
Children's Workforce Action Report & DRAFT Strategic Plan Solihull Third Sector providers

This Action Report and (Draft) Strategic Plan strategic plan for Solihull's Third sector providers has been developed in conjunction with the Solihull Children & Young Peoples Trust with funding and support from the Children's Workforce Development Council.

The report lays out a picture of the current status of the Third Sector providers and workforce in relation to 'Every Child Matters' and 'One Workforce' strategies. The report and draft Strategic Plan details the actions and issues relating to these and sets out a vision for Third Sector organisations in Solihull.

This plan is subject to further consultation with Third Sector providers through the Children's Voluntary Sector Forum (CVSF) and Solihull Council for Voluntary Youth Services (SCVYS).

The plan is ongoing work in progress with the Solihull Children & Young Peoples Trust Workforce Development team within SUSTAiN's role as Strategic Workforce lead.

The plan is also subject to being able to secure the financial resources needed to deliver it.

Vision:

A committed, skilled and secure workforce who are employed by or volunteer with secure and sustainable organisations who are capable of delivering excellence in services to meet the needs of all children and young people in Solihull.

Why?

There are many organisations in Solihull delivering superb services to Children & Young People. But, there are many organisations who are struggling to keep up with the myriad of strategies, initiatives and legislation that impacts on the way they work. There is a broad understanding of the key drivers but detailed understanding is varied. The key problem being individual organisations understanding, in practical terms, what they need to do.

There is very limited Infrastructure support specific to the Children & Young Peoples Workforce. Within the two main Infrastructure providers, SUSTAiN has currently only one general Development Worker funded by Solihull Council whose time is split between Development & Volunteering. Other support staff at SUSTAiN are specialists (such as Marketing, CSR, Equality, etc) funded from a variety of sources. The Solihull Council for Voluntary Youth Services has one development worker who has joined them only recently. Both organisations work closely in partnership but there is still insufficient resource – particularly with the skills, knowledge and experience necessary to support Third Sector organisations.

There is no single cohesive or shared plan that covers the entire Third Sector in Solihull at the moment. Organisations have their own plans but they are diverse and the level of alignment to national and local strategies such as Every Child Matters, Solihull Children's Plan, One Workforce, etc is varied.

Many organisations are part of national bodies (e.g. Scouts, Boys Brigade, Children's Society) and are driven by national agendas for their organisation.

Some organisations cross boundaries with Birmingham and Coventry especially and will experience different approaches from strategic partnerships in each of these sub regions.

Funding and the outcomes expected by funding bodies drives many of the services provided by the larger organisations. Organisations face new pressures with a move away from grant funding to a new commissioning era which coincides with a recession and anticipated cuts in public spending.

The move towards personalisation and direct payments for people receiving social care support will require a very different approach (for some) to the design, delivery and marketing of services.

The sector faces new pressures on safeguarding such as the ISA Vetting & Barring scheme and the need for more integrated working and communication and protocols.

Individual organisations arrange and provide their own training with very little uptake (for practical reasons) of the training provided by the statutory sector.

There is no common induction process across the sector. Organisations develop their own induction programmes which vary considerably in depth and quality.

Mapping sector skills in reference to the Common Core became virtually impossible as there appears to be no common language and the volume of small organisations relying heavily on volunteers means the information is hard to obtain and not always available.

Who?

The Third sector is no more than a collective noun for a diverse group of organisations, groups and even individuals that operate outside the statutory sector and private enterprise. The groups grew organically to meet a need or purpose that was not served by other sectors. In terms of children & young people services, the sector can be broken down into the following broad categories:

- Dedicated Children & Young Peoples services (e.g. This Way Up Youth, Little Squirrels)
- Specialist services provided for all age groups (e.g. SoLO)
- Faith Groups (of all faiths and denominations)
- Nationally led organisations (e.g. Girl Guides)
- Sports, Social & Arts groups aimed primarily at children & young people (e.g. Spotlight Stage School)
- Social enterprise in all its forms (e.g. Stars Sitting Service)
- Infrastructure support providers (e.g. SUSTAIN, SCVYS)

Within these broad categories, services operate differently with different levels of understanding and engagement with broader strategies and different drivers.

For example ...

Scouts, Guides and other uniformed organisations will be guided on policies and procedures dictated by their national body which may or not be aligned to those designed for Solihull. Similarly, larger organisations like the Children's Society, are branches of national organisations following a national strategy.

Organisations such as Birmingham & Solihull Women's Aid will have to adapt and deal with differences between the procedures adopted by each local strategic partnership.

Faith Groups will provide a very specific and different service and may be driven by issues specific to their faith. By their very nature they are less inclusive than some.

Sports, Social and Arts groups tend to be largely volunteer led only with no professional member of staff responsible for understanding the strategic context.

Infrastructure support providers do not deliver services directly to children & young people but have a responsibility to support and advise those who do.

Within each broad category there will be further differences dependant on a variety of factors such as types of funding, the proportion of paid staff and volunteers, the time and frequency that volunteers provide support, the organisations age and history, geography, social and cultural factors and numerous other drivers.

Key Drivers

There are a number of key drivers affecting the provision of services to Children and Young People. These are:

Every Child Matters

The Green Paper, “*Every Child Matters*” was published alongside the formal response to the death of Victoria Climbié who was horrifically abused and tortured, and killed by her great aunt and the man with whom they lived.

This has 5 broad outcomes which are:

- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well-being.

The strategic thrust covers:

- Inter-agency governance
- Integrated strategy
- Integrated processes
- Integrated frontline delivery
- Outcomes for children and young people.

Every Child Matters is a national strategy underpinned by local plans

Solihull Children & Young People’s Trust

A key strategic group within the Solihull Partnership, of which the Third Sector is a key player. The Children and Young People’s Trust’s vision is: “Solihull as a place where all children and young people have an equal chance and achieve their full potential.” To achieve this vision children and young people in Solihull must be healthy, safe, enjoy life and achieve success, make a positive contribution to their communities and benefit from economic well-being. These are known as the five outcomes.

For all children and young people in Solihull to achieve the five outcomes they must be able to access services regardless of personal circumstances. This is known as Solihull’s sixth outcome, and requires greater integration of services so that organisational differences don’t get in the way of improving the well-being of children and young people.

Solihull Children’s Plan (2010 to 2013)

This is currently being refreshed and out for consultation and is Solihull’s local response to the Every Child Matters national strategy. The plan takes the national agenda and localises it, setting a standard for Solihull that is above the minimum or average national requirements. The Solihull Children’s plan seeks excellence in the achievement of local outcomes.

Solihull Local Safeguarding Children Board

The local safeguarding board is driven by the national strategy of “Working Together to Safeguard Children 2010” published by the DCSF.

Solihull Children & Young People’s Workforce Strategy (2009 to 2012)

This is an overall covering all sectors of which this is a part that is specific to the Third Sector. This includes key elements such as Common Induction Standards and Common Core Skills and Experience.

In addition to strategic programmes there are other practical considerations.

Cross Border Issues

Squeezed between the large city conurbations of Birmingham & Coventry and with several Third Sector providers straddling the borders presents problems for organisations in accommodating up to 3 different approaches to integrated working practices.

Funding

This has a significant impact on Third Sector services, particularly since the picture is changing significantly. Funding affects different organisations in different ways dependant on the funding mix each organisation has: The major changes affecting Third Sector organisations being:

- Grants – a move away from grant funding towards other outcomes based approaches commissioning and increased competition for remaining grants
- Commissioning – a move to a common framework that is not yet embedded

- Public giving – experiencing a substantial downturn as the country experiences its deepest recession in decades
- Enterprise & Trading – a hugely underdeveloped sector in Solihull with little local support or investment.
- Personal Budgets & Direct Payments – a positive change in the way services are provided but a significant change and challenge for Third Sector organisations in marketing terms. The scheme is still new and on trial and its impacts are not yet fully understood.
- An expected cut in public spending as a consequence of the recession and uncertainty on budgets for 2010/11 due to a looming general election.

Independent Safeguarding Authority – Vetting & Barring Scheme

Welcomed by some, feared by others and badly launched; this has a potentially significant impact on a number of organisations. Its supporters believe it to be a better more robust and practical system whilst others fear it will have a negative impact on volunteering and are predicting a loss of up to one third of their volunteers.

Organisational Structures & Development

Solihull has a large proportion of small groups which are largely volunteer led. There is only a relatively small number of large organisations with significant numbers of paid staff. There are some extremely professional organisations in the borough with the capacity to engage and understand the many strategic drivers but even they struggle. Many small volunteer & community led organisations struggle to keep up with the volume and pace of change.

Solihull's Third Sector is commonly regarded as 'under developed'. In reality it is the support services that are under developed and have suffered from decades of under investment. Poor leadership and the fact that Solihull is perceived to be a prosperous borough which receives little special treatment or status and priority with funders are the major factors.

Staff, Volunteers & 'Volunteers'

Paid staff in the Third Sector generally has higher levels of education than in the public and private sectors. Many paid workers regard third sector employment as a vocation not occupation. Salaries are generally lower than equivalent paid staff in other sectors. Security of employment is lower with most organisations lurching from one funding stream to another.

Not all volunteers are volunteers. Many are persuaded, cajoled and encouraged by various means. Val is a helper at Sunday School. She does it because her children go there and she 'volunteered' out of a sense of duty. She also couldn't think of an excuse in time. Val is on a rota with 12 other mums and only has to do 2 hours every fourth Sunday. She volunteers for a total of 24 hours a year. Faced with 4 hours of Common Induction, level 1 safeguarding and "something called the vetting & barring scheme", Val found an alternative 'calling' and excuse why she couldn't help out at Sunday School.

Demographics, Social Mobility & Culture

We live in a society and borough with an increasingly ageing population with a high proportion of volunteers and staff who are from the older spectrum of the population. Children & Young people have very different aspirations to those of previous generations. Language has changed. Children and Young people have greater access to information technology and therefore expectations are greater and knowledge is broader. The circle of friends that today's younger generation have is no longer restricted by geography to 'kids in the street'. However, this brings new threats through cyber bullying, misuse of social networking and exposure to materials not appropriate for their age group. Children and Young people see the world through very different eyes to those that the adults who provide the services see things.

Options

Do nothing

Allow the sector to remain as it is in developing its individual plans, workforce, skills and services.

Do something

Develop a cohesive plan that enables the sector to influence services and commissioning more effectively, shares best practice, work coherently and consistently with other sectors and achieve economies of scale in terms of training

Sector Prospects

Below are two possible scenarios that could exist in 5 years time. These describe two opposite ends of the spectrum with reality falling somewhere in between the two.

Do Nothing

Fewer services

Poorer quality services

Unstable and unsustainable services

Less people volunteering

Fewer jobs

Private sector providers replacing Third Sector provision

Lower skills base

Vulnerability to safeguarding risks

Fewer & poorer outcomes for children & young people – particularly for those most in need and at risk

Do Something

Creative partnership within the sector and across sectors

New and innovative services

Service quality improvements

Beacon status on several counts

Benchmarked by others

Less dependence on grants – more commissioned services and enterprise income

More sustainable

Shaping services & fully engaging service users

Increased volunteering

Increased employment

Safe & secure

Better outcomes for all children & young people

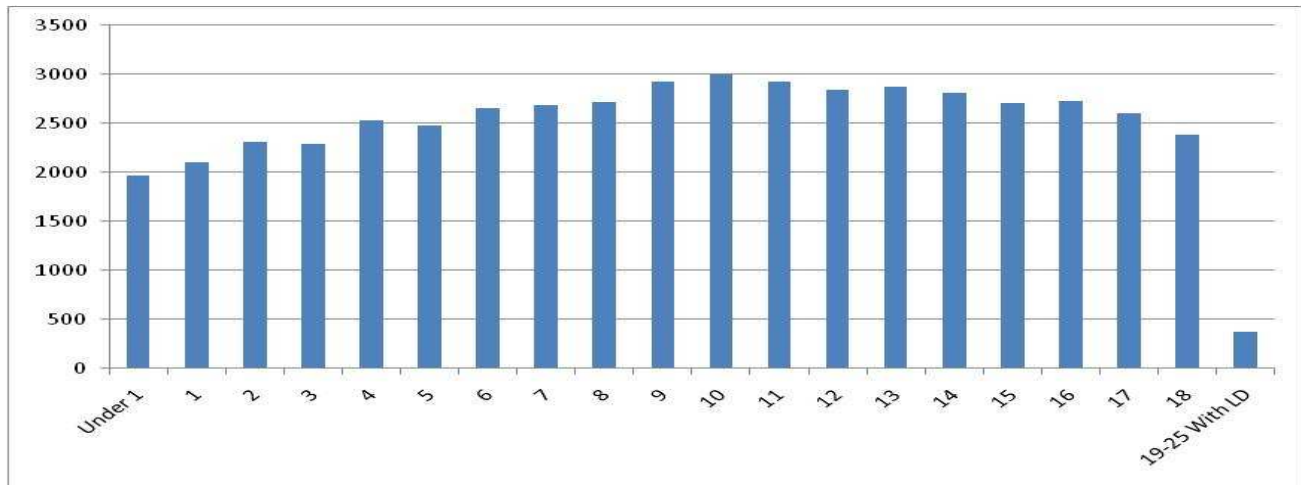
Doing nothing is not an option given the various national and local agendas for safeguarding and delivery of services to children & young people and the increased pressures organisations face in developing and funding sustainable, safe, high quality services.

Having a cohesive and inclusive plan will

- Help the sector understand its priorities and obligations.
- Encourage and support better partnership working within the sector and across other sectors
- Encourage the sharing of good practice
- Help the sector influence local strategies and commissioning plans
- Help other strategic and planning bodies better understand the needs of the sector
- Provide organisations with a better platform to develop high quality, sustainable services.

Population & Service Users

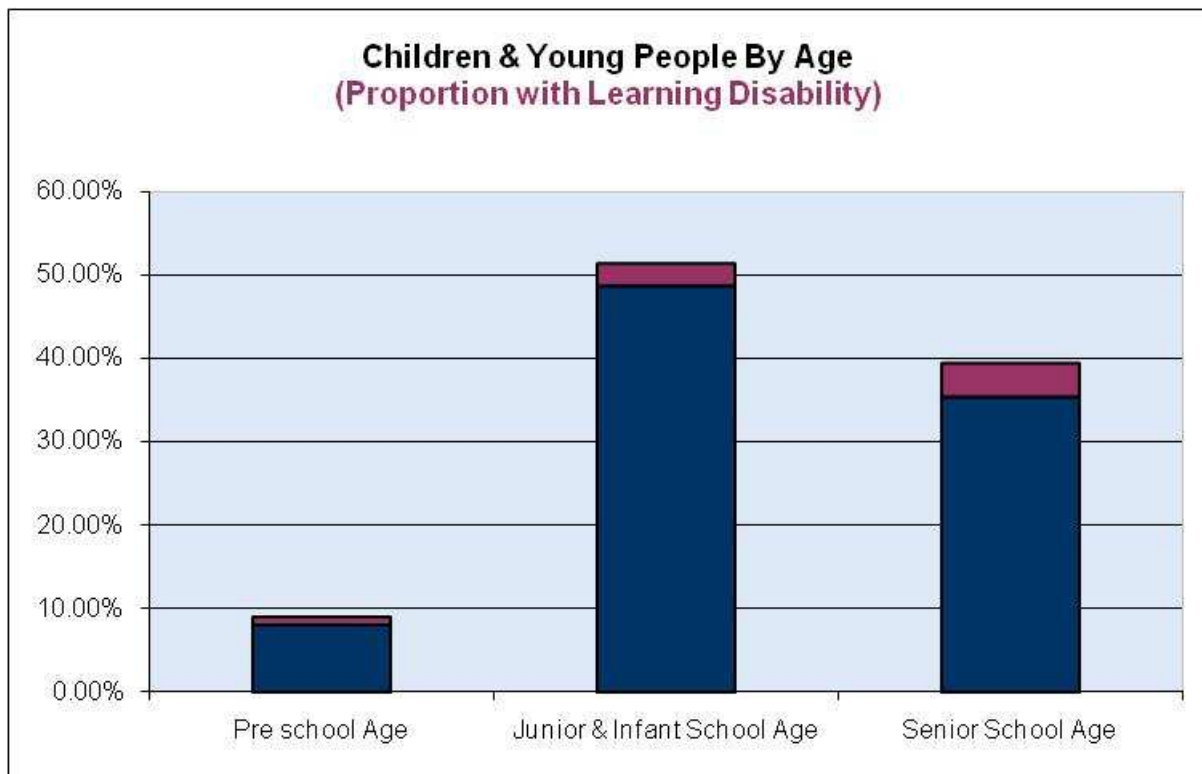
According to the 2001 Census, there were 49,529 children and young people under the age of 18 with an estimated further 375 aged between 19 and 25 who had Learning Disabilities. Of this, c30,500 were aged between birth and 11. The chart below gives an age breakdown from the 2001 population census.



Without an increase in the birth rate or significant increase in the population, it is likely that the current population has reduced from 2001 levels. However, the %age of children from ethnic minority backgrounds will have increased. Latest estimates also suggest that around 15% of children under 11 come from a BME background compared to an overall population mix of around 7%. It is also believed that the proportion of children with some form of additional or special need will have increased.

From the information collected as part of the mapping exercise, the raw data implies that Third Sector organisations provide services to 30,252 children & young people – 60% of the population. The difficulty with this number comes in identifying children & young people who access more than one service (e.g. Guides, Sports Club, Sunday School, etc). This is virtually impossible to measure in the context of this mapping. A true figure is likely to be around half the population.

We also sampled the population of children supported by Third Sector organisations which revealed the following breakdown.

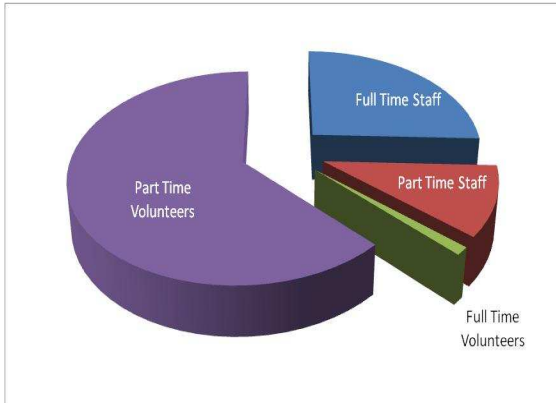


Service Providers

According to SUSTAIN's database of Third Sector Organisations, there is a total of 184 organisations who provide services to Children & Young People across all disciplines. This is based on how the organisations themselves classify the services they provide and service users. Breaking this down further, we can see:

There are 86 organisations who specify Children & Young People as their primary user group.

- 55% cover the full spectrum of all ages up to 19.
- 30% are Uniformed organisations such as Scouts, Guides, Boys Brigade
- 23% are non uniformed organisations aimed at Children under 12
- 15% are non uniformed organisations aimed at Young People aged 13 to 19
- 6% are Faith based with a specific service aimed at Children & Young people



In addition, there are 98 other organisations that provide services that Children & Young people use but have not classed them as a primary user group. These include

- 28 x Faith based organisations
- 18 x Sports, Leisure, Arts groups
- 6 x Parent & Family organisations
- 8 x Learning Disabled organisations
- 6 x Physical Disabled organisations
- 32 x others covering a wide spectrum of services

NB: This is based on a database that includes 542 organisations. However, other research suggests there could be up to 750 Third Sector organisations operating or registered in Solihull which means around 200 are either dormant, have closed down or are otherwise unknown to SUSTAIN. Many are likely to be social & leisure groups who do not see themselves as Third Sector organisations.

Workforce Size

The Third Sector Workforce picture is based on sample data from the SUSTAIN Census & specific Children's Services research conducted during 2009 by post, online via the Children's Voluntary Sector Forum and individual face to face interviews.

Based on detailed information from 35 organisations on the make up of the workforce, we estimate that the total Third Sector workforce is around 2650 people strong.

It is easy to see where the term 'Voluntary Sector' comes from with around two thirds of the workforce made up from volunteers and one third made up by a combination of full time and part time staff. In reality, face to face discussions revealed that some volunteers may actually spend a proportion of their 'volunteering' time as paid Sessional workers. This tends to be during school holidays to support summer play-schemes, etc where staffing is essential. The definition of 'Full Time Volunteers' varies from person to person. It does not necessarily mean 37 hours a week. Often it simply means that the individual only does voluntary work which can vary from 10 to 40 hours a week and does not have any paid occupation.

However, the heavy reliance on a voluntary unpaid workforce explains the anxiety felt about the volume of strategies, initiatives and new demands being placed on the sector. It is feared that the demands of the workforce strategy and safeguarding actions such as the vetting and barring scheme will dramatically impact on this workforce. Anecdotal evidence suggests that up to one third of volunteers (20% of the total workforce) could be lost. (See above – Staff, Volunteers & 'Volunteers').

Workforce Experience

The length of service varies considerably across the sector, ranging from just a few months to over 40 years. The average length of service for paid staff is 10 years. For volunteers, the average length of service is 18 months.

Workforce Skills & Training

These range from no formal qualifications for around 60% of the workforce to highly qualified professionals representing around 15% of the workforce. The remainder fit into a wide spectrum in between the two.

The specific training and skill mentioned included Safeguarding, Health & Safety, Risk Assessment, Person Centred Planning, Safe from Harm, Coping Strategies, First aid, Epilepsy Awareness, Disability Awareness, Working with vulnerable people, Augmented Signing Communication, Working with children with Challenging Behaviour, Administering Invasive Medication plus more specialist subjects such as football coaching. A large proportion of the training given was provided in house with their own materials or those provided by outside specialist agencies and some statutory provision.

Strategy Awareness

Early research suggested that the levels of awareness and depth of understanding of the key strategies and processes driving Children's services and Workforce issues was very mixed. This seems largely down to the time and capacity to engage. Given that two thirds of the workforce is made up by volunteers with other commitments, the time and capacity they have to engage is limited. There is a lot to take in and its not all as accessible and concise as it could be.

As one respondent put it *"I am aware that there is effort to educate us on what needs to be done and how to do it, but it is difficult when not everyone can give their commitment. For us, it is about giving the community an opportunity to get together and do something. It comes down to priorities."*

Below is a summary of feedback from detailed interviews with a mixed representative group of 10 VCS organisations; chosen to represent a wide cross section Third Sector Providers.

Levels of Awareness	Yes	No	Remarks
Every Child Matters	9	1	Largely understand the five outcomes and services designed around these. One participant was even involved in developing the strategy.
Understand it well?	9	1	
One Workforce Strategy	4	6	The term was known but the depth of understanding was limited except for two people who have acted as Sector Reps past and current
Understand it well?	2	8	
CAF	8	2	There was a high level of awareness of CAF except for two people who hadn't been exposed to it. However depth of understanding was limited and only one person (Sector rep & CYPT Board member) used CAF
Understand it well?	2	8	
Used CAF	1	9	
Lead Professionals	4	6	For those who were aware of Lead Professionals the depth of understanding was good. One participant has been an LP
Understand it well?	3	7	
Contact Point	4	6	Awareness mixed and some confusion on what it was and how it worked plus some cynicism about whether it would ever happen.
Understand it well?	2	8	
Common Induction & Common Core	7	3	There was general awareness amongst the majority and detailed awareness by one participant who acted as a pilot for the Common Induction process.
Detailed understanding?	1	9	
Common Induction process positive?	8	2	Generally positive reception. The only negative comments centre around the practicality and proportionality of delivering it.
ISA & Vetting & Barring	4	6	The level of awareness of the new ISA scheme was poor and confused. In terms of what to do if they had concerns about a child, the understanding ranged from very detailed to not at all. Concern that two organisations may not be acting in a safe manner.
Understand what to do if concerns?	8	2	
Provide Induction Training	9	1	Mostly in-house Induction and to differing standards depending on the member of the workforce role. Safeguarding was a mix of in-house and LSCB. Most were alarmed that one organisation provided no induction or safeguarding training.
Provide Safeguarding Training	9	1	

Whilst only representing a small cohort, the consensus to the findings was that this was a reasonably accurate picture of the Third Sector given its diverse nature.

This picture is further enhanced by a series of 'Introduction to Safeguarding Basics' workshops carried out by SUSTAiN and SCVYS and with peer to peer cascade through the CVSF. This revealed that, whilst organisations claimed to know what to do if they identified concerns, there was divergence of actual response. The picture tells us that there is good alignment to the concepts behind the various strategies – in particular Every Child Matters, Common Induction, Common Core Skills and the value of CAF. The issues are around

- depth of understanding
- proportionality
- resources
- practicality
- costs & funding
- support needs

These discussions, workshops and safeguarding cascade however reveal that there are instances where a small minority of organisations, whilst delivering excellent services, may be unwittingly leaving themselves vulnerable by operating in a way that is not entirely safe.

Action Plan - What?

There are a number of key priorities and actions necessary in order to achieve this vision given the current status of the Third Sector providers and the key drivers.

Priorities

1. Raising awareness of the important points in each strategy with illustration of what this means in practical terms.
2. Development of organisation Business & Action Plans which outline the services provided, marketing, funding, resources and skills required
3. Safeguarding – embedding safer recruitment, induction, policies and procedures
4. Data on the client group of Children & Young people and their needs and wants
5. Development of a common language and communication that is understood by the Third Sector
6. Integrated Working procedures
7. Resources – funding to enable more organisations to engage
8. Identification of partnership opportunities – helping Third Sector organisations understand the value of and develop partnership working practices with other organisations and across the sector
9. Training on Commissioning
10. Training on the development of workforce plans
11. Training plans and programmes that are accessible and proportionate
12. Workforce plans for individual organisations

Action Plan - How?

It is clear from the mapping exercise and research that many organisations are struggling to understand what they need to do in practical terms within their organisation to meet the aims of Every Child Matters and the 'One Workforce' agenda.

There is no shortage of enthusiasm for the strategic goals but simply overload with the volume of paper and words; some of which is written in a language that is hard to engage with – too much jargon and over complication.

The organisations consulted were pretty unanimous in identifying the need for better infrastructure support and the lack of a dedicated development worker who could help them develop policies & procedures and recruit, train and induct the right staff. To provide this at the place they deliver services at times and in ways that are appropriate to their workforce and organisation.

They were also clear about proportionality. What works for statutory providers and large organisations may not work for the Third Sector. Sector specific support was important. As an illustration, not one place has been taken up by Third Sector organisations on safeguarding courses provided by the LSCB. The reason being the courses are day time at a central Solihull location and simply cannot be accessed by most groups. The LSCB has made every effort to provide training at the place of work and outside office hours for some groups but with limited capacity to meet the full need.

The appointment of a full time Third Sector Children's Services Development Worker would provide a solution to overcoming many barriers.

SUSTAiN has had some success in recent months by delivering a series of workshops in the evenings in different parts of Solihull on different nights and in recruiting a number of organisations to undertake a peer to peer cascade. The workshops and cascade are designed to be an Introduction to the Basics of Safeguarding. However, in raising awareness, this also generates demand for further support which is not resourced.

In total 20 people from 15 organisations have attended the Introduction to Safeguarding evening workshops and a further 45 organisations were covered by the 'peer to peer' cascade.

Some progress is being made with the LSCB and CYPT to understanding the need for sector specific support and in identifying the potential to part fund a post. If successful, this funding would only meet 60% the costs of employing one suitably skilled, experience and credible individual. Further funding of at least £15,000 would be sought from CWDC or alternative sources.

The key priority is to increase the capacity within SUSTAiN's Infrastructure service to provide better support for front line organisations. The minimum requirement is one Development Worker although an ideal would be one Development Worker and one Training Officer.

This means:

What	When
Secure funding from LSCB and other sources to secure specific resources to embed strategies with supporting policies and procedures.	April 2010*
Appoint a skilled and trained Development Worker(s) within SUSTAiN to provide one to one and group support to organisations delivering services to children to help them implement workforce strategies plus safeguarding, recruitment and induction processes and workforce development plans.	June 2010
Source additional data on the needs and wants of Children & Young People and map the service provision to those needs. Identifying gaps and opportunities for service expansion.	Oct 2010
Develop accessible communications material to improve awareness and understanding and to communicate training opportunities.	Sep 2010
Close partnership with SCVYS, the LSCB and the Children & Young Peoples Trust Workforce team to continue the development of workforce strategies.	Ongoing from Day 1
Deliver Safeguarding Training (with direction from the LSCB) directly to Third Sector organisations at a time & place most appropriate to the organisations and to identify other Training providers. This includes the (virtual) Learning Consortium which is soon to be established and peer to peer introduction training	Sep 2010
Network with other CWDC contract holders and Children's services development workers plus national bodies such as Children England, NSPCC, Safenetwork, etc to seek out and share best practice.	Ongoing from Day 1
Further development of the Children's Voluntary Sector Forum and encourage more partnership and inter agency working.	Ongoing from Day 1

* c60% of funds for one post provisionally secured via LSCB

Partnership working with other Third Sector infrastructure organisations, statutory bodies and networks is essential in order to secure co-ordination and common outcomes.