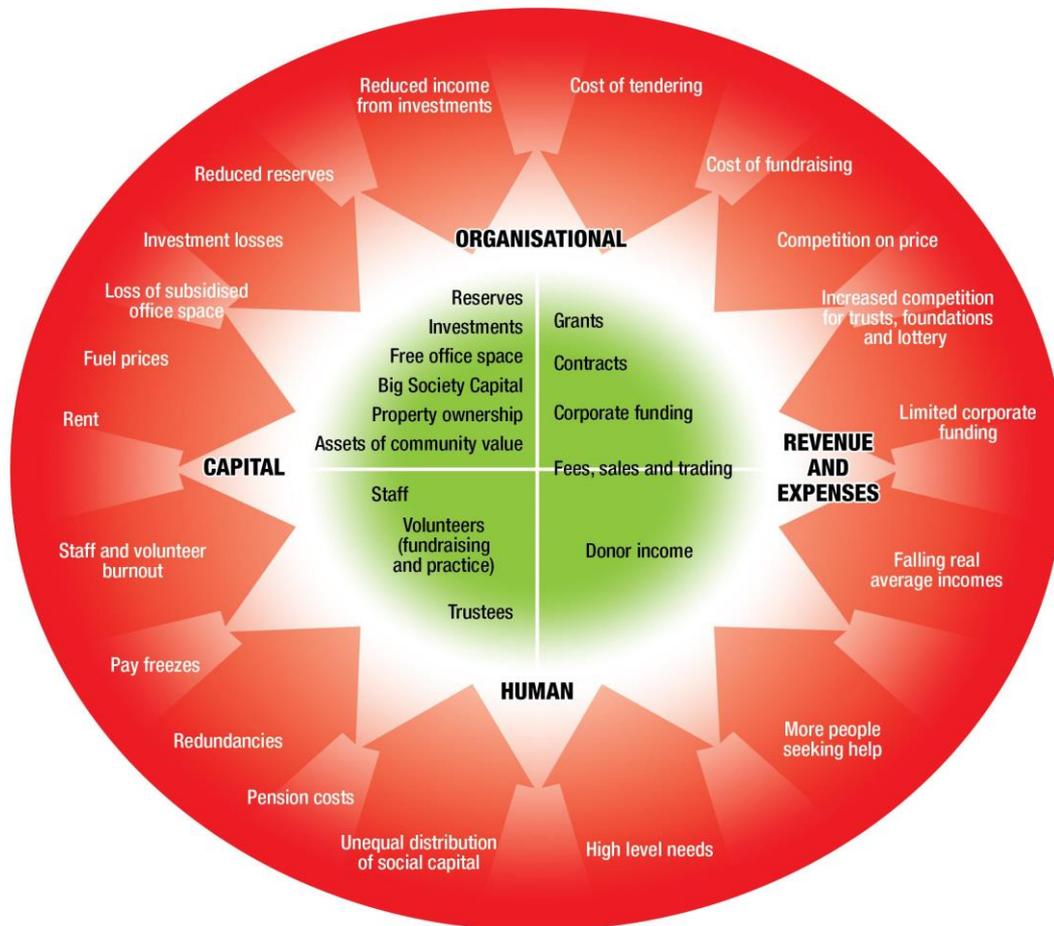
- 1 Overview of some of the biggest issues for children, young people and families emerging from Children England's membership
- 2 Understanding the operating conditions and challenges for VCS organisations, and wider children's services in localities
- 3 The importance and challenges for evidence-based practice and service development

1. Key issues for Children England members



- Leadership, vision and strategy for children
- Children's rights and equalities
- Halt and reverse child poverty increases
- Reliable / stable spending plans for children's services
- Impacts of benefits and housing reforms
- Youth unemployment
- Legal aid reforms and advocacy
- Workforce
- Childcare and children's centres
- Strategic accountability for schools
- Social and Emotional learning, CAMHS

2. 'Business Storms' in the Voluntary & Community Sector



Severe simultaneous pressures on all areas of VCS business models

- Increasing fuel bills, high price inflation, pension costs.
- Public grant-giving diminishing; competition for all funds high
- Do more for less while it costs more to get less
- Donation income relatively resilient
- Salary cuts and workforce reductions highest of all 3 sectors
- Increasing service demand from children, young people and families is reported right across both VCS and statutory services.
- Organisational strength substantially weakened by investment and asset value losses and continuing low interest rates
- Ongoing cashflow pressures on reserves.
- Adaptation to new business models, social finance opportunities and more commercial 'trading' models is being embraced, but cannot be achieved quickly, and open to question as 'effective' in some practice areas.
- The primary blockage to taking up social finance opportunities for many VCSO's is low, or highly uncertain, revenue funding prospects.

3. Demonstrating Impact on Children's Outcomes



- Making a *real difference* in children's lives is the only goal worth setting ourselves and we have to know, and show, that we do
- Drivers and demands to 'prove impact' are not restricted to public sector commissioning at all – charitable funders and even small grants providers now demanding increasingly high evidence standards
- Donors have ALWAYS wanted to know what difference we make, in the most tangible terms possible, and VCS often have great stories to tell of what they achieve.....BUT:
- Different funders have some very different ideas / frameworks and expectations of what constitutes convincing evidence for different kinds of work
- Different funders have very wide-ranging ideas about desirable / feasible / measurable outcomes for a VCS organisation to account for
- Much of what the VCS sector does is not an intervention or a service, nor a 'model' nor a 'programme' – it is '*doing something rather than nothing with whatever we can muster*'; being something to take part in; someone to talk to (unconditionally); somewhere to find sanctuary, solace, fun or escape, friendship, solidarity, voice.



Sutton: Outcomes Based Accountability

- collaborative outcomes reporting to LA into a single balanced scorecard
- co-producing measures & mechanisms – helping VCS to show what they contribute in ways that are manageable, consistent and useful
- outcomes ‘belong’ to the children, monitored in one dataset by LA, and all agencies contribute in different ways

Torbay: Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD)

- start with the *‘what helps you most / least’* question to children, families and communities
- how can we strengthen, support the relationships and groups through which you help yourselves and each other?
- process generated 2 new parent-led social enterprises, even before commissioning plans developed
- then...commissioning to fill gaps and add capacity, with community members in ‘driving and deciding’ seats – community panels and hubs integrated in Early Help and safeguarding triage processes

Some questions for discussion

- What is the 'vision' for children in London, and how can VCS and statutory agencies work together to achieve it?
- How can we ensure that children, young people and their rights are at the centre of our decision-making in even the most difficult of 'austerity' driven decisions?
- How can we make the best use of all the resources that VCS can offer in partnership with statutory budgets?
- Are we evaluating outcomes for children in current contracting arrangements, or is the focus on testing out organisations' performance?
- How can we ensure that CYP's own assessments are included in evidence gathering and decisions about service improvement / redesign?
- What are the most pressing issues for you, that Engage London needs to focus on in the future?