



Harrogate and District
Community Action

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For the attention of Harrogate & Knaresborough Area Committee

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Dear Councillors

Thank you for inviting the local Voluntary and Community Sector to provide feedback on issues specific to their work in Harrogate Town. HADCA used its "Chief Officers and Chairs Forum" last week to pose three questions suggested by Cllr Lacey. The attached slides show the key bullet points raised by the group members, but more detail on these points is given below.

We acknowledge that some of the issues raised may well not be within the remit of the Area Committee, however we hope the information provides useful overall insight. We would be pleased to broker further conversations at any future stage if this would be helpful.

With best wishes

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Frances Elliot".

Frances Elliot
Chief Executive -HADCA
On behalf of members of the local Voluntary and Community Sector

What are the main challenges you face as a sector in the Town of Harrogate?

- **Perceived wealth of town** National funders don't prioritise the area, as the need is not perceived as great as in other locations, even though some local wards have higher levels of deprivation. Issues such as poor mental health, domestic abuse, drugs and county lines perceived as not happening, when in reality they are big problems, as is a high suicide rate. Also an issue of people who are asset rich but cash poor.
- **Added stigma of being in 'the best place to live', a perceived happy, affluent place, for anyone struggling, making it hard to ask for help**
- **Short term funding and funding for new projects rather than funding for proven, needed services** A service is just embedded in the community, then funding ends.
- **Uncertainty when some contracts are due to end in a few months' time**
- **VCS contracts not being renewed**
- **Increasing demand for VCS services as needs not met by statutory services.** Volunteer fatigue.
- **Managing waiting lists** Insufficient funding for VCS services to meet increased and more complex needs, with statutory services not sharing responsibility.
- **Increasing complexity of needs** e.g High number of referrals to services are adults and children with SEND.
- **Having to move from free services to suggested donations and charged for services** which could create barriers for those most in need of support.
- **Business Rates** Charities receiving 100% relief instead of the mandatory 80% relief would make a big difference. In one case, an issue getting any charity relief applied.
- **High rental costs for charities** who may need more space to meet demand, but can't afford it
- **Vermin control costs for charities who own premises**
- **Recycling collection arrangements not adequate for charities and the cost of recycling removal is very high prohibiting charities from investing in the scheme** Instead staff have to take recycling to do at home. There is also no space to store at charity premises.
- **Refuse collection costs** Cost per collection is unaffordable for smaller groups
- **Parking for staff** Having to spend time moving cars to find free car parking.
- **Issues with autism diagnosis** People are having to get a private diagnosis which is not recognized by GPs, so there is no access to medication, resulting in families in crisis. Better communication/ shared agreement with GPs and TEWV NHS Trust needed.
- **Accessibility of services** People with SEND and poor mental health are struggling to cope with long online forms, difficult to navigate websites and difficulty in reaching anyone at the council to talk to who will listen to them and offer any support or helpful signposting.



- **Housing** Lack of affordable housing. With direct train links and more remote working, people moving from London pushing up prices even higher. Rental costs are huge, the market is very competitive and some are having to offer over the asking price on rent to secure a property. This makes it harder for them to take a job in VCS where pay is not competitive, so disproportionately affects our sector.
- **Young people moving away** High cost of living, lack of suitable housing, no facilities all contributing to young people leaving the area. These are the future of our organisations and communities. (Some sectors e.g hospitality already rely on people commuting to the town from more affordable areas.)
- **Tourism** Whilst very positive for some charities who rely on visitors and others who can reach a bigger audience e.g. when a conference is in town, it can mean some fundraising events attract tourists who aren't interested in a local charity.
- **Employers' NI changes** This will have a significant negative impact on larger charities.

What was most valuable about the support provided to the sector by the former Harrogate Borough Council?

- **There were staff who lived and worked in the town**, who were approachable and who better understood the issues and opportunities.
- **The approach was more collaborative**, with more joined up working and people 'on the ground' looking for solutions.
- **Key local contacts who were supportive and made valuable new connections** Many of these key relationships have been lost.
- **Local joint working on projects such as the 'You Are Not Alone' leaflet delivered to local residents** The future of this helpful publication is unclear at present.
- **Request for continued support for community productions at Harrogate Theatre and Royal Hall**
- **Feels more difficult now for local people to be heard**



In what ways can the Area Committee support the sector in representing your interests to NYC?

Asks:

- **Help to educate the wider council so that councillors in other areas recognise that local issues do exist in Harrogate** e.g alcoholism and homelessness. Challenge the perception that Harrogate has had too much for too long.
- **Levelling up rather than levelling down** Good initiatives in the area, which may not be in place in the rest of the county, need to continue e.g THE LOCAL LOTTO and 'You Are Not Alone' leaflet
- **Engage with VCS and visit local charities to find out what they do** e.g sit in on a Citizens Advice drop in (suggestion was for council staff as well as councillors)
- Support any work at the council that enables **affordable housing** in Harrogate
- **Provide longer term funding** to sustain services that work and are proven to make a positive difference. Also hard to recruit people to very short term contracts.
- **Focus on funding charity prevention services** helping build people's resilience and ability to cope, avoiding reaching crisis, which impacts on statutory services
- **Include and celebrate local charities who aren't funded by NYC** Celebrate the diversity of VCS (for example, Mayoral visits to thank volunteers are always appreciated)
- **Value and learn from local social enterprises** Input time and investment to build on models that build sustainable communities without need for statutory funding, people giving back when they can.
- **Education budget** – suggestion that an amount be ring fenced for schools to spend on mental health support, otherwise other cost pressures in schools get in the way
- **A charity rate for refuse and recycling collection**
- **Parking permits to charities for their staff teams**
- **More community spaces needed** (Sure Start Centres helped with early intervention / support)
- **Promote Involvement Framework** Listen to VCS and build on some actions now happening e.g. charities on interview panels.
- **Tourism** More promotion of heritage and community assets.

