Evaluation of year 2 of the Coordinated Community Support Programme

A report by Cloud Chamber for The Children's Society and CCS partners

Version: Final, 13th December 2021
Lead author: Emma Roberts
Contributions from Richard Sutcliffe, Rich Stephens and Janet Grauberg

Summary of key findings

Summary of key findings 1/2

Our evaluation of year 2 of the CCS programme has identified the following learning points described in more detail throughout this report:

Local systems: Coordination

- 1: The key features of coordination are better understood and have been progressed in 4 pilot sites
- 2: CCS have a central role to play in motivating networks
- 3: Organisations are more likely to have access to a referral system
- 4: The programme is working towards longer term sustainability of networks and referral systems

Local systems: Reach and access

- 5: Improved capability for organisations to make appropriate interventions
- 6: Increased ability for organisations to reach more people
- 7: Improving access to support for children, young people and families

Local systems: Partnerships

- 8: There are pockets of visibility of the programme within local authorities
- 9: In pilot sites there has been a step towards a more joined up support offer between LA and VCS

Beyond the pilot sites

- 11: The programme is sharing good practice with other localities
- 12: Evidence from the CCS programme is supporting TCS efforts to influence system structures at a national level

Summary of key findings 2/2

The programme has supported organisations in 2 main ways in year 2. The funding distributed to VCS organisations via the programme in year 2 is broadly even between two types of projects:

- Firstly with improving **access** to services (e.g. adding capacity to front line professionals, developing leaflets).

- Secondly with supporting organisations to **lead systems and coordination** efforts (e.g. funding for organisations to develop networks).

In summary, the CCS programme has supported the key features of coordination in 4 pilot sites. These key features are:

- A strong advice **network.**

- Building and embedding a digital **referral system.**

Where the referral system is new (in 3 of the 4 pilot sites) there is optimism that the referral system will improve the service-user journey. There is a need to focus on long-term **resourcing** of these initiatives in year 3.

We have made a number of recommendations in the report including:

- Resourcing referral system should be the focus for year 3.

- Training on the referral system is important when considering sustainability plans.

- Build upon work with statutory services, especially schools.

- Develop plans for engaging the 4 pilot local authority sites in the programme.

- Work with LGA to share learning beyond pilot sites.

- Build on opportunities to share learning at subregional levels.

Contents

1. About the CCS Programme year 2

About the Coordinated Community Support Programme

The Coordinated Community Support Programme

The Children's Society (TCS), in partnership with Buttle UK, the Lloyds Bank Foundation, Children in Need, The Church of England, The Legal Education Foundation, The Local Government Association (LGA), Trust for London, Smallwood Trust, Stepchange and Trussell Trust are delivering the Coordinated Community Support (CCS) Programme.

The Programme was devised in response to the localisation of welfare assistance in 2013, and research conducted by The Children's Society with The Church of England (the 'Not Making Ends Meet' report). In 2013, reform led to the establishment of Local Welfare Assistance Schemes (LWAS), which are now administered by upper-tier local authorities in England. The funding for these schemes is not ring-fenced for that purpose, and the overall sum of money for crisis support has reduced over time. Funding in England fell in real terms from around £291 million in 2010/11 to £132 million in 2020/21, a reduction of 55%.

In Wales, the Discretionary Assistance Fund (DAF) provides two types of grant – the Emergency Assistance Payment (EAP) and the Individual Assistance Payment (IAP). The DAF is administered centrally by the Welsh Government, in contrast to the decentralised local welfare assistance model in England.

The CCS programme works primarily in 4 local areas (Norfolk, Oldham, Swansea and Tower Hamlets) to improve coordination between locally-based agencies providing support (including grant support, advice, legal support, access to food and other services) to people in financial crisis.

This evaluation report describes the impact and learning from year 2 of a 3-year programme.

Context: year 2, building on year 1: increased legitimacy for the CCS programme to support and influence change

Despite a planning phase in autumn 2019, much of the activity in 4 pilot sites had to be adapted to respond to the challenges arising within communities due to Covid-19. The overall objective of 'access to crisis support' remained constant in year 1.
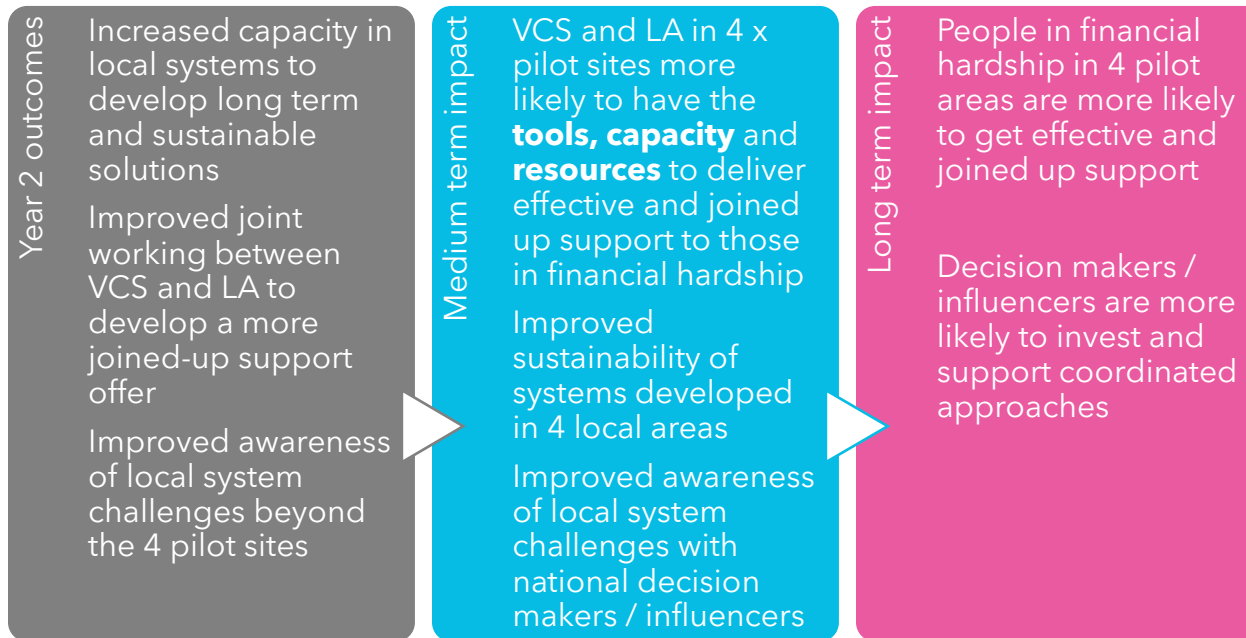
The programme actively brought organisations responding to the Covid-19 crisis together and offered a chance to exchange experiences and understanding of the emerging needs resulting from lockdown. While coordination remained the primary objective of the programme, Covid-19 made it difficult for organisations to think 'long term' about strategic coordination as they were busy adapting to remote working and an increase/changed nature in demand for services.

Our evaluation of year 1 found that the pandemic did help to forge relationships between agencies and there was optimism that this would be sustained in the longer term. We also observed that the CCS programme, through funding workstreams in year 1 (some of which were in direct response to pandemic-related challenges) helped to build trust with organisations in the 4 pilot sites which could be built upon in year 2, with more focus on coordination, longer term planning and development. A blended approach of workstream funding and added capacity from the CCS team was welcomed, especially amongst VCS organisations, in year 1. We judged that the workstream funding in year 1 has 'paved the way' for the CCS team to raise the coordination agenda.

Logic Model for year 2

Figure 1.1: Logic model as set out at the beginning of year 2 (source: Cloud Chamber)

Year 2 outcomes	Medium term impact	Long term impact
Increased capacity in local systems to develop long term and sustainable solutions	VCS and LA in 4 x pilot sites more likely to have the **tools, capacity** and **resources** to deliver effective and joined up support to those in financial hardship	People in financial hardship in 4 pilot areas are more likely to get effective and joined up support
Improved joint working between VCS and LA to develop a more joined-up support offer	Improved sustainability of systems developed in 4 local areas	Decision makers / influencers are more likely to invest and support coordinated approaches
Improved awareness of local system challenges beyond the 4 pilot sites	Improved awareness of local system challenges with national decision makers / influencers	

This Logic Model was developed by Cloud Chamber early in year 2 of the programme. This was our 'hypothesis' for year 2 and informed our data collection for this evaluation. It differs to the Theory of Change developed in year 1 to reflect the evolution of the programme. For example, year 2 focuses on systems change at local level with an acknowledgement that impact on people who access services will be long term rather than necessarily achievable within the year. The Logic Model has the following assumptions:

- There is a shared understanding of the required solution(s) in each pilot site (and a shared understanding of the need / problem).

- A coordination role / function is necessary to improve coordination. This might be a "post" or funded person [builds on learning from Year 1 that coordination takes time and resource].

- An improved service user experience requires access (to services), awareness (of services) and coordination (between services). Supporting these "cogs" will lead to improved systems and improved outcomes for people.

- If the VCS and Local Authority work better together, there will be an improved experience for service users.

- If the VCS and Local Authority work better together, there will be an increase in LWAS/DAF applications.

- Local pilot areas will be willing / able to sustain the systems-impacts generated by the programme beyond the CCS programme funding.

- Stakeholders in the 4 x pilot sites are able to identify and request what is required (tools, capacity, resources).

- National decision makers / influencers are receptive to messages emerging from the Programme.

The year 2 evaluation

Our approach

The methodology set out in the initial evaluation framework was modified in response to the evolving nature of the programme. Our approach in year 2 was focused on assessing the contribution of the programme to change, primarily at pilot site level (local systems change) with some reflections on the contribution to national systems too. We used a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods and analysis to assess the contribution of CCS activity to systems change. This evaluation covers the funded activity from October 2020-September 2021 known as year 2 of the programme. However, the impacts achieved in year 2 are cumulative from year 1.

Quantitative data sources

- Monitoring data from 9 organisations who held funds.

- Local systems survey administered to stakeholders in local pilot sites in June 2021 (n=55).

- Norfolk Community Advice Network (NCAN) referral system data (representing period 2017 to 2021).

- Tower Hamlets Community Advice Network (THCAN) referral system data (representing period March to October 2021).

Qualitative data sources

34 people consulted in total including:

- 13 people representing 11 VCS organisations who hold funds as part of the CCS programme.

- 9 people representing 9 VCS / education organisations who have been involved e.g. members of local advice networks (but not necessarily held funds).

- 7 people representing 4 local /district authorities.

- 4 people beyond the pilot sites representing members including 1 learning partner and 1 member of the Programme Board and 2 additional stakeholders.

- 4 members of staff at The Children's Society including the 3 CCS team members.

- 4 team consultative calls with TCS team to hear about National Systems change activities, achievements and learning.

- Mosaic (TCS case management system) data logging communications between the CCS team and 4 pilot site stakeholders from Jan 2021-end of Sept 2021.

This report

- Section 2 focuses on the changes in 4 pilot sites organised in three categories: Coordination, Access and Reach, and Partnerships.

- Section 3 focuses on reflections and contributions of the programme beyond the 4 pilot sites.

- Section 4 summarises the programme "as a whole" and poses some consideration points for year 3.

- An accompanying report of pilot site "snap shots" is available as a separate document to summarise the learning in the 4 sites primarily written for stakeholders in the respective sites.

Reflections from the Programme's Learning Coordinator, Janet Grauberg, are included throughout this report and in text boxes and pages shaded light yellow.

2. Change in four pilot sites

What we are learning

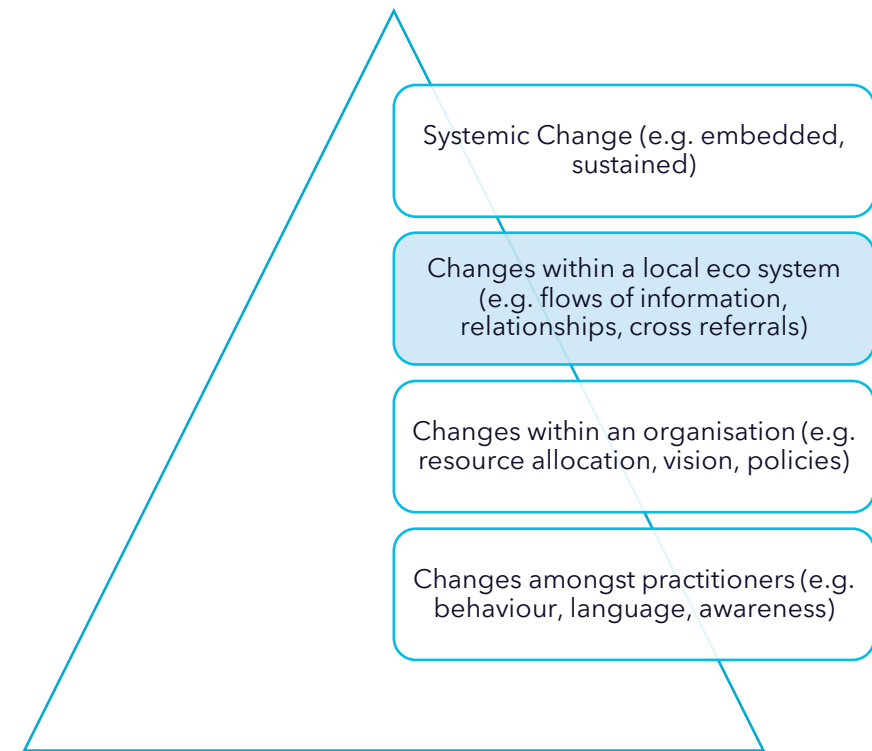# Defining and conceptualising change at local level

In year 1 of the programme our evaluation found that the programme attempted to encourage change within the 4 local 'eco' systems in the following ways:

- Increasing levels of communication between organisations.

- Increasing levels of trust between organisations.

- Improved clarity of responsibilities and strengths of VCS provision.

- Agility of VCS sector is better understood.

- Development of a shared vision of a 'warm' network.

- Joint understanding of the importance of referral systems in the pilot sites.

Our year 2 Logic Model articulates an evolution of this with the following target outcomes:

- Increased capacity in local systems to develop long term and sustainable solutions.

- Improved joint working between VCS and LA to develop a more joined-up support offer.

- VCS and LA in 4 x pilot sites more likely to have the tools, capacity and resources to deliver effective and joined up support to those in financial hardship.

Figure 2.1: Change at local level conceptualisation (source: Cloud Chamber)

Systemic Change (e.g. embedded, sustained)

Changes within a local eco system (e.g. flows of information, relationships, cross referrals)

Changes within an organisation (e.g. resource allocation, vision, policies)

Changes amongst practitioners (e.g. behaviour, language, awareness)

In year 1 we identified different modes of systems change as illustrated above. The aspiration for year 2 is to focus on the local eco system in 4 pilot sites i.e. the ways in which organisations work together.

This section is organised in 3 sub-sections -

2.1   Coordination outcomes and learning

2.2   Reach and access outcomes and learning
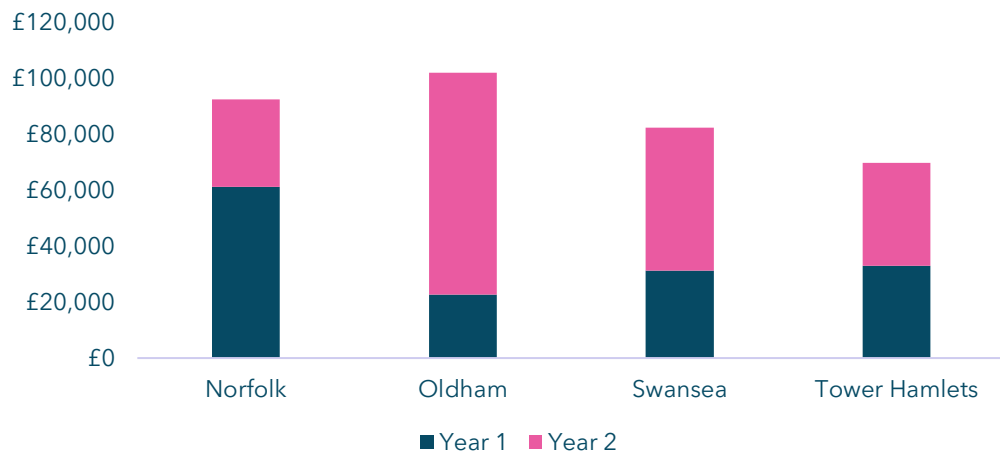
2.3   Partnership outcomes and learning

Funded activity in year 2

The programme distributes funding to VCS organisations in the 4 pilot sites. Organisations in the voluntary and community sector (VCS) can hold funds which meet the programme's overarching objectives around improved crisis support.
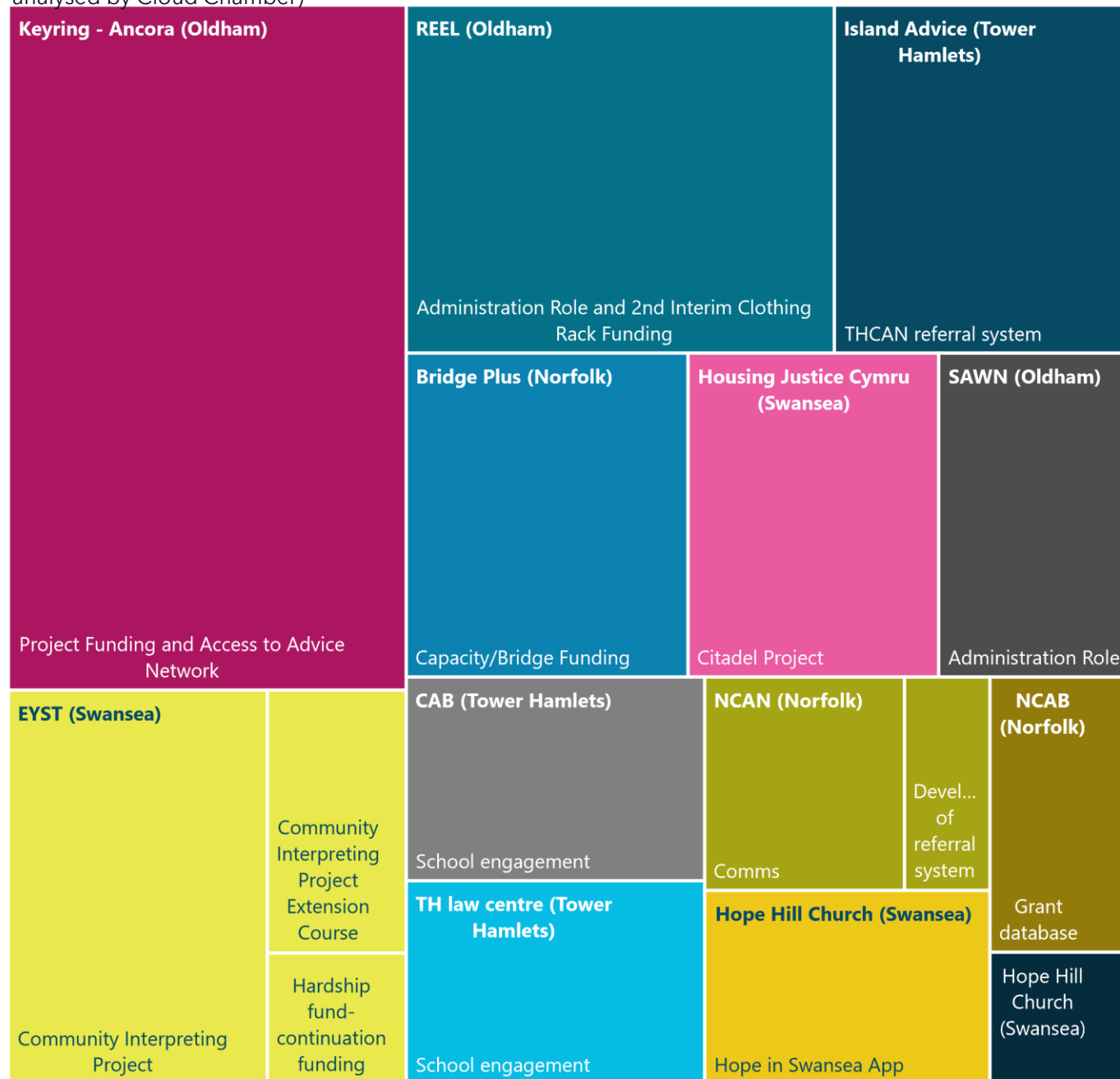
Nearly £200k of CCS funding was distributed in year 2 (137% higher than year 1; £83k). Across the 4 areas, spending is roughly equal over the programme which is why, for year 2, expenditure is higher in Oldham and Swansea. On average, each pilot site has spent c.£35k per annum in year 2. £36k of non-CCS funding was distributed equally across the pilot sites in year 2; this was provided by Smallwood. Smallwood are a programme partner and provide small grants to women on low incomes.

The chart opposite provides a summary of the amounts allocated to each project/workstream. The largest grants were made to Keyring (Oldham), EYST (Swansea) and REEL (Oldham) and Island Advice (Tower Hamlets).

Figure 1.2: Core CCS funding by area and year (source: provided by CCS, analysed by Cloud Chamber)

Figure 1.3: Funding amount illustrated by workstream for year 1 and year 2 (source: provided by CCS, analysed by Cloud Chamber)
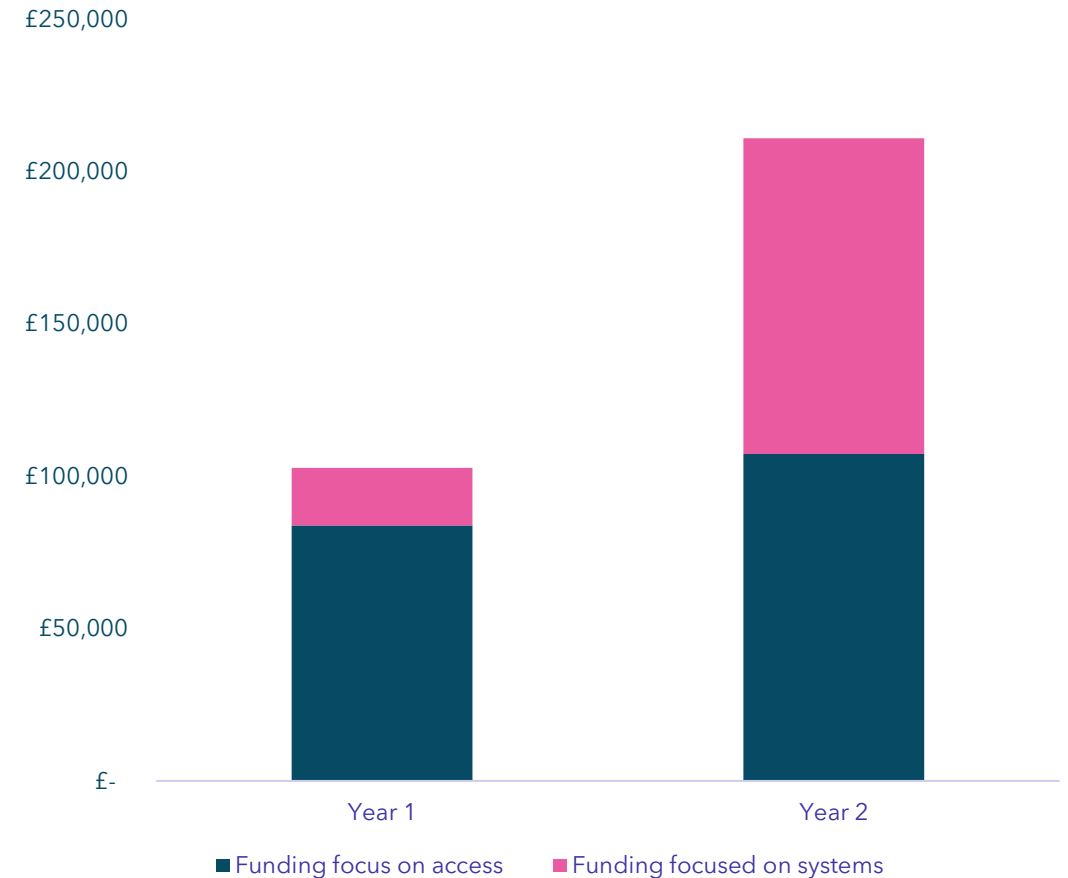
Workstream funding in year 2 focuses more on systems

Much of the funding in year 1 focused on access to crisis support. This was partly due to Covid-19 which made it difficult for organisations to think 'long term' about strategic coordination as they were busy adapting to remote working and an increase/changed nature in demand for services. In year 1 the CCS programme, through funding workstreams (some of which were in direct response to pandemic-related challenges) helped to build trust with organisations in the 4 pilot sites which could be built upon in year 2, with more focus on coordination, longer term planning and development.

This is reflected in the nature of workstreams funded in year 2 of the programme with a greater emphasis on projects focused on systems improvement and coordination.

• The impact of funding focused on access is discussed in section 2.3 of this report.

• The impact of funding focused on systems is discussed on section 2.2 of this report.

• It is acknowledged that there is some overlap and complementarity between the two types of activity.

Figure 1.3: Organisations shifting focus to improving systems in year 2 as indicated in nature of CCS funding allocation (source: data provided by CCS team, analysis by Cloud Chamber)

Activities delivered by CCS team in year 2

In addition to the funded activity, the following activities have also taken place. Data from The Children's Society illustrates that each pilot site has required different types of support from the CCS team. A 'session' refers to a meeting, participation in a workshop and/or a presentation delivered by 1 or more member of the CCS team.

Norfolk activities demonstrate a focus on engagement with local authority partners

25 sessions in total

- 10 have been general catch ups and scoping conversations such as

    - Norfolk Community Foundation regarding possible funding of community supermarket.

    - Updates from Norfolk County Council on how the referral system is going and exploring increased engagement.

- 6 of which introduce the CCS project to new audiences such as Norfolk Libraries and the East England Strategic Migration Partnership.

Oldham activities demonstrate a focus on network building

64 sessions in total

- 20 of which have been focused on the Oldham Community Advice Network (OCAN) network and/or engaging with existing networks in the borough.

- 17 have been general catch ups and scoping conversations such as meeting with Greater Manchester colleagues to raise awareness of CCS.

- 14 have been about the referral system specifically including onboarding new users.

Swansea activities demonstrate a focus on network building

55 sessions in total

- 20 of which are catch ups or scoping meetings including:

    - Arranging a meeting for small charity to explore the possibility of supplying the DAF.

    - Fortnightly catch up with local authority.

    - Understanding organisation needs from other CCS partners (such as transport costs and support for people with NRPF).

- 11 of which are about the Cash First Leaflet which has contributed to collaborative working in the area.

- 9 of which are about the community interpreting project.

- 9 of which are about Regional Advice Networks (RAN) and/or engaging with other pre-existing networks.

Tower Hamlets activities demonstrate a focus on launching the referral system

40 sessions in total

- 17 of which have been about the referral system including training on the system.

- 8 have had a focus on schools engagement.

- 8 have been to introduce the CCS project to new audiences.

Evaluation Learning

CCS has engaged differently with each pilot site depending on their needs in relation to network building and referral system development. The CCS team are adding value as a broker too, by setting up meetings between VCS organisations and local authority local welfare assistance teams, for example.

Activities delivered by the Learning Co-ordinator in year 2

The learning programme in year 2 has consisted of the following activities:

Autumn 2020

- Reflective session with representatives from the four Local Authorities, discussing the changes each LA had made to their Local Welfare Assistance Scheme in the light of Covid, and their reflections on the impact of the CCS programme.
- Practice-sharing session from Liverpool University & Citizens Advice – presenting on their Access to Justice project using Refernet to improve local co-ordination. 40 attendees from the four pilot sites and three learning sites.

Spring 2021

- Four reflective sessions for the Learning & Evaluation Board, Programme Board, pilot sites and learning sites drawing out the key points from the year 1 evaluation.
- Discussions covered:
  - The role of schools in improving access to advice & support
  - Reframing the programme objectives as improving access to, awareness of, and co-ordination of local advice and support
  - Improving co-ordination between the voluntary and community sector and the LA
  - The role of the CCS programme in facilitating local system change

Summer 2021

- Presentation to the Grant Makers' Alliance about the programme and how individual grant-makers could connect with local referral arrangements
- Informal policy discussion with the Trussell Trust about the potential for sharing practice with their pathfinder projects.
- Development of the "conditions for successful co-ordination" framework
- Planning of Year 3 activity:
  - Pilot site reflections on learning in Year 2, and the conditions for successful co-ordination framework
  - Programme of one-off sessions about the learning from the CCS programme (eg Access to Justice network, LGA Welfare Advisers Network)
  - Considering a peer-learning programme for other local areas with an interest

2.1 Coordination outcomes

What we are learning about local systems

Key finding 1: The key features of coordination are better understood and have been progressed in 4 pilot sites

Impact and evidence

In year 1 and 2, the programme worked with the four pilot sites to identify the steps needed to make 'good' coordination happen. As our year 1 evaluation stated, the programme contributed to a shared understanding that a referral system offers an opportunity to achieve many of the identified barriers to coordination (awareness, access and opportunities to address underlying need).

In year 2, the programme has broadened the key features of good coordination to include the following:

- Network – of organisations who share a desire to achieve better outcomes collaboratively.

- Referral System – to facilitate robust referrals.

- Resource – to run the network and manage the referral system.

- Legitimacy – to manage the network in the longer term.

The tables opposite illustrate, in broad terms, how each pilot site is evolving with support from CCS programme with respect to these key features. **Green** indicates some long term security (e.g. THCAN is an established network and likely to continue beyond the duration of the CCS programme), **orange** indicates that the area is at the beginning of a process (e.g. OCAN is in the process of rolling out its referral mechanism) and **red** indicates that there are firm activities planned but have not materialised at time of writing (e.g. a business case has been drafted in Norfolk to sustain the funding of the system). Where there is no tick it means that no action has been taken.

Evaluation Learning

The programme has made good progress against the key features of coordination in the pilot sites. The following sections of this report provide evidence to support this.

Figure 2.2: Baseline position of 4 pilot sites (pre-CCS programme) (source: Cloud Chamber)

	Network	Referral System	Resource
Norfolk	✔	✔	
Oldham	✔		
Swansea			
Tower Hamlets	✔		

Figure 2.3: Position at the end of year 2 in 4 pilot sites (source: Cloud Chamber)

	Network	Referral System	Resource during CCS programme	Resource and legitimacy to manage long term
Norfolk	✔	✔	✔	✔
Oldham	✔	✔	✔	
Swansea	✔	✔	✔	
Tower Hamlets	✔	✔	✔	

Reflections from Learning Coordinator - Illustrating the Conditions – Pilot Sites

Local area	Network of people who share desire to achieve better outcomes collaboratively	Underpinning 'mechanism' that facilitates robust referrals across agencies	Supported by capacity & legitimacy to run the network & administer the referral mechanism
Norfolk	NCAN established network of accredited advice providers	NCAN referral system (bespoke design by H42) expanded beyond advice	Two full time staff funded by a range of grants, including CCS
Tower Hamlets	THCAN initially established for funding purposes is now embedded	Rolling out the THCAN referral system with H42. Initially across the advice sector and relevant LA depts.	Part time staffing capacity at Island Advice funded by CCS
Oldham	Oldham Access to Advice Network recently established by CCS	Introducing the H42 referral system across key agencies and LA depts.	Part time staffing capacity at Ancora funded by CCS
Swansea Neath Port Talbot	SNPT Regional Advice Network (RAN)	Network is solely an information sharing forum	Networks (across Wales) are coordinated by Welsh Government

Illustrating the Conditions – other examples

Local area	Network of people who share desire to achieve better outcomes collaboratively	Underpinning 'mechanism' that facilitates robust referrals across agencies	Supported by capacity & legitimacy to run the network & administer the referral mechanism
Liverpool	Advice network funded by Liverpool City Council, led by Citizens Advice and Liverpool University Law Dept	Refernet online system being rolled out among advice providers – 21 agencies on the system; 45 in the network.	Network and referral system co-ordinated by Citizens Advice.
Greenwich	Advice network co-ordinated by the Local Authority (jointly by LWAS and Welfare Rights teams)	Introducing an open access referral system	System will be housed within the LA
Cambridgeshire	Cambridgeshire Local Assistance Scheme (CLAS) is hosted by CHS (Housing Association) with 16 VCS partners	The CLAS network (including Citizens Advice, District Councils) meet regularly to share information. No formal referral mechanism	Network and information sharing co-ordinated by CHS as part of hosting CLAS. No formal referral mechanism

Key finding 2: CCS have a central role to play in motivating networks

Impact and evidence

Prior to the programme beginning, two networks already existed (THCAN in Tower Hamlets and NCAN in Norfolk). NCAN had some grant funding and THCAN had no specific funding. In Oldham, the programme has initiated the OCAN network which has 50 members. In Swansea, the programme has engaged with the Swansea Neath Port Talbot Regional Advice Network (RAN) which begin in 2019 and is therefore fairly new.

In all 4 localities, networks report that they value how the CCS programme has added value in the following ways:

Increased referrals (because of networking alone). Of those organisations who returned monitoring data, there has been an increase in referrals attributable to the CCS programme – even for those who are not on board with a formal referral system. This is especially notable in Oldham where the referral system hasn't officially launched, yet some organisations claim that over 50% of their referrals can be attributed to CCS facilitation and support. This illustrates that the network in and of itself is likely to have gone some way to increase referrals (due to improved awareness, increased dialogue and not a referral system).

Showcasing referral systems from other areas to bolster the case for referral systems in their area.

Bringing a fresh pair of eyes, independence and knowledge to the area to contribute enable some long-term plans to bear fruit i.e., giving momentum to ideas:

- "The fresh pair of eyes is really helpful – it challenges the norm" (Oldham).

- "[CCS Officer] has become my local expert" (Oldham).

- "They lift our heads up from the day to day" (Swansea).

Modeling collaborative working – a phrase we've heard often is that the CCS team are "banging heads together" (in a good way!) to get things done.

Time from the CCS team to attend meetings and feedback when network members are unable to do so due to capacity limitation.

Advice networks are the focus in all 4 areas. An initial aspiration for the programme at inception phase was for a range of agency-types (such as food providers) to be involved in the programme longer-term. However, thus far most appetite and understanding for the work has been in the advice sector where there has been a focused effort to improve coordination. There are some emerging examples of other agency types (such as food banks, schools and community centres) engaging with the programme.

Evaluation Learning

The CCS team reflect that in year 2 there has been more focus on the quality of relationships within networks rather than a pressure to "grow" the networks. There is an acknowledgement that having a smaller number of engaged agencies involved might be a better use of resource as opposed to engaging larger number of agencies who are not ready /able to engage meaningfully.

Most agencies involved in the networks are advice agencies. The programme has attempted to engage other agency-types (e.g. food providers) with limited success. However, working with agencies who are receptive has been a sensible use of programme resources and there may be opportunities for other types of support agencies to "plug into" the networks further down the line.

While digital referral systems have been described as a "glue" to hold a network together, partners are keen to stress that the network (in and of itself) remains an important feature – "the referral system isn't replacing good communication" (Oldham).

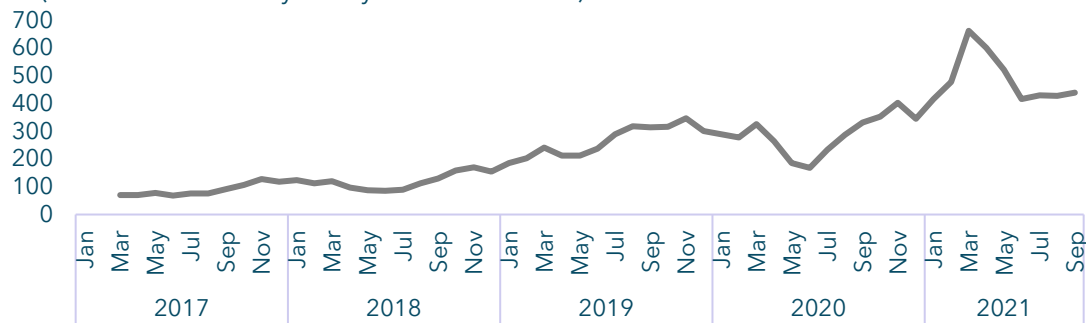# Key finding 3: Organisations more likely to have access to a referral system

Impact and evidence

The status of referral systems in each of the 4 pilot sites can be described as follows:

- In **Norfolk**, the NCAN referral system predates the CCS programme. Since the CCS programme launched, the referral system has increased the average number of monthly referrals from 292 to 505 (+73%).

Figure 2.4: NCAN monthly referrals (3-month rolling average)
(source: NCAN analysed by Cloud Chamber)

- In **Tower Hamlets**, THCAN existed as a network but did not have a referral process. This is now in place and is being used with 224 referrals made during the period March to September 2021.
- In **Oldham**, the programme has initiated the OCAN network and, building on learning in Norfolk and Tower Hamlets, has designed a referral system which at the time of writing is onboarding the first user-agencies.
- In **Swansea**, the programme has engaged with the RAN and, through building on learning from Norfolk and Tower Hamlets have made the case for a referral system. At time of writing, a small number of organisations have expressed interest in managing the system.

The referral system progress is grouped into two categories:

- Where a referral system is up and running most closely related to Norfolk and Tower Hamlets who are "up and running" with their system.

- Where a referral system is in development most closely relates to Oldham and Swansea who are at the early stages of their system.

Where a referral system is up and running progress includes…

Moving from a signposting-mindset towards a robust referral practice. Organisations who use the referral system – including those in the relatively early stages – report that they are more able to refer rather than signpost people as a result of the system. It is likely that some of the onward contacts made in year 2 of the programme (via NCAN and THCAN) would have taken place without the system – although many may have been a signpost rather than a referral.

- 224 referrals made in Tower Hamlets may otherwise have not taken place or would have been signposting only

Improving accountability. The referral systems encourage accountability between organisations. This is increasing trust that fellow advice providers are taking responsibility for follow-up work.

- "The introduction of a referral system holds people [professionals working in agencies] to account more – it sets the boundary of what you can do and offer. So it reinforces a commitment" (Oldham).

More referrals to specialist services, timely referrals leading to improved service user experience. Network members recognise that the referral system ensures that referrals are more likely to be dealt with quickly and appropriately.

- "The customer receives a far better journey through the organisation [as a result of referral system]" (Tower Hamlets).
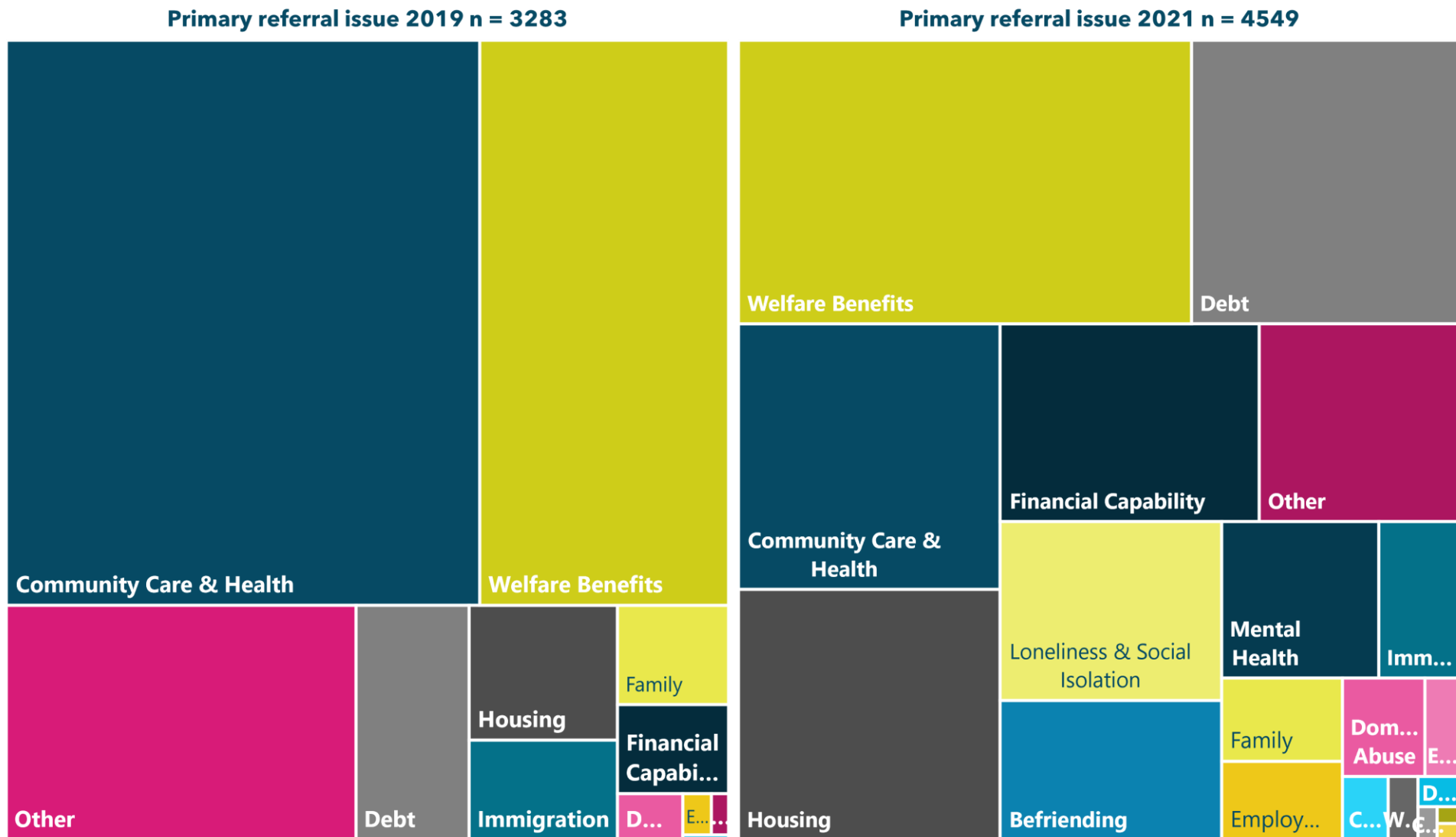
…(continued) organisations more likely to have a referral system

Referral data "pre" CCS is only available for Norfolk as that is the only area to have a referral system that pre-dates the CCS programme.

Whilst there has been an increase in referrals in Norfolk, it is likely that much of this would have happened in the absence of CCS. However, CCS has contributed by raising the profile of some VCS services across both NCAN and the County Council with one of those agencies now being represented on the NCAN steering group.

The nature of referrals in the NCAN referral data has changed from 2019 to 2021 (the period of the CCS programme). This is thought to be for a number of reasons including an increase in the number of households experiencing debt due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. Furthermore, the council gave NCAN additional funding to support with debt advice around the time of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Figure 2.5: Reasons for referrals in Norfolk, change over time (source: NCAN data, analysed by Cloud Chamber)

Primary referral issue 2019 n = 3283

Community Care & Health
Welfare Benefits
Other
Debt
Housing
Immigration
Family
Financial Capabi...
D...
E...

Primary referral issue 2021 n = 4549

Welfare Benefits
Debt
Community Care & Health
Financial Capability
Other
Housing
Loneliness & Social Isolation
Mental Health
Imm...
Befriending
Family
Dom... Abuse
E...
Employ...
C...
W...
D...

…(continued) organisations more likely to have a referral system

Where a referral system is in development progress includes…

Confidence amongst practitioners who are time-poor. Some agencies express a lack of confidence in their knowledge and awareness of other agencies. They are hopeful that the referral system will improve their confidence and make them more able to do their job well.

- "It has alleviated my worry about where to signpost people" (Oldham)

Recognition of the potential of the referral process to improve joint working. There is optimism that the momentum gained through the referral system will improve joint working amongst networks more generally, giving them a focal point.

- "Harnessing the potential of technology – is the thing I've learned most through the programme" (Swansea).

- "I haven't collaborated with people differently yet. I think once we start doing referrals, collaboration might come" (Oldham)

Evaluation Learning

While setting up a referral system is a huge step forward, stakeholders recognise that launching the system is not enough – there is an ongoing need to onboard agencies and train them in how to use the system and get the most out of it. Training needs will vary with some organisations needing to increase their awareness and knowledge of advice-types. It is possible that some referral system-users will not necessarily be confident in who to refer to. This is a need identified by the CCS team and consideration needs to be given to how this ongoing training will be resourced going forward.

Looking forwards, referral processes are one of the top 3 aspirations for the programme with 42% of respondents (local systems survey, June 2021) reporting that improved referrals to and from other organisations in my area (referral is when a staff member or volunteer makes initial contact between a person and the referral point) is what they are most hopeful for in the next 12 months of the programme.

Key finding 4: Working towards longer term sustainability of networks and referral systems

Impact and evidence

Partners in the 4 pilot sites report that the CCS programme has been an opportunity to "prove the value" of a network and referral system and is helping stakeholders (and potential future funders of the system) to "see the benefits".

The focus for the CCS team in year 2 has been to bolster the networks in the 4 sites, launch the referral system in 2 sites (Oldham and Tower Hamlets) and put plans in place to launch the referral system in Swansea. The steps towards sustaining the network and referral systems (beyond CCS) in these 3 sites long term have not been a focus in year 2 but partners are aware that once the systems are "up and running" there is work to do to identify sustainable funding for them.

Different stages and approaches to sustaining impact in 4 sites

- As **Norfolk** already had a referral system in place (funded by a patchwork of various grant providers), CCS have been working with agencies to embed the system supporting with long term funding. CCS have been supporting NCAN with a business case for local authority funding for the referral system.

- In **Oldham** the CCS programme has supported Ancora, to lead on OCAN coordination. There is an aspiration that Ancora will secure Lottery (and potentially other) funding in the future and be able to continue the network and referral system coordination work. It is not necessarily expected that Lottery or other grant funding will be able to solely fund the network and referral system in the long term. In Oldham there are relatively few accredited advice agencies which is thought to limit support to avoid recurrent crisis.

- In **Swansea**, the CCS work is building on the RAN which is supported by Welsh Government. This indicates that Welsh Government are invested in improved coordination in the advice sector and while it is early days for the RAN and referral system, it is likely that it will continue to align with Welsh Government (and other partners) agenda for improved coordination.

- In **Tower Hamlets** the model for sustaining the referral system beyond CCS is currently unclear although THCAN members are keen to identify a way to sustain it beyond CCS.

Evaluation Learning

The management of a referral system needs to be done by an organisation who is well respected in the area and has legitimacy.

While still early days, a number of "models" for sustainably funding advice networks and referral systems are being discussed. These include (and are not limited to): local authority funding; membership model statutory teams / organisations pay a fee to use the system and/or grant funding.

Partners involved in the CCS programme stress that the sustainability of coordination is about more than funding for the referral system – there is a need to continue developing the network and communications. Notably, there is a need for ongoing training costs to be built into any sustainability funding.

2.2 Reach and access outcomes

What we are learning about local systems

Key finding 5: Improved capability for organisations to make appropriate interventions

Impact and evidence

Improved capacity is expected further down the line due to referral system

Organisations surveyed in the 4 pilot sites (n=55) report the following improvements to their capability as a result of CCS:

- 33% felt more able to work in partnership with other organisations (40% for those who've been funded directly by CCS).

- 31% felt more able to deliver new services (60% for those who've been funded directly by CCS).

- 20% felt able to do more development and planning work (20% for those who have been funded directly by CCS).

This indicates that the funding received from the CCS programme has not significantly increased organisations' ability to do more development and planning work but has increased their ability to work in partnership and deliver new services.

Ability to make and take referrals has increased for those who are not on the referral system. Organisations who have been directly funded by the programme (n=9) report improved capacity to make (8) and receive referrals (7) regardless of whether they were on the referral system or not (source: monitoring data). This is reinforced by qualitative data from interviews and emerging data about school referrals to Citizens Advice in Tower Hamlets.

CCS funding has catalysed / added value to existing projects. Organisations who have been directly funded through CCS reflect on how the funding has

allowed them to make things happen. The Hope in Swansea app, for example, is unlikely to have been built without CCS input.

- "CCS additional funding made it possible to fix some of the unexpected technological issues that arose with the app e.g. the mapping function. Without further funding, we may have had to compromise on some of the functions that we believe are essential to the success of the app and making it as user-friendly as possible. Furthermore, the CCS programme has been present in numerous meetings and forums sharing information about funding streams and organisations that we can link up with to maximise our impact with Hope in Swansea" (Swansea).

The CCS team have also empowered VCS organisations to leverage funds to complement their core work.

- "[a funding opportunity] was shared by [CCS team] to us has enabled us to get funds from Great Places who have given us £13,000 to buy a van which will enabled us to reach out to more people with our furniture offer. CCS have linked us to key statutory organisations and has enabled us to be invited to stakeholders meetings more than before" (Oldham).

Evaluation Learning

Due to the input from CCS (both funding and facilitation) organisations are reporting a shift in their approach.

- "It's [added value of CCS] the capability to understand more and intervene more appropriately, but not really capacity" (Oldham).

While the work to increase access to services has been valued, there is limited evidence to suggest that it has supported VCS organisations to develop long term and sustainable solutions.

Key finding 6: Increased ability for organisations to reach more people

Impact and evidence

The programme has helped to **support in the region of 2000- 4000 households in total**. It is difficult to be precise as some of the support would have taken place independently of the CCS programme as described below.

 In year 2 the following referrals have been made:

- across all 4 sites 1700+ households reported as being supported as a direct result of CCS funding in year 2 by funded projects not on the referral system (this is likely to be underreported as not all organisations who received CCS funding have returned monitoring information).
    - Within this we estimate that 300+ referrals have been made as a result of CCS funding amongst organisations who have received CCS funding.
    - Within this 82% are families with children.
    - Within this 43% are Black, Asian and Minority ethnic.
    - Within this 20% had no recourse to public funds (NRPF).

- via THCAN referral system - 224 people (some of which may have been referred or signposted anyway, therefore not all attributable to CCS).

- via NCAN referral system - 3,040 people (some of which may have been referred anyway, therefore not all attributable to CCS).

- in Tower Hamlets 31 families were referred from schools to East End CAB (by email or telephone)

The ways in which CCS have funded organisations to increase access of their services (outside of the referral system discussed in section 2.1) include:

- Funding for administration posts to process referrals, make onwards referrals.

- Funding for a volunteer coordinator.

- Funding for digital tech and access to prevent digital exclusion.

- Funding for community interpreting project through the creation of a Hub.

- Funding for food and care packages via a school.

The funding for such projects enabled organisations to enhance their capacity and reach more people.

Evaluation Learning

CCS has supported organisations to reach more people in need through a variety of ways including additional admin support, tech solutions, community interpretation and funding for food. There have also been referrals made outside of a formal referral system as a result of improved networking facilitated by CCS.

Key finding 7: Improving access to support for children, young people and families

Impact and evidence

Over 80% (of 1700 in total) of people supported through CCS-funded activity are households with children (from monitoring data). Those who supported a particularly high number of households with children include:

- Admin for VCS organisations supporting women (such as REEL and SAWN in Oldham who supported around 200 and 275 women with families respectively).

- Work with schools is directly supported by the programme in Tower Hamlets. A partnership between schools in the borough and the East End Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) has increased referrals from schools.

  - The project has supported 31 families in total during year 2
  - East End CAB report that over £130k in income has been gained for families through the project

Learning about working with schools

Much of the work impacting children, young people and families has been delivered in partnership with schools. Schools and advice agencies who are working with schools have shared the following learning:

- Having advisors based in school for face to face support is critical for building relationships and improving understanding between agencies

- Every school has a different approach to GDPR and data sharing – what works for one school might not work for another.

- A single point of contact (such as a parent engagement officer or social worker) based at a school helps. For some professionals based in schools there is limited knowledge of the advice sector generally. There is optimism that the referral system will boost confidence of school-based professionals although they may need training on the system.

- It takes a long time to establish a working relationship as schools have limited capacity.

Headteacher perspective of the CCS programme:

"We got Involved with CCS at the time of Covid when we ran some community services. We had CCS funding to help us with the weekly food pantry. After Covid, CCS helped us to begin to come out of crisis mode and think about more strategic stuff. We are in the process of getting onboarded with the referral system. With the referral system we have a bit of nervousness around quality control - we want our families to be satisfied that where we refer them for advice and support will be good quality.

CCS and others working the advice sector need to understand that schools are complex - we are balancing multiple agendas. Like all organisations in the sector, we are under resourced. We [schools] recognise that if we can support the community we will have an impact on the children. This has an impact on educational outcomes. Not all schools understand this. Some schools don't see the benefit in working with communities. But we do! For us, we work on a theory that we need to help families meet their basic needs. Some families are suffering, they're hungry. We need to invest in their readiness to learn and this includes the whole family.

We now have good links with advice agencies in Tower Hamlets and a lot of that is down to CCS. The programme has helped us to think about the long term need of families and a road map. We recognise that 10% of our families require an enhanced level of support with food and living circumstances. CCS has helped us to understand this.

I have spoken to other Head Teachers about CCS- many are keen to have a holistic approach to working with families. This project is needed elsewhere, outside of Tower Hamlets. If we live and work in a deprived area they need to hear about it. Even in affluent areas this is needed."

2.3 Partnership outcomes

What we are learning about local systems

Key finding 8: Pockets of visibility of the programme within local authorities

Impact and evidence

Engaging with "teams" at local authority level

It has become apparent that teams / directorates within local authorities do not always have strong levels of communication, data sharing and are not necessarily talking with one another about strategic plans for coordination. As a result, the programme has needed to engage with individual teams within a local authority rather than with the local authority "as a whole" or at a senior leadership level.
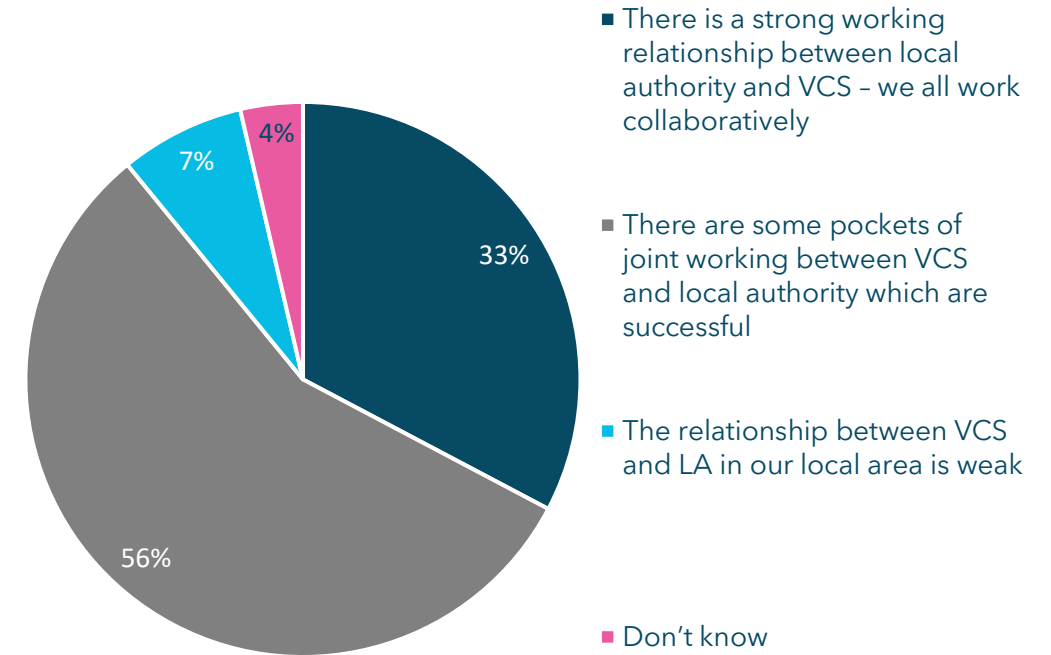
There are differing ways in which the local authorities (or teams within them) have engaged with the programme. For example:

- Being a part of network and associated referral system (most notably, Norfolk and the Resident Support Services Team in Tower Hamlets.).

- Watching (and waiting) with interest to see how the referral system works in practice before deciding how / whether to engage (most notably, Oldham and some teams in Tower Hamlets).

- Using CCS learning to inform broader strategy work (e.g. Tower Hamlets using evidence from year 1 to inform their poverty review).

- Fortnightly catch up calls with CCS team to explore areas of joint interest (most notably, Swansea).

By way of illustration, the local authority teams engaged with CCS from 2 pilot sites can be found below.
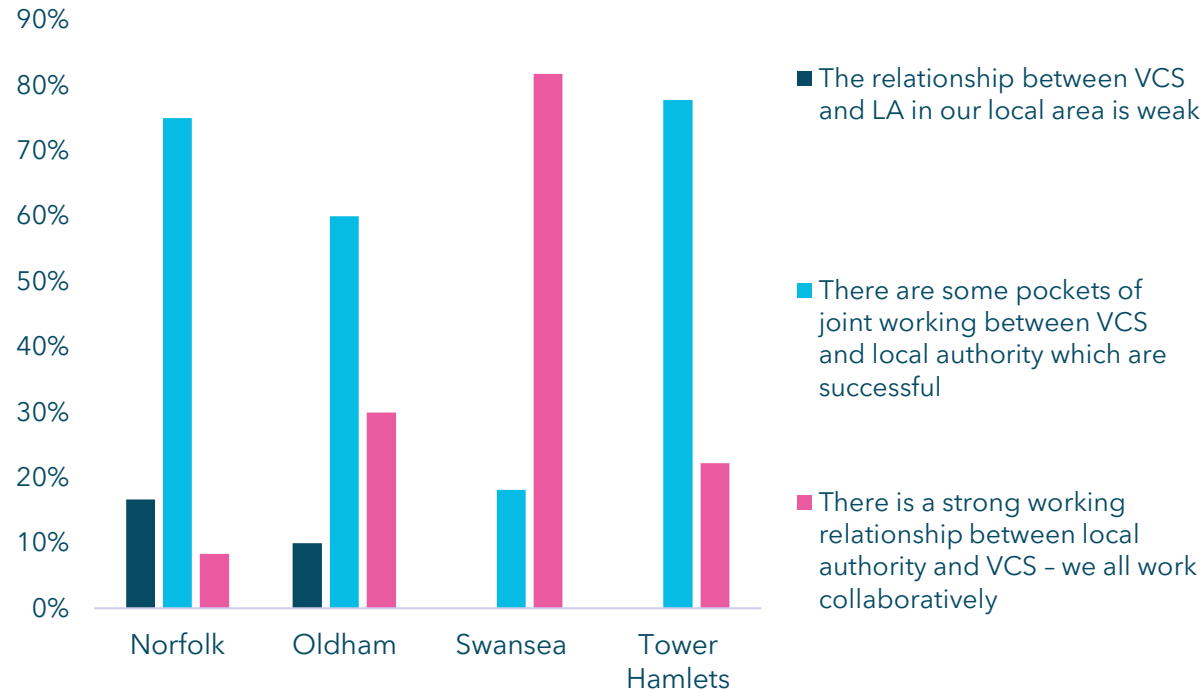
Figure 2.8: Relationship between the LA and VCS from both LA and VCS in pilot sites (n=55) (source: Cloud Chamber survey)

- There is a strong working relationship between local authority and VCS – we all work collaboratively

- There are some pockets of joint working between VCS and local authority which are successful

- The relationship between VCS and LA in our local area is weak

- Don't know

Pilot site	Deep engagement with CCS (e.g. regularly attend network meetings)	Moderate engagement with CCS (e.g. occasionally attend meetings)	Light engagement (e.g. aware of the CCS programme)
Oldham	Client Benefits and Welfare Rights; Corporate Policy Thriving Communities Hub;	Public Health; Covid Helpline; Education and Early Years;, Warm Homes,	Youth Leisure and Communities; Housing
Swansea	Tackling Poverty; Migration, Asylum Seeker and Refugee Support;	Benefits Advice; Ageing Well; Welfare Rights, Tenancy Support Unit, Service	Performance Hub; Early Help Hub; Local Area Coordinators and Youth Justice

…(continued) pockets of visibility of the programme within local authorities

Figure 2.9: Three pilot sites report pockets of joint working and Swansea reports strong joint working between VCS and local authority n=55 (source: Cloud Chamber survey)

Legend:
- The relationship between VCS and LA in our local area is weak
- There are some pockets of joint working between VCS and local authority which are successful
- There is a strong working relationship between local authority and VCS – we all work collaboratively

CCS is informing broader strategy work for some local authority teams

In Tower Hamlets the CCS Programme (year 1 learning in particular) added value to the council's Poverty Review (2021). In particular the referral system (funded by CCS) is regarded as pivotal to supporting the council's aspiration of a "no wrong door" approach (p. 34 and p. 45). CCS' work with the Mulberry School in year 1 is regarded as good practice and contributing to a more joined-up approach to initiatives on food poverty (p. 39). The project increased awareness of the need to build on strong informal networks in Tower Hamlets to develop more systematic referral arrangements for the

Resident Support Scheme (Tower Hamlets, LWA) with a range of advertising routes to reach residents, and to build on the role and commitment of schools (p.44-45).

- "We used the evaluation of [year 1] of the CCS programme to inform the Poverty Review. It was very helpful to give us additional evidence – the main review finding was that more needs to be done to support coordination" (stakeholder, Tower Hamlets).

Also in Tower Hamlets, Elected Members have been given a demonstration of the referral system and local authority colleagues report that this "buy in" is critical to contributing a sustainable system and demonstrating VCS contribution.

In Oldham, the CCS programme is operating in a context of a Poverty Strategy and the Poverty Truth Commission, both of which galvanise the VCS to ensure that peoples lived experience are central to designing solutions. The CCS programme has been described as adding value to this process and encouraging the local authority to "walk the walk" and encourage cooperation between agencies.

Evaluation Learning

In one of the pilot sites a local authority professional stated that "the programme isn't particularly well known" and that she was surprised that her colleagues in the commissioning team were not aware of it. She recognised that until the referral system gets "off the ground" it is difficult to engage local authority stakeholders. There is a recognition across more than 1 of the pilot sites that "people need the referral system explained to them. They need to see how it can improve performance" (local authority stakeholder).

Key finding 9: Referral system is supporting joint working (for VCS and statutory agencies)
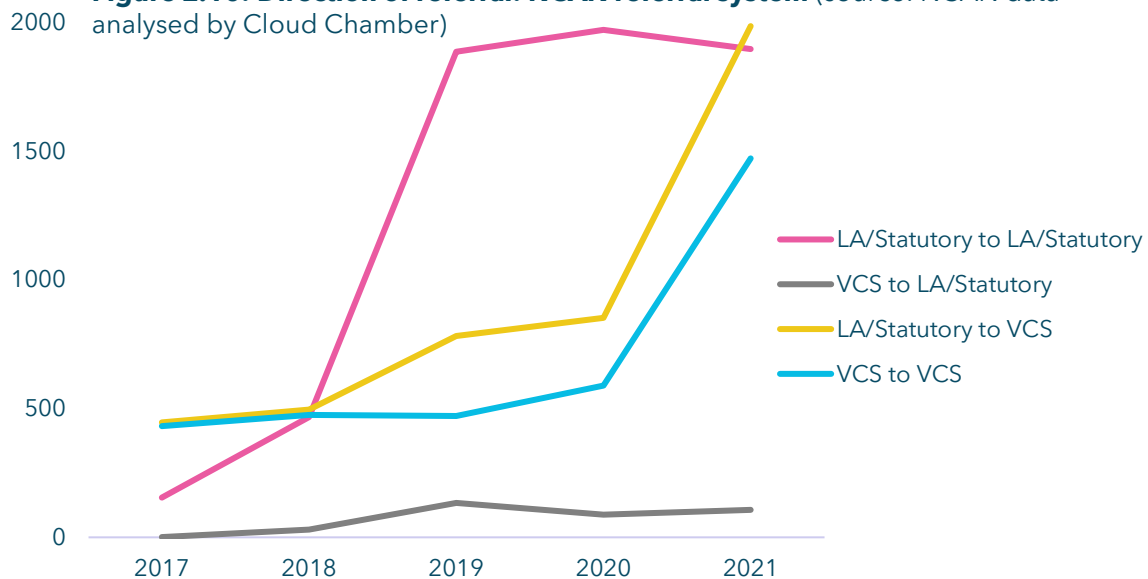
Impact and evidence

The Norfolk experience

Norfolk is the only pilot site with referral data from pre-CCS and it is therefore possible to look at how different agencies are using the system. In Norfolk we are learning the following:
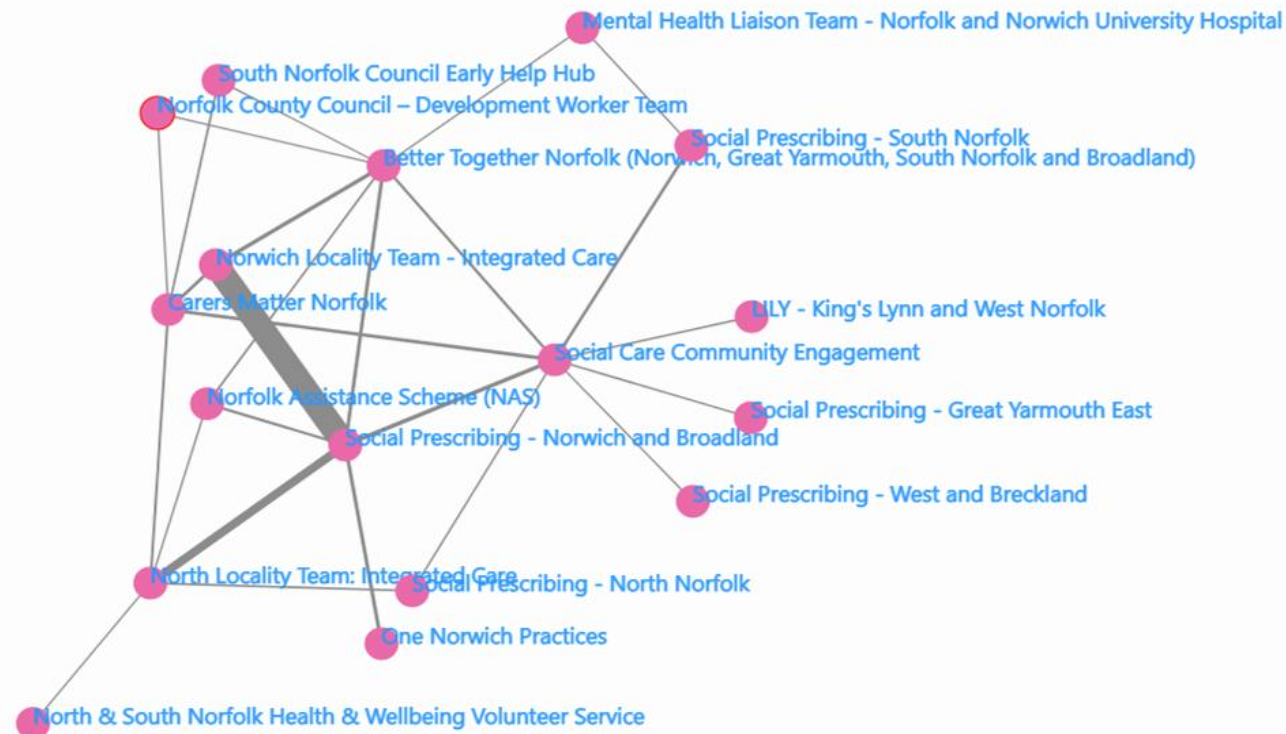
- 20% growth in referrals to the VCS between 2019 and 2021.

- More LA/Statutory (+48%) and VCS organisations (+37%) referring since 2019.

- 80% growth in connections overall, & the average number per organisation increasing from 5.7 to 7.2

Statutory services are heavy users and referring to one another. In Norfolk, statutory services (including agencies commissioned to delivery statutory services) are using the referral system to refer to one another. This is a surprising use of the system and further indicates the challenges of joint working *within* a local authority (as described in key finding 8). The chart below illustrates examples of statutory-statutory referrals.

Figure 2.10: Direction of referral: NCAN referral system (source: NCAN data analysed by Cloud Chamber)

Figure 2.11: Referrals between statutory agencies in Norfolk in 2021 (source: NCAN data analysed by Cloud Chamber)

…(continued) joint working

Experience of joint working in all pilot sites

Referral mechanism as an exemplar of VCS-led coordination. VCS organisations involved in the referral mechanism report that it will "demonstrate to the local authority what is achievable" and "show that the VCS can work together, can be professional" (Oldham).

VCS working towards equal partnership. VCS organisations report a legacy of being seen as the "quick and easy" option by the LA and a tension that arises from local authorities "piling on" referrals to an underfunded VCS. In year 1 there was some evidence that engaging with the CCS programme had helped to boost the credibility of VCS organisations. Evidence from year 2 suggests that this continues to be the case with a recognition amongst the VCS of a need to articulate their value.

- "We need to up our game and generate more income […] Now [since CCS] we say [to statutory services who refer to us] "have you got a budget for this". We say "can you go away and check the budget". Our hard work hasn't translated into funding from the local authority […] but we are getting there" (Oldham)

There is hope that the referral system could go some way to help alleviate this tension by bringing accountability and an evidence-base to demonstrate the workload (and associated costs) of VCS delivery.

- "The referral system will help the VCS put boundaries in place" (Oldham).

CCS programme has had a role to play in increasing visibility of need. In year 1 in Oldham, the CCS programme raised awareness in the Oldham Local Welfare Provision (LWP) team (the borough's LWA scheme) of a need

identified by VCS partners. As a result, the LWP were able to offer essential items (flooring, carpets, curtains and blinds) in start packs. It is reported that VCS organisations didn't feel able / confident to raise this need with the council but the CCS team were able to so on their behalf. These resources continue to be distributed in year 2.

Evaluation Learning

Norfolk can be seen as a "test case" – with a more evolved referral system and an increase in referrals. It is possible that both Oldham and Tower Hamlets will achieve more inter-sector referrals in year 3 and beyond. It is interesting to note that in Norfolk, statutory services are using the system to refer to one another.

Key finding 10: Number of LWA/DAF awards is increasing each year
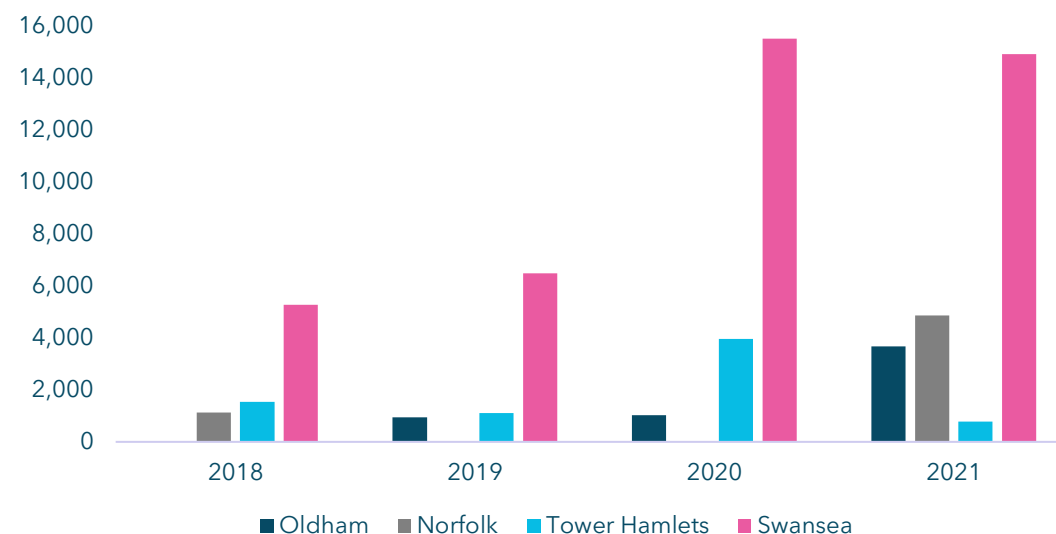
Impact and evidence

About Local Welfare Assistance. Local welfare assistance (LWA) is a discretionary support scheme to provide households with cash or grant support to prevent financial crisis. In England the type of help available and who qualifies varies from council to council.

Pilot site	Name of LWA scheme	Eligibility criteria
Norfolk	Norfolk Assistance Scheme (NAS)	Can be found here
Oldham	Local Welfare Provision (LWP)	Can be found here
Tower Hamlets	Residents Support Scheme (RSS)	Can be found here

In Wales, the Discretionary Assistance Fund (DAF) provides two types of grant – the Emergency Assistance Payment (EAP) and the Individual Assistance Payment (IAP). The DAF is administered centrally by the Welsh Government, in contrast to the decentralised local welfare assistance model in England. Eligibility criteria can be found here.

An increase in awards made. 3 of 4 of areas have seen an general trend of increasing LWA awards over time. Norfolk saw a 3-fold increase between 2018 and 2021, and Swansea's awards increased by 182% over the same period. Oldham saw a trebling of awards between 2019 and 2021. Tower Hamlets saw an increase to 2020 (+155%), followed by a decrease in 2021.

Figure 2.12: LWA awards increase over time (source: data provided by respective local authorities annualised by Cloud Chamber, note data for Oldham are Items awarded)

…(continued) LWA

**Figure 2.13: NAS Referrals within NCAN increasing by year –
more referrals from the NAS than to the NAS** (source: NCAN data)

■ Referrals from NAS

■ Referrals to NAS

Limited awareness of how the programme increases LWA applications amongst VCS organisations

VCS organisations in the 4 pilot sites consulted for the evaluation had little to no understanding of how LWA / DAF schemes complement (or could complement) with their own work.

- Only 3 of the 9 funded organisations (who returned monitoring data) report that the funding has improved their capacity to inform clients of LWAs grants.

- This is further demonstrated in Norfolk referral data. In 2021, there is a significantly higher number of referrals out from the NAS to the VCS (178) than there is from the VCS to the NAS (22). This suggests that there is potential under utilisation or low awanress of the NAS amongst VCS partners.

Increasing linkages between LWAS and VCS in Norfolk

Before the inception of the CCS programme, the Norfolk Assistance Scheme (NAS) adopted a holistic delivery model. In the new model, NAS Advisors provide a wrap-around service to support individuals through the application process signposting and referring to other organisations to provide wider support. This shift to a holistic model has been supported by NCAN and the CCS programme. Stakeholders told us that the programme helped raise awareness of the NAS among the VCS, and build trust. This is supported by the infrastructure provided by NCAN. Increasingly, there are more referrals between the VCS and NAS. Data shows a 4-fold increase in referrals from NAS to VCS between 2019 and 2021. While the volume of referrals in the opposite direction is not of the same magnitude, it has increased by 83%. See chart above.

Evaluation Learning

The CCS programme helped to raise awareness between the VCS and LWAS in Norfolk – highlighting the role of an independent broker and facilitator – where there might have historically been discord, particularly with respect to funding and accountability.

While there has been an increase in LWA awards in the other 3 pilot sites, it is probable that the CCS programme has had little direct impact on this (increases in awards made could be to do with other factors such as increased demand due to Covid -19).

3. National systems

What we are learning

Assessing CCS role in driving National Systems Change

Understanding impact

Logic model: the key elements of the Logic Model from a National Systems perspective are shown below and underpin the basis of an approach which uses evidence, insight and relationships to improve awareness in a way which ultimately leads to more investment in support in coordinated approaches in local contexts as they are experienced by service users.

Figure 3.1: Logic model of intended impact beyond pilot sites (source: Cloud Chamber)

Year 2 outcomes	Medium term impact	Long term impact
Improved awareness of local system challenges beyond the 4 pilot sites	Improved awareness of local system challenges with national decision makers / influencers	Decision makers / influencers are more likely to invest and support coordinated approaches

There are two potential and sometimes interrelated areas where the CCS programme contributes to national systems change and these are detailed below.

System leadership

This refers to the level of collaboration, joint-working and sharing of information. In a CCS context, this includes sharing best-practice and sharing with receptive (e.g. sub regional) partners. In particular the CCS programme in Year 2 has focussed on coordination and access where there is strong interest and willingness for change at local and regional levels.

System structures

This refers to the policies, laws and regulations which determine or help support people facing hardship or crisis. In the current context this also includes influencing for financial resources to be made available to improve the system. This type of change is predominantly a national influencing activity with a focus on national governments.

Reflection from Learning Coordinator:

Emerging model of change

The CCS programme is looking to change the system at three tiers:

- Tier 1 – to improve co-ordination across the VCS and LA in local areas

- Tier 2 – to demonstrate the value of Local Welfare Assistance/ DAF, and to work with others (eg LGA) to share good practice

- Tier 3 - to engage the UK government, especially DWP, in making the case for a properly-funded welfare system.

Improving outcomes for those in crisis requires action at all three tiers.

TIER 3

TIER 2

TIER 1

Key finding 11: Relationship building and sharing good practice with other localities

Approach

The CCS programme involves a number of activities which are targeted at sharing awareness of challenges and successes from the pilot sites with a wider group of local authorities, VCS and other organisations. Framing challenges in a common language, identifying the conditions for change and sharing best-practice has the potential to contribute to changes within services and organisations more broadly.

Example: Learning partners network

CCS has established a network of local authority learning partners who are interested in understanding more about the CCS programme and how the lessons can be applied within their local authorities. Engagement is via a mix of quarterly meetings and more informal/ad-hoc conversations about specific issues, typically with an operational focus on challenges and potential responses. This engagement has included presentations from the pilot sites with a focus on their referral networks.

While all learning partners that we spoke to found the sessions to be useful in framing challenges, none had yet implemented changes within services or organisations other than placing an increased emphasis on coordination and further developing their own strategies for coordination and referral networks within their areas.

Example: influencing the Robust Safety Net initiative

CCS has been involved in the Robust Safety Net initiative by the Greater London Authorities which kicked-off in Summer 2021 and aims to improve coordination and funding in the advice sector. This has provided the opportunity to share experience and insights from the CCS programme around issues such as coordination, access and influencing. While it is early days and there are some internal questions regarding its long-term direction, this initiative could inform a model of regional influencing in other parts of the UK (namely London) where there is a recognition of system challenges and a willingness to change.

- "The debate is still at a high-level, for example levelling up. It's not coherent at a national level, but local and city Mayors generally are clearer" Programme Board Member

…(continued) Relationship building and sharing good practice with other localities

Learning and implications

- The programme has identified opportunities to share learning with pilot site sub-regions – London, Greater Manchester and via the Welsh Government to other areas in Wales. While it is early days, there are opportunities for the programme to have impact (beyond the 4 pilot sites) by sharing learning at subregional levels where there is a relatively "open door" and relationships are already in place between project delivery partners and sub-regional stakeholders.

- Awareness of local challenges is already high beyond the 4 pilot sites and there is a strong degree of willingness to change systems and approaches among many of those who are engaging with the programme.

- Local authority contacts including learning partners observed that they felt they were the only local expert and so welcomed discussions with people from similar roles in other areas to swap experiences and approaches via the programme. Understanding operational challenges from a mix of locations has been very valuable and allows them to consider different approaches with an open-mind. The deep operational insights from the programme allow conversations to explore the "what" and the "how" of new ways of working in different contexts.

- While some local authorities and learning partners perceived CCS as playing a valuable and time intensive facilitation role, others felt there was an opportunity for TCS to act as convenor of key stakeholders within local authorities who could then form their own peer-to-peer relationships. This latter approach may be more sustainable in the longer-term in terms of both TCS involvement and a more informal and flexible approach.

- The complexity of need and system pathways makes it challenging to develop coherent and detailed policy at a national level. There may be a case for thinking tactically about which types of locality might be most appropriate to influence and to use this to be proactive about engaging new relationships and partners that fit within a broader strategic vision.

Key finding 12: Evidence from the CCS programme is supporting TCS efforts to influence system structures at a national level

Approach

The CCS generates significant amounts of evidence about challenges for individuals and organisations. This also provides the four pilot areas with opportunities to contribute directly to TCS influencing activities via calls for evidence and case studies. Feedback from our interviews consistently highlighted that the CCS programme is valued because it understands the different experiences at local level.

- "We were asked by the clerks to give a case study because they knew we were on the ground and had the experience of service users" (TCS Team Member).

Example: influencing central government

There are a number of examples of central government influencing regarding system structures using evidence from the CCS programme. These include:

- Supporting a request for an additional £250 million of funding for Local Welfare Assistance and a 10% uplift on funds for coordination as part of the Autumn 2021 Comprehensive Spending Review. Ultimately this was unsuccessful.

- Contributing to the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Vulnerable Groups reviewing the impact of the November 2020 Covid Winter Payments using a CCS example (Norfolk). The CCS programme provided a relevant and impactful case study in a short space of time in response to the call for evidence.

- Contributing evidence for the DWP Work and Pensions Child Poverty Select Committee regarding helping families in crisis and an enquiry into people with no recourse to public funds (NPRF). Feedback from these groups suggests the detailed real world examples and case studies are especially valued as they highlight the breadth of issues and challenges faced.

- Involvement in the Westminster and Welsh Government Income Maximisation Groups.

- Meetings with a Number 10 Advisor set up by a programme member from Lloyds Bank Foundation.

TCS feedback suggests that the need for a LWA scheme has been recognised within DWP but not with Treasury and there remains no commitment to providing local authorities with funding to coordinate LWA efficiently.

In addition to influencing central government directly, indirect approaches are used to amplify the lessons from the programme through other initiatives, most notably through the Local Government Association (LGA) and close links with CPAG's Ending the Need for Food Banks programme which contributes to APPG on this issue.

Example: Regional Advice Networks in Wales

In 2019 the Welsh Government launched Regional Advice Networks with the objectives of mapping needs and services, facilitating referrals, identifying root causes of hardship and sharing best practice between providers. The network is managed by Citizen's Advice in each region – in Swansea the region also includes Neath and Port Talbot.

A number of challenges have been identified with the new system which nevertheless is generally considered to have been successful in establishing an outcomes focus. The CCS programme provides a way of comparing other tools and the Swansea App with RANs and demonstrate constructively how more flexible, less centrally controlled models can work at a very practical level and encourage a wider range of organisations to provide support to disadvantaged and marginalised communities.

CCS has engaged with contacts in Welsh Government via conversations with specific individuals and using the Learning & Evaluation meetings to share experiences from the perspectives of what can work locally and also influence how Welsh Gov could improve pathways using funding formula when the RANs are reviewed.

Learning about CCS role in influencing system structures (beyond pilot sites)

Learning about CCS role in influencing systems

- Understanding the extent to which changes in thinking and policy can be attributed to CCS is not practical due to the broad scope of areas on which evidence has been submitted. Nevertheless, interviews and anecdotal feedback support the view that the programme has a strong reputation for providing detailed insights into both establishing a case of need and potential responses.

- Where TCS and/or CCS are asked to provide evidence to central government departments and/or APPGs, there is not always a clear opportunity to raise the value of coordination. Sharing the challenges (through case studies etc) faced by people in financial hardship however, is an important step.

- There is an internal tension between having clearer policy asks in terms of recommending particular system structures and being well known for having a broad evidence base that cuts across different themes, such as school uniforms or food, and user types, such as NRPF groups and homelessness.

- The relationship with the Programme Board is seen as being increasingly constructive in terms of thinking about 'bigger picture' issues which has in turn opened up new relationships as exemplified by recent meetings with a Number 10 Advisor that were facilitated by a Programme Board member. One interviewee commented that this showed that the Programme Board had the potential to act as ambassadors for CCS.

- Much of the focus of the programme remains focussing on people who are presenting in crisis rather than 'catching' people before crisis occurs. Although this has been largely driven by the implications of Covid-19, some internal and external interviewees highlighted that a challenge for the programme is to build an evidence base and case of need for earlier intervention and how more coordinated system structures can enable this.

- One consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic has been a willingness of national decision makers to listen afresh to understand need and system challenges at a local level. This has created a space for the CCS programme to leverage its growing evidence base and become recognised as an expert in system pathways. As systems return to a more stable footing in the medium-term, there is a need to consider strategically how to maintain this.

Implications for CCS

- Focussing on people and their outcomes rather than the charity and advice sectors has been important in building common ground and understanding between parties. However, this may need to be balanced against a desire amongst some Programme Board members to recommend certain models and ways of working as part of broader policy asks. Working with VCS organisations and local authorities to develop agreed policy positions may provide a means to further relationships in the longer term.
    - Linked with the above, we noted that there are different expectations as to whether the objective of CCS is to recommend a particular model of co-ordination or a suite of models, the appropriateness of which will depend on specific local contextual factors.

While it is currently well managed, clarifying what role the insights from the CCS programme will play in the future as part of TCSs wider influencing strategy is an important consideration for the organisation. CCS role as an influencer of national systems structures can switch between evidence provider and team-player, critical-friend and advocate for change and this can lead to a degree of uncertainty as to what is the right role for TCS in different situations.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

Concluding comments

1. **Supporting the key features of coordination has been the driver --** Providing tangible support to strengthen the advice *networks* and build / embed a *digital referral system* has given the CCS team and partners in 4 pilot sites a common goal. In particular, designing the referral system and onboarding / training advice providers to use the referral systems (in Oldham and Tower Hamlets) has been a key focus for the CCS team in year 2.

2. **Advice sector has been the focus -** In year 2 the CCS programme focused primarily on the advice sector in the 4 pilot sites. This is where there has been most traction (and action!) with the concept of coordination (when compared with other sectors such as food provision). The programme has attempted to engage other agency-types (e.g. food providers) with limited success. However, working with agencies who are receptive has been a sensible use of programme resources and there may be opportunities for other types of support agencies to "plug into" the networks further down the line.

3. **Optimism that the referral system will improve the service-user journey -** Of the 4 pilot sites, Norfolk is "furthest down the line" with their referral system which has been operational for 4 years. NCAN data shows how referrals increase year-on-year and indicate what is possible in the 3 other pilot sites who are in the earlier stage of implementing their referral systems.

6. **VCS-led approach with patchy local authority engagement -** In all 4 areas coordination activities have been led by VCS-led networks. Directorates and teams within the 4 local authorities often operate in silos and there are mixed levels of engagement with the programme (and associated advice networks) across teams. In those areas where the referral system is newer, some teams within local authorities seem to be operating a "watch and wait" policy to see how the system works before deciding whether to on-board themselves. Therefore year 2 (and likely year 3) can be seen as a piloting of the referral system with some long term aspiration to increase engagement from local authorities down the line. CCS and the pilot site networks have needed to engage local authorities team-by-team resulting in a somewhat patchy local

authority engagement. The extent to which the programme has been able to change commissioning processes and the architecture of support for people facing financial hardship is somewhat limited – especially from a local authority welfare perspective where the programme doesn't have mandate.

7. **The programme has evolved from the objectives set out in the initial proposal –** The initial programme objectives related to 5 themes (access, application, underlying need, aftercare and learning). Learning from year 1 found that the 5 themes didn't resonate and needed to be adapted to reflect this. Access, awareness and coordination are the 3 themes promoted by CCS in year 2. Pilot site stakeholders report most interest in the "coordination" theme as this is where there is most work to be done (and gains to be made).

8. **A credible programme with reach beyond the 4 pilot sites –** the programme is gaining traction beyond the pilot sites in two ways. Firstly within other local (i.e. learning partners) or subregional authorities (i.e. Greater Manchester and Greater London). This is driving the case for improved coordination via referral systems based on learning. We refer to this as *systems leadership.* And secondly as a provider of evidence to national policy makers, responding to calls for evidence about the experience of people and organisations "on the ground." On the whole the evidence provided is not necessarily about making the case for improved coordination (with the exception of the CSR which called for a 10% uplift of LWA budget specifically for coordination) but is used in support of a broader range of policy asks. We refer to this as *informing systems structures.*

Change Narrative – an evolved Logic Model to reflect year 2

The Logic Model below is an evolution of the one set out at the beginning of year 2 (as found in our introduction). The outcomes below are based on the evaluation evidence and articulate what has been achieved in year 2 and aspirations for the remainder of the programme.

Figure 4.1: Change narrative informed by year 2 data (source: Cloud Chamber)

LEGACY from Year One in four pilot sites

Increased legitimacy for CCS to influence and support change

Increased levels of communication between organisations

Joint understanding of the importance of a referral system

Year Two OUTCOMES in four pilot sites

Reach and access
Improved capability for organisations to make appropriate interventions

Increased referrals to specialist services (robust and timely)

Improved ability for services and support to reach CYP and families (Tower Hamlets)

Coordination
Added capacity to existing advice networks (THCAN and NCAN) and initiating new networks (OCAN)

Organisations more likely to have a digital system

Partnership
Improved visibility of the CCS programme within some local authority teams

Year Two OUTCOMES beyond four pilot sites

Improved awareness of how to improve coordination between delivery organisations (beyond the 4 pilot sites)

Year Three OUTCOMES in four pilot sites

Greater number of people are referred and supported longer term (rather than signposted)

Increase in cross-referrals between VCS and LA (including to and from LWA / DAF) to improve the service experience for people accessing support

Improved sustainability (resources and capacity) for the network and referral system developed in 4 local areas

Year Three OUTCOMES beyond four pilot sites

Improved awareness of why coordination matters amongst national decision makers / influencers

Improved coordination practice

Year Three IMPACT

People in financial hardship in 4 pilot areas are more likely to get effective and joined up support

People in financial hardship (in England and Wales) are more likely to get effective and joined up support

Decision makers / influencers are more likely to invest and support coordinated approaches

Revisiting assumptions underpinning our year 2 Logic Model

Year 2 assumption	Was this a fair assumption?
There is a shared understanding of the required solution(s) in each pilot site (and a shared understanding of the need / problem)	Yes but…it has been predominantly advice agencies in the VCS who have engaged with limited levels of engagement from statutory services
A coordination role / function is necessary to improve coordination. This might be a "post" or funded person [builds on learning from Year 1 that coordination takes time and resource]	Partially…the digital system has taken precedence in year 2. There are some ideas for how this could be sustained longer term with some VCS organisations (in Oldham and Tower Hamlets, for example) well placed to take on longer term facilitation and development.
An improved service user experience requires access (to services), awareness (of services) and coordination (between services). Supporting these aspects will lead to improved systems and improved outcomes for people.	Yes but…stakeholders in the local pilot sites report that coordination is where they need support through the CCS programme. While there is recognition that access and awareness are vital, there appears little interest in pilot sites to explore the access and awareness cogs through the CCS programme
If the VCS and Local Authority work better together, there will be an improved experience for service users.	Yes but…so far local authority do not engage "as a whole." Rather, it has been a team-by-team engagement with the CCS programme. Where teams have engaged (and been onboarded onto a referral system, for example) it is likely that service users will have better, more timely support
If the VCS and Local Authority work better together, there will be an increase in LWAS/DAF applications	Partially…Norfolk and Tower Hamlets have LWA on the system so far and the exact contribution of CCS is difficult to assess

What does this mean for year 3?
CCS team should consider the extent to which the advice sector is the focus for year 3 and how best to engage local authorities – for example, is a team-by-team approach adequate? Or are there opportunities to engage at a more senior level?

Summary of KPI data

KPI	Indicator	Target (for end of Programme, year 3)	Quasi-baseline	End of Year 1 (source: year 1 evaluation)	Year 2
1	Numbers receiving support through LWA scheme increases	LWA recipients increase by 2,000 above baseline in Year 3 across the four pilot areas.	Number of awards for three pilot areas in 2018/19 = 8,510	Approx. 21,411 support awards in 3 pilot sites (excluding Norfolk)	Approx. 20,554 awards in 3 pilot sites (excludes Oldham who have not provided their data)
2	Numbers receiving support through other crisis support schemes increase	Crisis support received through other sources increases by 1,600 above baseline in Year 3.	Number of awards made in 2018/9 = 2,821	384 – underreported in data provided from grant providers	94 - underreported in data provided from grant providers
3	Numbers receiving referrals to other support services at point of crisis increases	360 successful referrals across the four pilots made through crisis support network in Year 3	Unknown	31 – underreported in monitoring data	300+ based on monitoring data provided
4	Numbers requiring repeat crisis support decreases	Of those successfully referred for ongoing support, follow up evaluation finds increases in financial stability and resilience.	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
5	Widespread engagement of organisations is secured for a local crisis support network	At least 20 organisations engaged in each area in delivery of coordinated crisis support provision (80 across four areas).	Zero (0) organisations involved prior to CCS Programme launch	121 organisations engaged in Year 1, and over 20 in every area of the Programme (four areas)	In Oldham alone 50 members are part of the OCAN network. In Tower Hamlets 14 are on the THCAN referral system. In Norfolk 126 have ever been on the NCAN referral system (between 2017 and 2021) although cannot be attributed to the CCS programme as it existed before the programme launched

Five Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) were set for the Programme at programme-proposal stage. These are shown in the table opposite, and focus around receiving, and referral to crisis support, as well as engagement of organisations.

As explained in our evaluation of year 1, the KPIs are not necessarily the most useful metric to assess the contribution of the CCS programme but are included here for completeness. This is partly due to:

- Limited availability of reliable data

- Burden on VCS organisations to collect and share the data

- Not reflecting the evolved outcomes of the programme which focus on establishing a robust and sustainably funded referral system

- Not attributable to the CCS programme (in the case of KPI 1, 2, 3 in particular)

- Different contexts between baseline and programme delivery especially due to Covid-19 which has contributed to an increase in applications and awards for LWA and other grants

- Differing / inconsistent definitions and methods of identifying "crisis" amongst delivery partners

Recommendations and consideration points to inform Year 3

The following points should be considered by the CCS team as they enter year 3 of the programme.

Referral system recommendations

Resourcing referral system as a focus for year 3. Clear progress can be evidenced around building network capacity and setting up digital referral systems. However, the long term resourcing of such networks and systems remains unclear. The long term sustainability of the referral system is critical in encouraging partners to work together. Without it, there is a high likelihood that organisations will fall back to siloed working. It is recommended that options / models for funding the referral system are clearly articulated with partners (and potential funders) in each pilot site.

Training on the referral system. Partners involved in the CCS programme stress that the sustainability of coordination is about more than funding for the referral system – there is a need to continue developing the network and quality of the work. Notably, there is a need for ongoing training costs to be built into any sustainability funding. It is recommended that any longer term funding for networks and referral systems ensure that ongoing training for system-users is part of the funding package.

Other local-system recommendations

Build upon work with statutory services, especially schools. The CCS programme focused primarily on the advice sector in the 4 pilot sites. This is where there has been most traction with the concept of coordination (when compared with other sectors such as food provision, statutory services and others). It is possible that other types of crisis-support providers will engage with the initiative in the future. The increased collaboration between advice services and schools in Tower Hamlets has, up until recently, taken place without a digital referral system (longer term there is an aspiration for at least 1 local school to be on the system). It is recommended that the programme promotes the lessons learned around increasing collaboration between advice agencies and schools. This will be of interest in areas both with and without plans for a referral system. It is recommended that CCS identifies opportunities to collaborate with schools and leverage funding for specific school-focused collaboration projects both within and beyond the 4 pilot sites.

Long term ownership of local coordination. At the inception of CCS, it was assumed that local steering groups would be set up in each pilot site and would take ownership of the coordination agenda. To some extent, advice networks (THCAN, OCAN and NCAN) have fulfilled this role although there is heavy reliance on the capacity and skills delivered via CCS. Setting priorities has been facilitated (and on occasion, directed) by the CCS team and this function has been welcomed in localities. This indicates that coordination work can be facilitated by experts based outside of the area. It also points to a risk that once CCS funding ends, there could be a leadership void. It is recommended that steps are taken to mitigate this void (e.g. pilot-site leaders coaching / shadowing CCS colleagues).

Engagement plan for local authorities. Learning from years 1 and 2 illustrate a somewhat piecemeal approach to engaging local authorities in the programme. For many local authorities there are communication challenges within the organisation and efforts for an "authority wide" commitment to coordination (and associated referral systems, for example) has been unmanageable. Furthermore, the CCS team have had no mandate to incentivise change at this level. For year 3 it is recommended that each of the 4 local pilot sites has an engagement plan for each pilot site local authority which includes:

- Mapping out which teams are interested in the programme and what their needs are in relation to the referral system. Inviting them to join the network.

- Identification of senior stakeholders (revisiting signatories on the initial application to be part of CCS) to remind them of their commitment to the programme.

…(continued) recommendations and consideration points to inform Year 3

Impact beyond the 4 pilot sites recommendations

Build upon partnership with LGA to share practice. There are opportunities to work with the LGA (who sits on the CCS Programme Board) to spread the learning from CCS to other local authority areas in year 3. The LGA are well placed to continue to disseminate learning beyond the 3 years of CCS, contributing to a programme legacy It is recommended that a comms strategy for communicating with local authorities (beyond the 4 pilot sites) is the main avenue to influencing change beyond the 4 pilot sites.

Continue to work with subregions to roll out good practice. The programme is showing leadership in Greater Manchester, Greater London and part of Wales where some of the pilot sites are based (Oldham, Tower Hamlets and Swansea respectively). It is recommended that the CCS team continue to inform any subregional efforts to improve joined working based on pilot site experiences.

Emphasise the role of coordination when providing evidence. The CCS team and TCS more generally are regularly invited to give evidence about experiences of people and VCS organisations. This has increased stakeholders understanding of the challenges people are facing. It is recommended that any subsequent evidence provision looks for opportunities to share examples of why coordination matters in such contexts.

Year 2 key messages from the CCS Learning Coordinator

- Co-ordination of local services does not create capacity in those services. Organising the slices better doesn't make the cake bigger

- The co-ordination role can be led from the VCS or the LA – it needs both capacity and legitimacy

- The key to effective co-ordination is embedding a network where it is new (or strengthening it where it already exists). Building and developing such a network takes time (years, rather than months).

- Co-ordination has a cost

With thanks to Programme Partners and Funders