

One East Midlands Impact and Legacy Research report

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Thank you to all staff and board members of One East Midlands for time spent supporting this review and to Rachel Quinn and Sandra Casey in particular for providing us with access to various documents.

We were also really pleased with the positive response that we had from people who took time to fill in the survey or take part in interviews – we think this is a reflection of the positive regard that people from different sectors have for the work of One East Midlands. We have included as many of their comments as possible in the report to reflect the words of stakeholders across the region.

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Executive summary

One East Midlands' role

One East Midlands is the regional network for the voluntary and community sector (VCS) in the East Midlands with a mission to maximise the VCS as an influential, valued and equal partner in all policy development. It aims to ensure that all elements of the VCS play a valued role in the development of policies and strategies that impact on the individuals and communities in our region. In particular it aims to prioritise support to those parts of the VCS with specialist perspectives and knowledge or working with those communities facing most disadvantage.

The research

As a result of changes to former regional geographies and structures, the role of VCS infrastructure and the reduced funding climate, One East Midlands has decided to close its operations at the end of 2015. It commissioned *Ideas to Impact* to review the value of its work over recent years and identify any gaps in support that, if not filled, would be detrimental to the success of the VCS in the future. This report sets out the findings obtained by a survey with 112 respondents and interviews with 26 key stakeholders.

One East Midlands' activities

One East Midlands has been active in a number of areas of policy, particularly economic development, European funding, and health and social care; consistent with its aims to influence policy development and inform the sector of changes that affect it. This aim is reflected in its strapline - 'getting voices heard and shaping change'. It has also provided some general infrastructure support and some targeted support around BME and youth.

Value and impact findings

The research investigated what had been valued from the support provided by One East Midlands, and the impact of that support on VCS organisations and their beneficiaries.

Information provision was the most used service by survey respondents followed by work around European funding and health and social care. One East Midlands' role providing support to infrastructure organisations was least used, although this is likely to be because it is targeted at a subset of VCS organisations. Other functions that were valued were building relationships between decision makers and commissioners and the VCS to enable greater participation in the delivery of services, and the vision and foresight to enable the involvement of the VCS in various programmes.

Most organisations (68%) thought that One East Midlands had achieved or partly achieved its purpose. Frontline organisations were the most positive as were respondents from Derbyshire, Derby, Nottinghamshire and Nottingham – the D2N2 area where One East Midlands have been particularly active.

The most important infrastructure roles at regional level were considered to be:

1. Being able to support engagement with regional or sub-regional commissioners and decision makers and other bodies
2. Building cross sector relationships and partnerships
3. Coordinating tenders and funding applications for programmes that are above local level, e.g. two or more cities / counties.

There were a few suggestions for learning where things could have been done differently, for example a more consistent relationship with local infrastructure organisations across the region, greater awareness about One East Midlands' role, and some work with colleges that wasn't as successful as other initiatives.

Future gaps

Most respondents (68%) thought that there would be a gap left by One East Midlands' closure. No one thought that existing local or national bodies could fill this role completely, although 17 organisations answered that they would be partly able to. Government and public sector organisations were the most likely to agree that there would be a gap. Reasons included loss of knowledge, networks and relationships, (including about the East Midlands) that national organisations don't have, the loss of functions that are most effective at regional level for economies of scale, geographic proximity or critical mass, and the independence and impartiality of One East Midlands.

There was a consistent view across all interviewees and many survey respondents that local infrastructure across the region was patchy and in some places non-existent and not able to fill in gaps. There was no suggestion that generic national infrastructure would be able to step in and undertake the role of regional infrastructure, nor a wish from national infrastructure to do so. Comments about national infrastructure included that it was too remote, was mainly focused on the needs of larger organisations and it just did not have the local knowledge to be of practical use on the ground nor to build relationships with local commissioners and decision makers.

There was a feeling from many that loss of One East Midlands is likely to affect small and medium local VCS organisations rather than national or regional level ones that may be big enough to have the expertise required or links into national umbrella bodies.

VCS challenges

Future challenges facing the sector included:

- Developing consortia or partnership working and responding to commissioning, particularly for larger bids, including the need for facilitation and brokering of this.
- Undertaking strategic or policy work at a regional or sub-regional level or interpreting and influencing national initiatives - particularly regarding EU funding, devolution, health and social care transformation and cuts, and new commissioning models.

Geographical level

A major reason One East Midlands was created was the development of regional Government. While formal regional structures have been abandoned, Government still has an important regional footprint, local Government has regional representative organisations and there are important regional initiatives – Midlands Connect and Midlands Engine for Growth. The future may bring more sub-regional structures like D2N2 either through reorganising LEPs or creation of larger combined authorities.

Commissioners' needs

Commissioners wanted to hear the voice of the sector and to be able to increase its capacity and capability by providing information, advice and training, which fits with the purpose of One East Midlands. One East Midlands provided an effective level of access for the commissioners and a knowledgeable partner. There is a danger that commissioners will not take the trouble to contact local infrastructure (their resources to do this are also being reduced) and that local infrastructure will not have the capability (in terms of knowledge, expertise or relationships with their local VCS) to undertake that engagement effectively.

Future requirements for regional VCS support

Based on the findings from this research the elements below would appear to be important in considering future VCS infrastructure:

- **Geography** – any new arrangement would need to cover a large area to meet the requirements of commissioning/decision making bodies for scale and reach, but not necessarily the current East Midlands; being able to overlap other regions would be beneficial to cover emerging structures. It should not however not too large that it loses the elements below.
- **Trust** – it must have the trust of organisations in its area, particularly trust of VCS organisations. This research indicates that One East Midlands has been a trusted organisation as a result of the competencies of the staff but also because it is a “pure” infrastructure body that aims to not compete with frontline or local infrastructure VCS organisations.

- **Relationships, connections, and networks** – it needs to be able to talk to the right people and to be able to broker relationships within and between sectors, including being able to link local and national levels.
- **Expertise, capability and capacity** – can talk the language of commissioners and VCS and be a credible representative of the sector.

Conclusion and next steps

Overall One East Midlands is thought of highly amongst the VCS and its partners including decision makers and funders. This research has demonstrated a role for regional infrastructure (with potential changes to geographical remit) and VCS organisations and decision makers / commissioners alike will miss One East Midlands' role. There are activities that are needed at a sub-regional or regional level, but no easy answers to the problem of funding, particularly that of core funding to be able to continue providing functions such as information, foresight, intelligence and relationship building that mean that other opportunities can be identified and pursued. These findings could provide impetus for the VCS and its partners to come together to shape what is needed for the future.

The conference on 26 November can be used to test the appetite for holding discussions and finding a solution. Perhaps organisations collectively need to consider what they will lose in order to identify whether there is an appetite to either identify how to keep One East Midlands or to put something else in place to adapt to the future environment.

For commissioners, decision makers, funders and other partners:

- Is it important for commissioners to have an organisation with wide scale and reach it can work with efficiently to do what One EM have done?
- What extra work will it cause funders as a result and what will it cost them to undertake it themselves?
- What will the impact be on communities and services of not involving the VCS?

For VCS organisations:

- What will the VCS lose as a result of the loss of One East Midlands?
 - Might regional / sub-regional and national commissioners decide that engagement with a range of VCS organisations at different levels is too complex and time consuming and so not involve the VCS at all?
 - How would VCS organisations, particularly infrastructure organisations, need to organise themselves at levels above local to be able to open up opportunities for the VCS across the region?
-

1. About One East Midlands

1.1 Role

One East Midlands is the regional network for the voluntary and community sector and social enterprise sector (VCS) in the East Midlands region with a mission to maximise the role of the VCS as an influential, valued and equal partner in all policy development.

It identifies its role as being to ensure that all elements of the VCS play a valued role in the development of policies and strategies that impact on the individuals and communities in our region. In particular, aiming to prioritise support to those parts of the VCS with specialist perspectives and knowledge or working with those communities facing most disadvantage.

There are four core strategic functions:

1. Influencing

Creating an environment for the VCS to exert strategic influence through:

- Developing strategic links
- Shaping policy
- Advocating the role of the VCS

2. Enabling

Developing the sector 'landscape' to enable and support collaboration, develop consensus and raise collective voice:

- Supporting networks and sector representatives
- Facilitate wider 'third sector' collaboration
- Levering resources

3. Communicating

Ensuring greater understanding through effective communication:

- Website and e-bulletin services
- Magazine
- Promoting the sector and our members

4. Strengthening

Supporting the development of the sector:

- Training
 - Sharing best practice and supporting collaboration
 - Events and networking opportunities
-

1.2 One East Midlands' activities

One East Midlands has been active in a number of areas of policy, particularly economic development and European funding, and health and social care, consistent with its aims to influence policy development and inform the sector of changes that affect it as reflected in its strapline - 'getting voices heard and shaping change'. It has also provided some general infrastructure support and some targeted support around BME and youth.

Infrastructure support

VCS infrastructure support is help given to organisations to develop and grow and engage with influencing policy, strategy and decision-making.

One East Midlands played a role in '*The Big Assist*' a national programme of support for VCS infrastructure organisations. It provided a range of events to inform VCS stakeholders about the support available from this programme to improve infrastructure support to the sector. It provides *information about the sector* including local infrastructure organisations, specialist networks and social enterprises through its web site.

Support has been provided to three specialist networks the *Network for the Voluntary Youth Sector (EMVY)*, the *East Midlands Funding Advice Network (EMFAN)* and a *BME Network*. It ran a 'Closer Links' project through EMFAN to help increase the capacity of the sector to raise funding.

A range of events such as the *Volunteers conference*, the *Lay Leadership conference* and an *annual conference* to explore current issues and best practice were held as well as many events related to the policy work described below. Material such as *Member case studies* were prepared to show case the work of the sector and to spread best practice within the sector.

Work has also been undertaken to support the 3D infrastructure consortium in Derbyshire to develop their Big Lottery funded Transforming Local Infrastructure project.

Economic Development and European Union Funding

Working with the Department for Communities and Local Government, One East Midlands led the *European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) Reach and Impact* project. This focused on increasing awareness of the funding opportunities from ERDF and actively encouraging third sector organisations to engage in the ERDF programme and to ensure they have the right information to access this stream of European Funding. Its objectives were:

- Increasing voluntary and community sector (VCS) engagement
- Unlocking potential match funding
- Supporting the development of local collaborative approaches

- Improving impact and learning in targeted communities

Case studies and publicity were used to increase awareness and understanding of practical applications of ERDF, events were held for VCS organisations to increase engagement, tools and resources were developed for funding advisors to build their capacity to advise on ERDF funding and new potential sources of match with traditional VCS funders were identified. Work was undertaken with East Midlands Councils to target disadvantaged communities by supporting collaborative local partnerships with VCS organisations and supporting peer learning between targeted communities.

Skills Support for the Workforce was a Big Lottery funded scheme to help improve the skills of employees and eligible volunteers working for charities, voluntary and community sector, social enterprises and other not-for-profit organisations in Leicester and Leicestershire. Training needs were delivered by Leicester and other local colleges. One East Midlands took the role of a capacity building partner to enhance equality and reach across beneficiary groups and to help delivery partners' access VCS organisations.

One East Midlands received programme development funding from the Big Lottery to support the relationship between D2N2 and the VCS in its area through which it wanted to ensure that the benefits of economic growth reached more disadvantaged communities. One East Midlands led the recruitment of a VCS representative on the D2N2 Board and general communications between D2N2 and VCS organisations. It led the development of a Social Inclusion Framework to add detail to D2N2's European Strategic Investment Framework (ESIF) with the remit to:

- Further engage with and gather wider opinion from organisations across the D2N2 area on the framework
- Raise awareness of the EU SIF opportunities available with the Big Lottery Fund opt-in
- Prepare organisations intending to bid for this opportunity
- Identify and support the initial foundations of partnership building
- Develop a shared vision and approaches between the local enterprise partnership (LEP) and the sector to tackle social inclusion that enables inclusive economic development and growth.

One East Midlands then led research into what should be funded by D2N2's community programme including some development and networking sessions around worklessness, multiple and complex needs, financial inclusion and a technical workshop.

Health and Social Care

One East Midlands is part of the *Regional Voices for Better Health* network, which partnered with the Department of Health, NHS England and Public Health England to champion the work of organisations to improve health, wellbeing and care. Its aims are to improve health and reduce health inequalities by:

- Connecting policy makers with the work of voluntary and community organisations at regional and national levels, to shape and improve health and care services for local communities.
- Informing voluntary and community organisations about changing health structures and how to engage with them.
- Championing better commissioning and co-production of health, wellbeing and care services, in partnership between statutory and voluntary organisations.
- Influencing health and social care policy at regional and national levels through identifying good practice and sending powerful, co-ordinated messages to government, based on evidence and consultation with voluntary and community organisations.

There were 500 VCS organisations in the network demonstrating One East Midlands' considerable reach. Associated with this work was a '*Wellbeing East Midlands who's who*', a range of resources on the One East Midlands' website and work to support VCS representatives on Health and Wellbeing Boards.

The *Better Data* project was a collaboration between Public Health England, NICE (The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence) and One East Midlands to increase the capacity of VCS organisations to utilise both their own and public health and other published data to make their business cases for service delivery more robust. The underlying rationale for the work was to address the low levels of VCS service delivery compared to its potential to access target population groups in the context of the expectations of commissioners for evidenced based solutions.

Other work

One East Midlands led or were involved in a range of other projects including:

- Integration through sports development capacity project
- Poverty work including East Midlands Poverty Convention to mark 2010 as the Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion
- Homeless research
- Work to support the development of the VCS in Rutland with RCC

Strategic influence and representation

One East Midlands' Chief Executive Rachel Quinn represented the VCS regionally and nationally on a number of Government boards and working groups including the East Midlands and national European funding boards.

2. Research

2.1 Methodology

Information was collected through two main methods, an online survey and telephone interviews.

Survey

The online survey was open for nearly three weeks during the end of October and beginning of November. It was promoted through One East Midlands' mailing list and received 112 respondents, including 49 frontline organisations, 38 infrastructure organisations, 16 Government, public sector or funder respondents. A full breakdown of respondents is in appendix one.

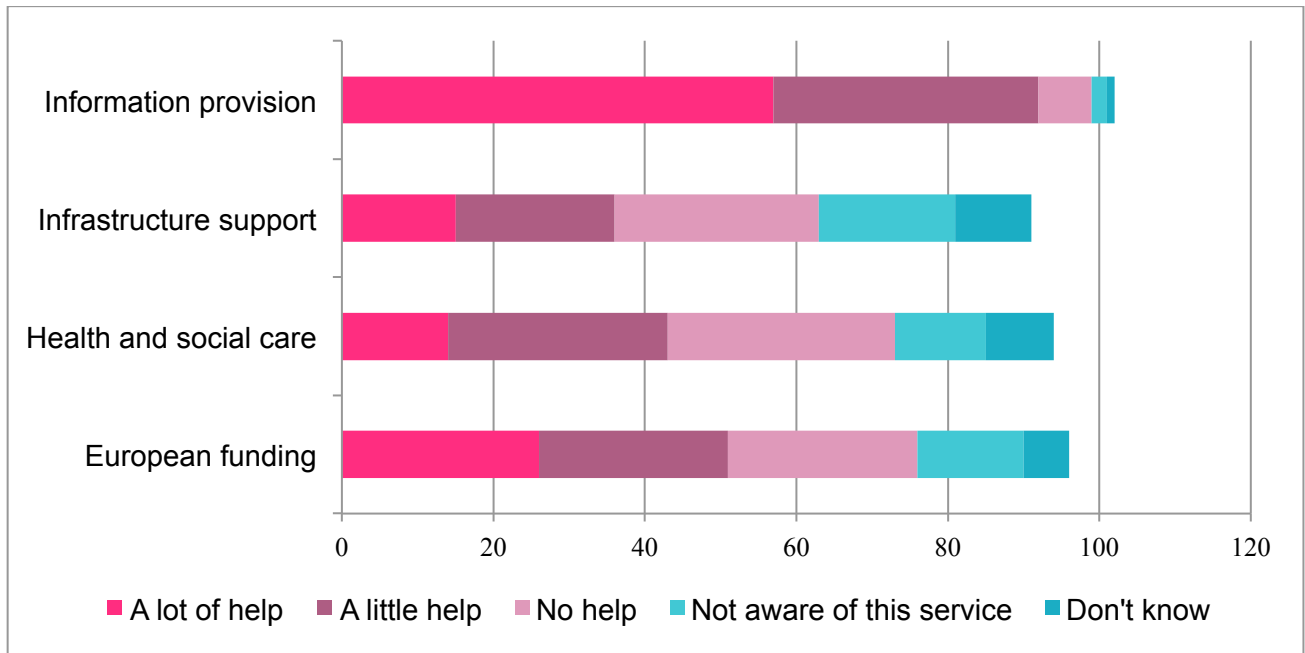
Telephone interviews

Telephone interviews were carried out with 26 people identified because they have a key role either nationally, regionally or locally. This consisted of 26 organisations, including infrastructure organisations, frontline VCS organisations, Government or public sector commissioners or decision makers, funders, One East Midlands' trustees, staff and consultants. A list of interviewees is available at appendix two.

3. Value and impact

3.1 Support accessed and what was valued by stakeholders

The survey identified that respondents had accessed the following types of support:



The research investigated what had been valued from the support provided by One East Midlands, and the impact of that support on their organisation and beneficiaries. Areas highlighted by survey respondents and interviewees are detailed below

- **Information provision and networking** - the information role of One East Midlands was most used, with nearly 60% of survey respondents identifying that they had a lot of help. Survey comments included,

A good source of information for across the region. (Survey respondent)

The only body that brought together accurate up to date details of NHS providers commissioners. (Survey respondent)

Many people also mentioned opportunities to share information, network and increase knowledge and contacts, for example:

Notification about funding and up to date information relating to government strategic direction. (Survey respondent)

Access to training on commissioning. (Survey respondent)

Events have proven very valuable in enabling me to improve my skills and knowledge, which facilitates better communication with CCG and other health professionals. They have also enabled me to network with other VCS and statutory contacts whom I otherwise wouldn't have met. (Survey respondent)

- **Support for the VCS to deliver European funding programmes** - This included work to influence the European funding programme and raise awareness with LEPs to include the VCS in strategies and delivery, and support for the VCS to understand and access European funding.

Through OEMs input we were able to understand what would be required of EU funding. Our district is peripheral to the region and our LEP area, and can be seen as too far away from the urban centres of the region to bother delivering in but OEM brought an early event to us, ensuring that those organisations interested could find out more without having to travel huge distances. This in turn meant our beneficiary organisations and their beneficiaries have a better chance of gaining some benefit through this round of EU funding. (Survey respondent)

The seminars and events to explain the operation and opportunities of EU funding were very helpful - enabled us to make successful applications for funding. (Survey respondent)

D2N2 is a new area and no other organisations as well placed to cover both. One East Midlands encouraged bids across D2N2 that probably wouldn't have happened without them – they would have had separate county responses. It would have led to many more arguments and debates because everyone would be looking at their own area. If One East Midlands hadn't done the Inclusion Forum then the D2N2 social inclusion policy would have suffered and wouldn't have been so good. (Funder)

Rachel was included in meetings to think about the implications for the sector. I can't think who else would do it. It's been their finest hour. (VCS infrastructure organisation)

Organising meetings for new ESF funding helped us partner with lead organisations. (Survey respondent)

Case study – D2N2

D2N2 engaged OEM to develop its engagement with the VCS in its area in 2014. Covering two County Councils, two City Councils and 15 District Councils, D2N2 wanted to ensure its engagement with the sector was representative and allowed the LEP to ensure that the added value of economic development benefited those most in need.

While some LEPs were able to engage with a single main infrastructure organisation for their area, there are a multiplicity of infrastructure organisations in D2N2's area. In the absence of a sub-regional infrastructure body, D2N2 turned to OEM because of its regional coverage, independence and trusted reputation.

OEM ran a recruitment process across the whole area to ensure the selected D2N2 Board member represented the sector as a whole and was seen to do so. They facilitated communications between the Board member and the sector as a whole and led the development of a Social Inclusion Framework to add detail to the ESIF strategy and guide funding decisions.

The Framework was prepared with the full involvement of the sector and enabled a consortium for delivery to be built and ranges of views about whether funding should be geographically or thematically organised for example to be substantially reconciled.

This process enabled D2N2 to be sure that it had established a relationship with the VCS in its area that was inclusive and representative.

Matthew Wheatley D2N2's Growth Plan manager said:

One East Midlands used its expertise and independence to engage effectively with the diversity of the VCS across the D2N2 area and enabled us to establish a trusted and representative relationship with the sector that underpins our efforts to ensure the benefits of economic growth are spread as widely as possible.

- **Health and wellbeing work** - Building relationships between decision makers and commissioners and the VCS to enable greater participation in the delivery of health and social care services was also mentioned,

Better Data conference was very helpful for networking and increasing my understanding of how to access and use data - especially NICE info. This improved quality of bids (still under consideration. If successful, will improve services for adults with learning disabilities). (Survey respondent)

Information on national Health Literacy forum which was invaluable and has led to direct engagement. (Survey respondent)

They helped us deliver some Health Literacy awareness training which was then taken up by Public Health England and then delivered to a wide range of practitioners. It is difficult to quantify precise benefits on communities but evidence suggests that greater practitioner awareness of health literacy means patients etc. are given information in a format they find easier to understand. (Survey respondent)

I'm more aware of who's around and better at using health service jargon, I can talk their language and get on an equal footing. Health services are more aware of the VCS and our potential. (Frontline VCS organisation)

Case study - ADASS

One East Midlands and the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) East Midlands jointly led a project to shape the personalisation of social care services across the region with the aim to achieve 'long term improvements in outcomes for services users'.

A co-design approach was adopted with four task and finish groups jointly led by a VCS and Local Authority representative. This was enabled by the existence of the One East Midlands Health and Social Care Network. Each of the task groups reported their findings and made recommendations.

Some of these focused on improving practice within local authority areas - for example *"Making it Real techniques offered the opportunity for meaningful VCS/LA dialogue outside of the traditional commissioner/supplier relationship"*. These types of findings can be described as improving joint learning.

Others identified issues that needed to be addressed across local authorities in the region - for example. *"Different interpretations by legal teams in each local authority about what can and cannot be done"*. These types of findings can be described as taking practical steps to improve access to markets by VCS providers.

The potential for continued activity at the regional level therefore covered:

- Spreading learning - for example that there should be regional resources to help each LA refresh their processes using a Making it Real approach and that there should be regional provider engagement events to allow providers to get a better perspective of social care transformation.
- Improved consistency - for example the definition and adoption of common definitions across the region the mapping of user and carer satisfaction across the region.

There has been no longitudinal work to assess the extent to which the recommendations of the project have been implemented or whether they have helped achieve the stated aim of long term improvements to the outcomes for service users, but there have been positive comments from participants about how it has built their skills and the capacity of their organisations.

Case study – Better Data Project

A consortium led by Public Health England (East Midlands), NICE and One East Midlands was formed to support VCS organisations to use their own and published data to improve the quality and applicability of business cases and to understand the importance of NICE's quality care standards.

There were two related drivers for the work.

First that, even though the VCS had the ability to work with disadvantaged people and communities that the statutory sector wanted to help, the sector only spends 2% of total government public service delivery spend. The report on the project identifies,

The sector is a key driver for social and economic progress with a track record in supporting community based, person centred solutions that focus on building capacity, resilience and empowering individuals. Services are effective in impacting upon health inequalities, both through addressing wider social determinants, and by engaging with so called 'hard to reach' groups and those who may not access traditional, mainstream services, often within the most deprived communities.

Second, because of the recognition that the complex dilemma between the need to seek innovative solutions to ease health and social care pressures and costs, and perceived risks of investing in delivery models that may not demonstrate evidence based approaches and evaluation methodology in a way that resonates with commissioners may be a factor in the potential under use of the sector in service delivery.

The project therefore set out to help VCS organisations understand the link between the use of public health intelligence, commissioning decisions and VCS market share and the importance of evaluating their own services and tracking the outcomes they achieve. It also sought to establish a dialogue about how the VCS might contribute more effectively to JSNAs and be more influential in commissioning decisions.

A number of events were held which showed that the VCS did not all appreciate the range of intelligence available to them or how to apply it and an absence of mechanisms to enable VCS organisations to contribute to that intelligence.

Evaluation showed that the process had helped increase VCS organisations understanding, with 93% of participants saying that they understood how to access data through NICE and Public Health England, between 86-90% saying they had a greater understanding of how to use these resources to evidence need and impact, and 57% a greater understanding of how to use resources to help with fundraising.

The work is ongoing and there has been a suggestion there is a need for further training and awareness raising of opportunities across the East Midland region including considering the development of webinars, training events and how to guides.

- **Funding Advice Network** - The work done to support funding advisers across the region, although this was impacted by cuts to the VCS and the reduction in the number of funding advisers across the region.

OEM's Funding Advice Network provided some excellent learning and networking opportunities across the region. (Survey respondent)

- **Link between national and local bodies** - The geographic level of regional support providing a good link between national policies and local delivery.

OEM provided access to the VCS at a scale that was manageable and practical for a national organisation. (Commissioner / decision maker)

Rachel Quinn's involvement at a national level was very beneficial to the sector, there was national impact. (Commissioner / decision maker)

- **Providing intelligence** - Commissioners, funders and decision makers valued the role of One East Midlands in providing intelligence to enable them to carry out their roles.

There is a need for wider intelligence across the region to help understand what is happening to be better prepared for conversations. (Funder)

- **Trust, independence and impartiality** - The impartiality and independence of One East Midlands to be able to act as an honest broker for the VCS, included in this is the decision to be solely infrastructure and not compete for frontline delivery.

They were crucial, it would have been very difficult to do [the project] without them, One East Midlands are trusted by the sector. (Commissioner / decision maker)

They helped our consortium because they understood what they were doing, they understood the local agencies and they had credibility, they wanted the best outcomes for VCS groups and showed commitment and impartiality. Without them, we would have had a more fractious process and damaged relationships.

(Infrastructure organisation)

One East Midlands takes ideas from its members, they are very good at listening and solutions are co-produced. (Frontline organisation)

- **Vision and foresight** - The ability to think ahead and to enable the involvement of the VCS in different programmes.

One East Midlands, led by its Chief Executive Rachel Quinn, have been a very forward thinking organisation. (Funder)

It's a sad day, they will be missed, they are a trailblazer. (Commissioner / decision maker)

[One East Midlands] is at the cutting edge of changes in health. (Frontline organisation)

- **Promoting the VCS** - Raising the profile of the VCS as a knowledgeable and credible partner and therefore increasing opportunities for funding.

It was good practice in co-production with co-chairs and 50/50 membership of task groups to build trust and remove some anxiety in local authorities about the capacity and capability of the as providers. (Commissioner)

- **Ways of working and approach of staff** - It was not just what One East Midlands did but how they did it that was emphasised as important. There were also comments about the way in which One East Midlands worked to develop trust, and about the skills, knowledge and expertise of staff, particularly the Chief Executive but also other roles.

Rachel Quinn has been a particularly good spokesperson for the sector. She is clear thinking and thinks on her feet. She has an astute awareness, identifies issues and asks pertinent and searching questions when necessary, and she promotes the sector with influence to stakeholders in other sectors. (Survey respondent)

Colleagues were passionate and supportive in what we requested. Their dedication to make it work helped the success of the project. (Survey respondent)

The consummate skills, ability and commitment of the CEO; the high standard of work produced; the area covered (EM wide); the integrity of the organisation (no conflicts of interest); professional objectivity. (Survey respondent)

- **Working with a diverse VCS** - Other people mentioned the ability to bring together a diverse VCS from different parts of the region and consisting of smaller and larger organisations,

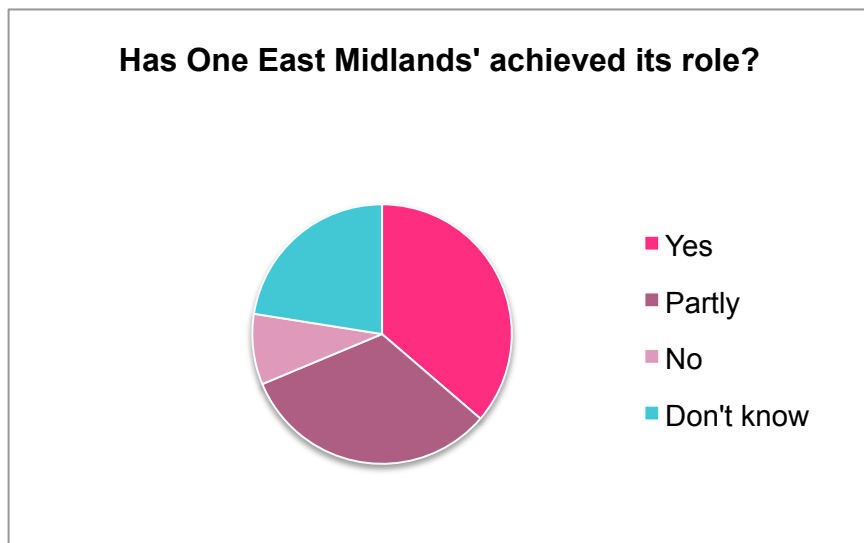
One East Midlands has been fantastic at bringing the diverse VCS together from a disparate and diverse region. One East Midlands has been excellent at understanding the needs of the different counties and cities and the urban / rural differences. (Survey respondent)

- **Building relationships between commissioners and the VCS** - The ability to develop positive relationships between the VCS and commissioners and decision makers,

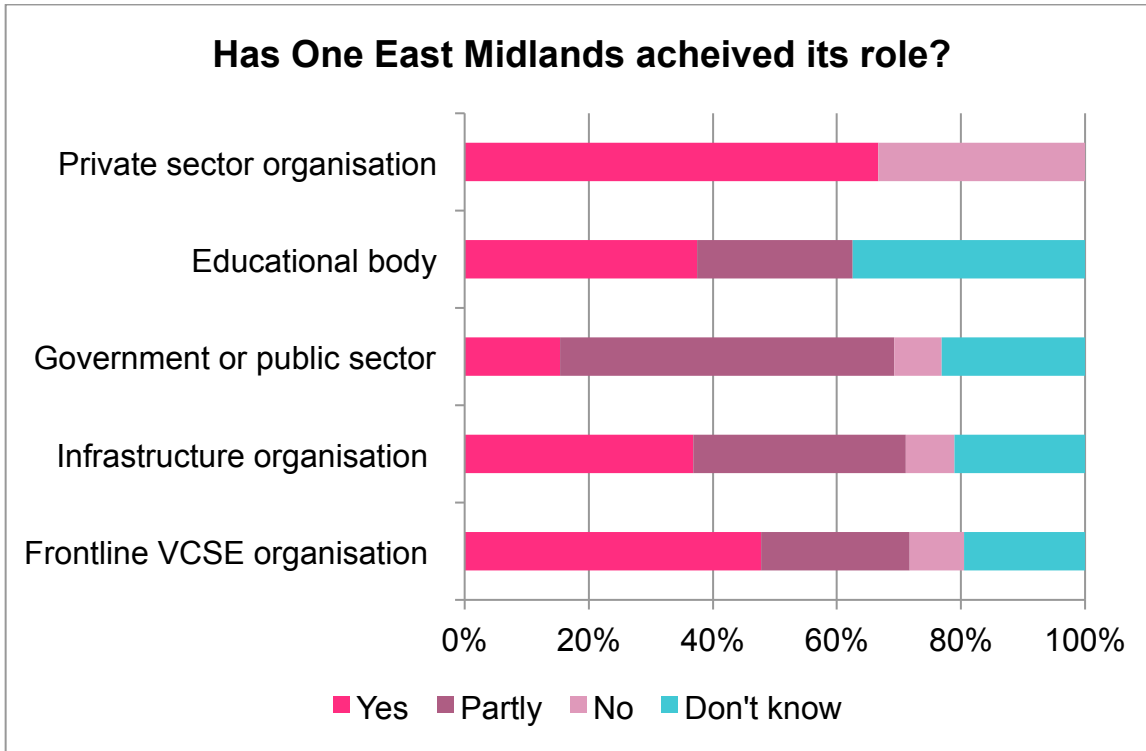
OEM had the ability to facilitate the right discussions, at the right time with the right people. (VCS infrastructure organisation)

3.2 Has One East Midlands achieved its role?

Of survey respondents, 36% said yes, 32% said partly, only 9% said no and 23% said they didn't know.



However, this varied by organisation type with frontline organisations more likely to agree (48%) than infrastructure organisations (37%) or Government or public services (15%). Numbers of educational bodies and private sector organisations were small.



As you might expect given work with D2N2, the Local Enterprise Partnership for Derby, Derbyshire, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, organisations in these areas were more likely to answer yes, with the fewest yes answers and the most don't knows in Northamptonshire. Lincolnshire had similar answers to the D2N2 counties, with Rutland not far behind. Leicestershire was slightly more positive than Leicester City, just above Northamptonshire.

Amongst organisation sizes, medium sized organisations (£25k - £249k) gave the most positive answers, with smaller organisations (under £25k) giving fewer yes and more don't know answers.

It was clear that some respondents who answered “partly” did so because,

The issue here is equal partner – the VCS is rarely welcomed by others as an equal partner and therefore often has to struggle to be valued and have influence - this is not a criticism of One East Midlands more a statement about how hard it is to influence and be valued as an equal partner – One East Midlands has made some great inroads in raising profile in this respect particularly with health and public health. (Survey respondent)

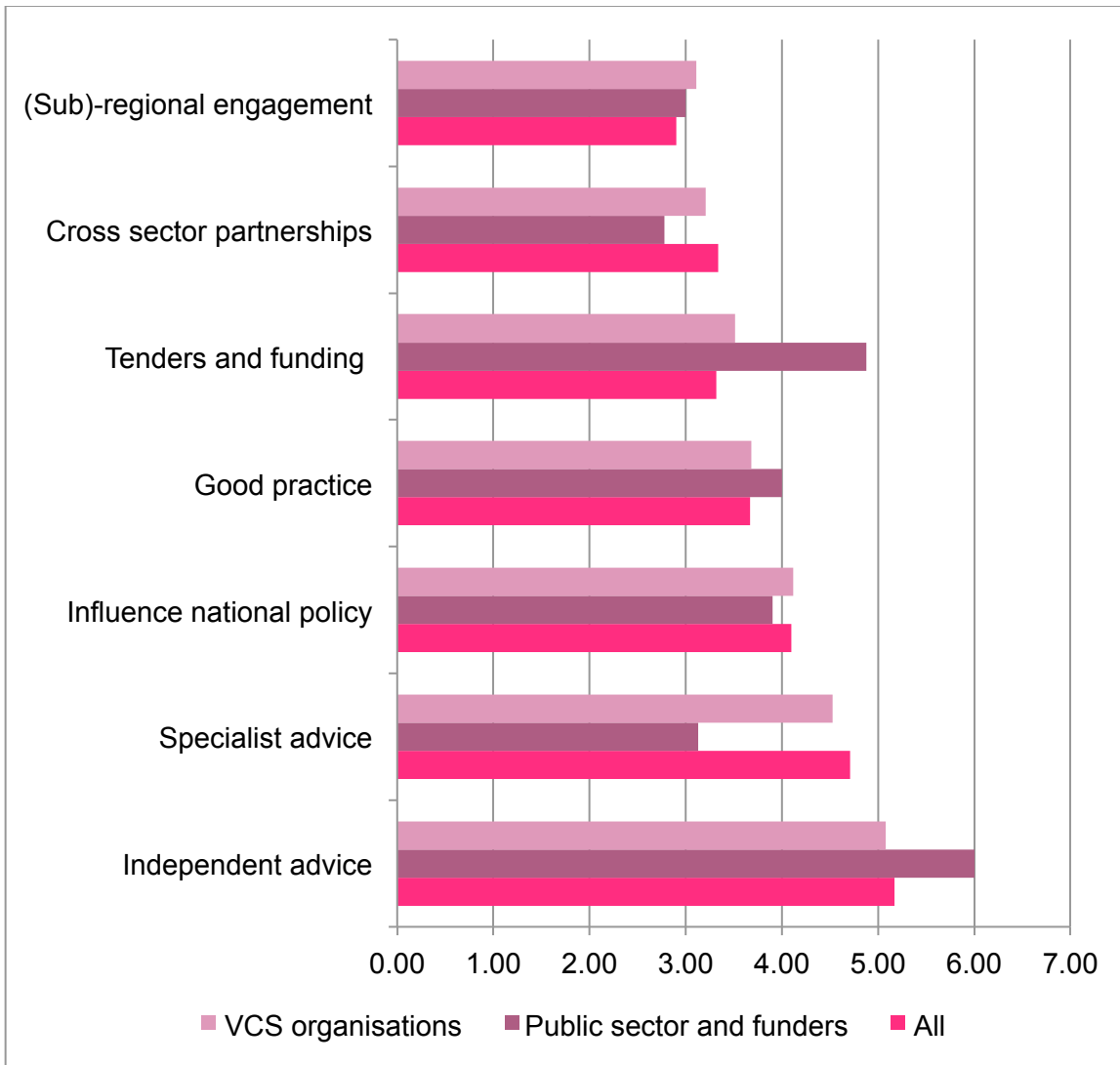
I think they have had a good deal of influence and have been able to attract attention to our work in the East Midlands at a national level. The role of the VCS is still not equal or fully valued by our partners in terms of policy development as it gets translated to the localities. We are still not fully engaged with in terms of things like JSNAs and Health and Wellbeing Board activity. (Survey respondent)

3.3 Functions of regional infrastructure

Respondents were asked to rank the different functions of regional infrastructure as to their importance. The responses, with most important first were:

1. Being able to support engagement with regional or sub-regional commissioners and decision makers and other bodies
2. Building cross sector relationships and partnerships
3. To coordinate tenders and funding applications for programmes that are above local level, e.g. two or more cities / counties.
4. Being able to share good practice with a wider range of agencies
5. As a good level to get together to influence national policy
6. To get specialist advice that isn't available at a local or national level
7. To get support and advice that is independent of local organisations

NB in the chart below a lower score = a higher ranking



The largest differences between the answers of organisations and Government, public sector and other funders included:

- The VCS ranked coordinating tenders and funding applications higher.
 - Government and public sector organisations and funders ranked the ability to get specialist advice higher than the VCS, but ranked getting advice independent of the local VCS lower.
-

4. Learning points

Survey respondents were asked, “What hasn't been successful, useful or relevant to you?” Satisfaction with One East Midlands overall was very high, but there were a few examples given including:

- **The relationship with local infrastructure organisations** in terms of developing infrastructure, having a more consistent relationship across the region (which is of course partly out of the control of One East Midlands) and promoting the role of infrastructure.

I think OEM (and we as a local infrastructure organisation) have failed to demonstrate the benefit/impact of support provided by local infrastructure organisations could have been more consistent or proactive. (Survey respondent)

While we know our own district council values our input at the moment, local infrastructure support is now poorly funded and at risk. When it is gone, there will be no impact to measure and small local communities and community organisations (and some relatively larger ones in rural areas) will struggle and be poorer in every way as a result. (Survey respondent)

They could have been more effective in promoting a more positive relationship when cuts to VCS infrastructure were being made and relationships were poor. (Commissioner / decision maker)

- **Clarity about One East Midlands role and scope** with uncertainty amongst different stakeholders at times about what it did, and also suggestions that they could have promoted and supported the VCS better,

The public sector sometimes had an unrealistic view of One East Midlands being able to stay in contact with what's going on the ground across the region. (Partner)

Not sure what funding they have managed to pull down which is key for the VCS. (Survey respondent)

It is a shame we were not able to explore promoting the VCS more in our project. (Survey respondent)

They could have done more about the needs of the sector, they were quite reactive. (Infrastructure organisation)

One interviewee suggested that some of what One East Midlands did was invisible to many organisations but the VCS was benefiting anyway,

One East Midlands is involved in policy debates that benefits the sector without them knowing. (Infrastructure organisation)

- **Acting sooner about the end of regionalisation** - a few people suggested that it was inevitable that a regional organisation would close with the end of regionalisation, and suggested that One East Midlands could have acted sooner,

The writing was on the wall when EMDA dissolved and the board could have been honest at that point about what the purpose was. (Funder)

- **Work in specific areas** – there were two comments that One East Midlands could have done more work in specific areas,

Not enough work in learning disability. (Survey respondent)

The one gap I would have liked filled more recently that wasn't, was in supporting and promoting the role of community and cooperative enterprise, or at least in working more with those in this sector in the region to do so. (Survey respondent)

- **Other comments** – there were three general negative comments:

Limited interaction and no take up of offers of help. (Survey respondent)

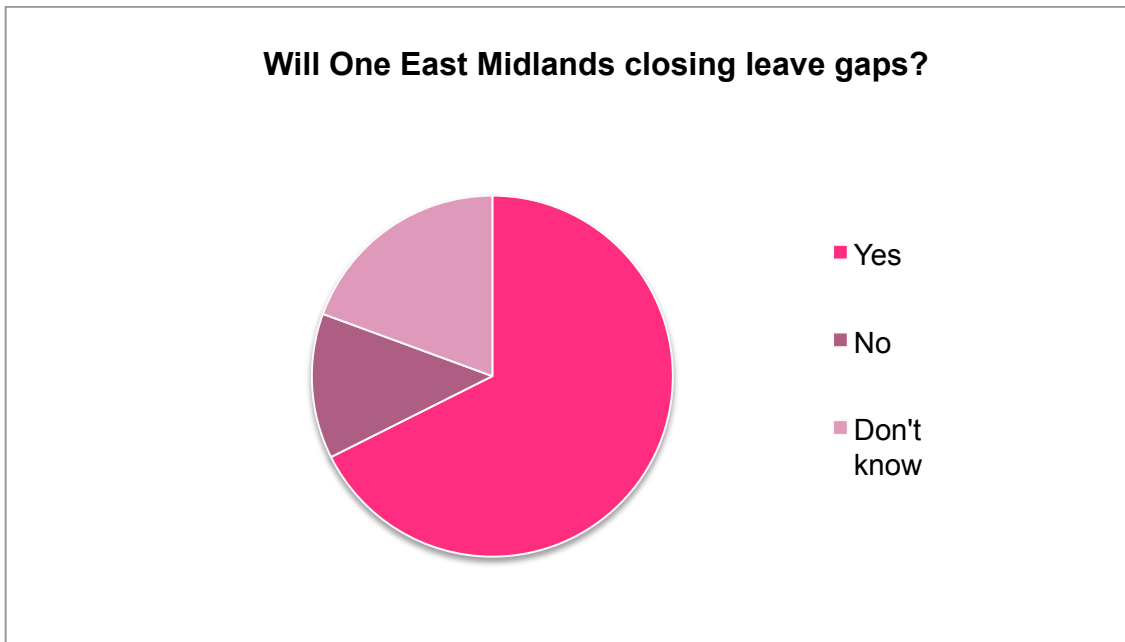
90% of One East Midlands [was not successful / useful]. (Survey respondent)

Faced nothing but disinterest as a new small provider. The organisation clearly got too big greedy and lost its focus. (Survey respondent)

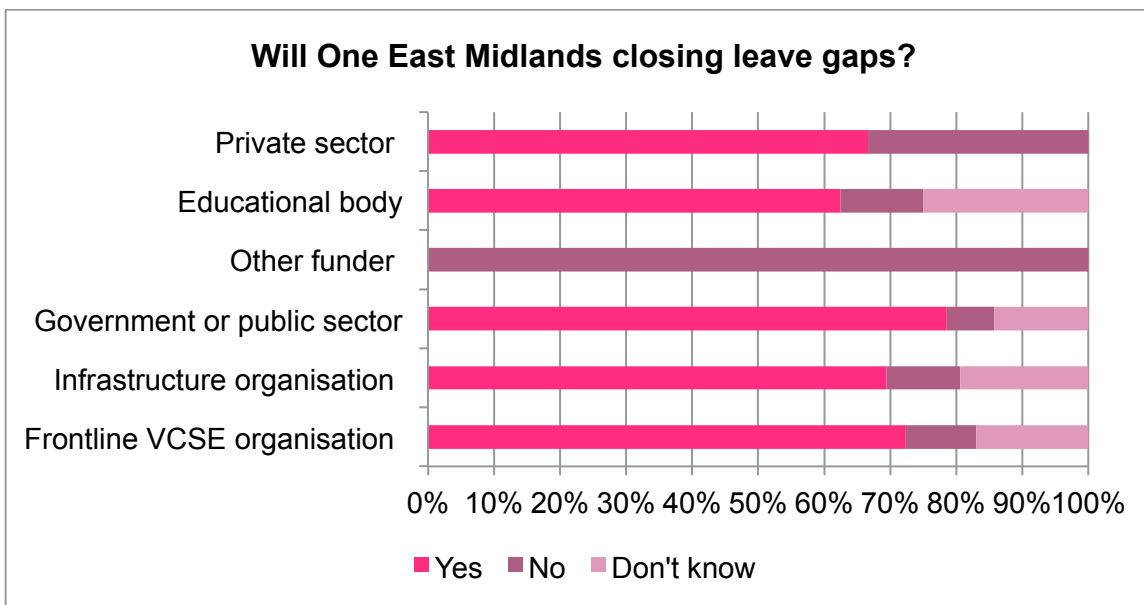
5. Future gaps

5.1 Will One East Midlands closing leave a gap?

The majority of respondents (68%) thought that there would be a gap left by One East Midlands closing, with 13% saying no, and 20% don't know.



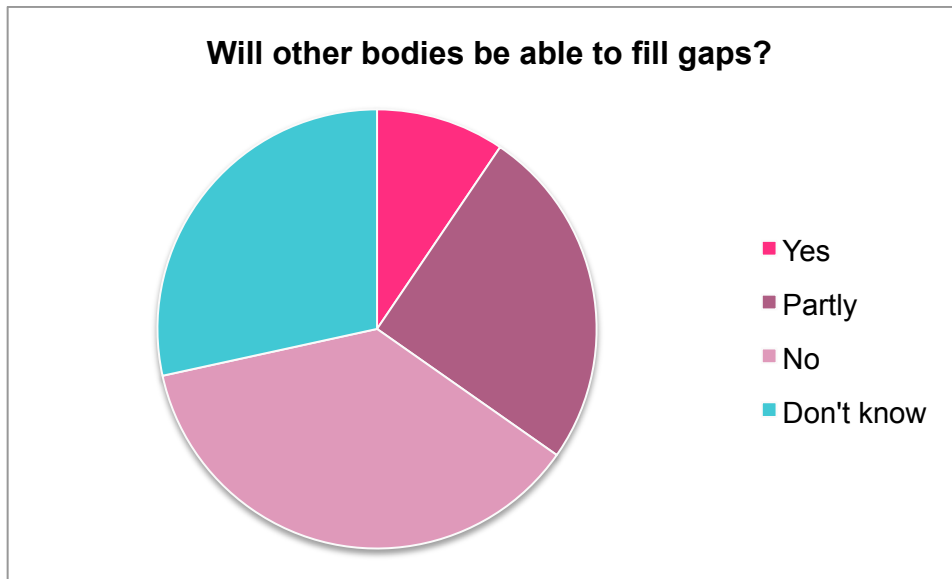
Interestingly, Government and Public sector respondents were most likely to identify that there would be a gap – 78% of respondents, with education bodies and funders less likely to say yes.



Northamptonshire (59%) and Rutland (60%) based groups were less likely to say yes, with Nottinghamshire (76%), Derby City and Leicester City (both 74%) most likely to say yes.

5.2 Will other bodies be able to fill gaps?

Fewer than 10% of respondents thought that other organisations would be able to fill the gaps left by One East Midlands.



Of the people who thought that there would be a gap (73 organisations), no one thought that existing local or national bodies would be able to fill this role completely, although 17 organisations answered partly.

Reasons given for this included:

- Loss of knowledge, networks and relationships:

One East Midlands had an established network that reached many organisations and it would take another organisation many years to establish the same level in which time many opportunities would be missed by smaller organisations. (Survey respondent)

Partly but there will be big gaps and information will only be available from a variety of sources which will take a long time to gather and will be beyond the capacity of many organisations. (Survey respondent)

With One EM closing the capacity to do any of the work will be reduced. The VCS cannot play an effective role in using ESIF funds for development unless they are well informed about opportunities and rules. (Survey respondent)

No-one has the knowledge, experience, capacity or the reach that One EM has - this is a fine example of an approachable and affordable infrastructure service and one that has worked diligently to support and develop the sector over the last few years. (Survey respondent)

- Knowledge of the characteristics of the East Midlands and capacity that national organisations don't have:

National organisations do not have the capacity to represent the interests of local organisations. (Survey respondent)

I work for a national infrastructure organisation supporting local voluntary schemes. There is no way we could take on the role of OEM and have any chance at doing it successfully. Having OEM is such a huge benefit to the sector and it does a valuable job. (Survey respondent)

- Loss of functions that are best at regional level for economies of scale, geographic proximity or critical mass:

Some national organisations provide good web-based information and what look like good training courses. However, we cannot afford the cost or travel for most such events, so the loss of regional events is a shame. County and district level organisations seem to provide activities focused more on smaller groups, without the more strategic overview, so don't fill the same needs. (Survey respondent)

In my opinion, there is still a need for regional infrastructure and information bodies who can act as broker between national policy and local delivery. I actually think regional infrastructure support arrangements would be more cost effective in terms of spread, coverage and savings in back office costs. (Survey respondent)

- The independence and impartiality of One East Midlands:

One thing I valued about OEM was their position of understanding the sector, the region and its environment, but of also being able to be impartial. This impartiality gave it space to act as a facilitator and support an organisation or group of organisations either formally or tactfully and informally. (Survey respondent)

Local bodies are too inward looking and lack objectivity - often too focused on their own survival that they cannot be impartial. (Survey respondent)

Most local organisations are influenced by self-interest and do not represent the sector objectively. (Survey respondent)

- The lack of any organisations to undertake representation or development at regional or sub-regional levels where this is needed:

OEM was the only opportunity to engage with other organisations on a regional basis. The regional focus is important for medium organisations like my own, especially when considering how we might access funding from national sources. (Survey respondent)

Local bodies do not work together. (Survey respondent)

The advent of the D2N2 LEP has made organisations think in terms of a broader geographic focus and stimulated consortia development that will aid the D2N2 region. (Survey respondent)

There's a concern now that funders will all need to keep several different mailing lists to get information out to the VCS. (Funder)

- The link to national organisations and policy making:

There needs to be a link to the national agendas and policy makers, think tanks and government departments in order for real equality to be achieved in the East Midlands for the VCS. Local organisations tend not to have this level of influence or engagement and nationally the focus is on London and the larger charities due to location and ease of access etc. (Survey respondent)

- The link to other cuts within infrastructure services:

It feels as if infrastructure support is being whittled away and as a result, the support available to the sector is becoming more fragmented. (Survey respondent)

Support groups for the sector seem to be disappearing rapidly. My local CVS has recently failed too. (Survey respondent)

Since the austerity cuts began, we have lost staff and are all working at full capacity to deliver the same level of service. I'm sure other organisations are in the same boat. (National infrastructure organisation)

Local infrastructure is stronger in some areas but there are ongoing challenges about funding. (Funder)

It's right that they stayed as a pure infrastructure organisation, so inevitable that their funding would reduce. (Commissioner / decision maker)

Of the people who thought that there wouldn't be a gap or they didn't know (35 organisations), nine organisations thought that local or national organisations would fill the gap completely and seven said partly. Reasons given included:

Other organisations could provide the support:

[Local or sub-regional organisations] provided this service previously. (Survey respondent)

We have tended to us the local Voluntary and Community Services support. (Survey respondent)

There is not a need now with changing regional and local structures:

The regional outlook is outdated now there are no regions. (Survey respondent)

With the devolution of government and emphasis on local I believe the role for ONE East Midlands would have reduced. (Survey respondent)

There are no regions. I think that local and national infrastructure will continue to provide support and fill gaps. It may need some alterations but they are better placed to meet the needs of the sector. (Survey respondent)

There is no need for this type of organisation:

The sector is not about collaboration unless there is money on the table and then the organisations find appropriate partners. The sector doesn't need a coordination body. (Survey respondent)

5.3 Future challenges for the VCS

Areas identified

Survey respondents and interviewees were asked what the future challenges faced by the VCS and its partners were likely to be.

Developing consortia or partnership working and responding to commissioning, particularly for larger bids was the most common theme and the need for facilitation and brokering of this:

Responding to large scale tenders - need support to network beyond own county. (Survey respondent)

It is difficult for organisations to come together in consortia, which is what is required by some funders. Active facilitation of this would be welcomed. (Survey respondent)

Things will need to be done on a bigger basis, authorities will get together and start to put out larger contracts. Consortia need to be in place before contracts come out. (Funder)

A few people mentioned this specifically in relation to European funding and the LLEP areas:

Reduction of areas to LEPs for new ERDF/EUSIF makes working across boundaries harder. An organisation that already crosses the boundaries would have helped to develop the partnerships needed to bid for the next round of funding. (Survey respondent)

I think a regional infrastructure is very helpful in understanding the wider LLEP sub-regional landscape, in particular. In addition, for larger organisations like ours, we find that our local infrastructure body does not provide adequately for our needs and acts in competition with us often. A regional body seems to have greater independence, impartiality and clout with government departments especially. (Survey respondent)

The information from the seminars meant that we better understood risks and decided not to pursue being a lead body. (Infrastructure organisation)

Health and social care:

There will be new commissioning models of health and social care and the will have to fight our corner and work with commissioners. (Infrastructure organisation)

There are horrific social care cuts coming. (Infrastructure organisation)

There were also issues raised around responding to devolution:

I don't see a regional voice coming back but I do see the need for infrastructure to model around devolution. (VCS funder)

Other organisations specifically mentioned issues about smaller organisations being able to engage with larger organisations:

Community organisations are increasingly challenged over the high value of tenders for services that they would be best suited to deliver on. (Survey respondent)

There continues to be a need for forums to enable grass root organisations to connect and articulate with larger players across the region. (Survey respondent)

Helping to put together consortia and helping bidders to find delivery partners and helping smaller groups to join a supply chain. (Survey respondent)

Undertaking strategic or policy work at a regional or sub-regional level or interpreting and influencing national initiatives was the second largest area of comments.

Representation of the sector to the D2N2 LEP e.g. choosing the rep on the Board. (Survey respondent)

Running regional campaigns such as Halve it Local - a regional version of halving late HIV diagnosis, sharing practice and learning regionally through training and influencing together. (Survey respondent)

Responding to the challenges in health and social care which are key to our sector, cuts will be huge and we will need to be able to influence commissioning methods in order to level the playing field for the VCS. Access to national and regional bodies is very hard for local infrastructure and almost impossible for frontline organisations. (Survey respondent)

Developing regional / local responses to national policies. Co-ordination of debate; appropriate professional representation of the in high-level discussions. Having a recognised and respected advocate. (Survey respondent)

Opportunity to engage with national health professionals - Public Health, NICE, DH etc. (Survey respondent)

Access to specialist policy areas such as economic policy are difficult to access by the VCS. (Survey respondent)

There is also a need for more coordination on a health authority level. (Survey respondent).

5.4 Geographical level

Regionalism has gone but Government still has an important regional footprint, local Government still has regional representative organisations and there are important regional initiatives – Midlands Connect and Midlands Engine for Growth. The future may bring more sub-regional structures like D2N2 either through the re-organisation of LEPs or the creation of larger combined authorities. These sometimes cover areas that overlap other regions.

Maybe the links across with West Midlands - the 'Midlands Engine' may take up where the old EM structures have gone. (Survey respondent)

It is clear that for areas of specialist innovation/technology support there is not the critical mass in the LEP areas to sustain a successful project. In some cases, it has been difficult to deliver even across the whole region. (Survey respondent)

There may be a need for more local partnerships to work with emerging areas be these the LEPs or City Deal. (Survey respondent)

Regional structures

Bodies with structures between local and national include:

- DCLG and BiS Midlands Growth Team based in Nottingham and Birmingham
- East Midlands Funders Forum
- Public Health have Midlands region with East Midlands centre in Nottingham
- NHS England have regional presence – Midlands?
- ADASS – Association of Directors of Adult Social Services – regional
- Cabinet Office – regional person
- East Midlands Councils – has all East Midlands Local Authorities as members (except one) and has done work with One East Midlands around European funding

Subregional structures

Region’s LEPs	<p>D2N2 – Derby and Derbyshire, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire.</p> <p>Greater Cambridge, Greater Peterborough LEP – includes Rutland as well as Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and surrounding areas.</p> <p>Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership – Lincolnshire and North Lincolnshire unitary authority areas.</p> <p>Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership.</p> <p>Northamptonshire Enterprise Partnership – all Northamptonshire Boroughs.</p> <p>South East Midlands Local Partnership – South Northamptonshire, Northampton, Daventry, Kettering, Corby as well as Milton Keynes, Bedford, Central Bedfordshire, Luton, Cherwell and Aylesbury Vale.</p>
Devolution / combined authorities	<p>Geographic coverage uncertain at present – but larger areas are likely to bring greater powers and devolution of decision making opportunities. There is also Midlands Connect – strategic transport group and Midlands Engine for Growth that is yet to be defined but could possibly have some Midlands level governance.</p>
National delivery programmes	<p>For example Work Programme Contract Package Areas (East Midlands) or Transforming Rehabilitation (1. Derbyshire, LeicesterShire and Rutland and Nottinghamshire; 2. Northamptonshire, Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, Cambridgeshire; 3. North Yorkshire, Humberside and Lincolnshire).</p>

This suggests whilst Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire form a core area within the region, there are also overlaps with the East of England, South East, West Midlands and Yorkshire and Humber.

Recommendation

Any future infrastructure needs to be able to provide support with flexible geographic boundaries to be able to effectively deliver to each of the counties within the East Midlands to take into account the geographical areas of current and future initiatives.

5.5 The wider context of cuts

The impact of funding cuts and changing environments was also mentioned including on infrastructure services, placing the closure of One East Midlands in wider context. Points made included the need for more support to be able to respond to the ever-changing environment; that there was a need to promote good commissioning practices within local authorities to reduce the impact of cuts on the VCS; and that smaller organisations in particular struggle to remain involved and will miss the specialist information provided by One East Midlands.

Other survey respondents identified that local authorities are reducing funding to infrastructure support, so local infrastructure organisations may not be around to pick work up either. This leads to a need to find appropriate innovative ways of providing this support at grass-roots level:

One East Midlands' objective and impartial position could help find radical solutions, and therefore ensure that local communities are able to continue to voice their concerns on local and wider issues. (Survey respondent)

Local infrastructure

There was a consistent view across all interviewees and many survey respondents that local VCS infrastructure across the region had variable capacity and capability, in some places non-existent and not able to fill in gaps. Commissioners and funders identified the difficulties that they would have engaging with infrastructure across the region.

It will be difficult for organisations like mine to engage directly with local infrastructure organisations - there are quite a lot of them, there seems to be a lot of 'politics' going on around some of them and it's not clear what they offer. If the statutory sector is to continue to support the third sector as a whole in the region (post OEM) by providing information and advice and by enabling access to decision making, infrastructure in the East Midlands needs to clarify its offer and improve its accessibility. (Decision maker / commissioner)

There are too many of them and it's too much of a challenge for organisations to manage this number of stakeholders, especially when it's nice to do but not essential.

They are also likely to have less specialist knowledge. (Decision maker / commissioner).

Local infrastructure are not equipped to meet challenges. Most are too focused on trying to do things five years out of date, they are not leading and instilling change. (Funder)

Infrastructure organisations themselves recognised the challenges,

Local infrastructure has varied capacity and it is under enormous stress and pressure. (Frontline organisation).

These are the desert years for infrastructure. It's not receiving investment so we will have a much weaker sector. (Infrastructure organisation)

There has been a move in many areas towards more market driven approaches to providing support services to the VCS. For example, The Big Lottery Fund now offers Reaching Communities grant holders some "Building Capabilities" funding to be able to buy in support for organisational development, and its Local Sustainability Fund asks organisations to find an "adviser" to work with. The Big Assist fund to support local infrastructure has also worked in a similar way. Whilst there are opportunities for infrastructure organisations to gain funding working in organisations, many of these opportunities will go to individual consultants or private sector providers. It may be that consultants are able to provide a more responsive and expert organisational development service to organisations, but what is in danger of being lost is the overview of and advocacy for the as a whole and work with funders across a whole programme rather than with individual organisations.

Public funding is necessary to ensure adequate representation. (Survey respondent)

In recognition of this and following a consultation, Leicester City Council recently decided not to pursue a market driven model of infrastructure delivery.

The need to change was recognised by local infrastructure organisations themselves:

It's difficult for local infrastructure organisations to manage, we need to become entrepreneurial, we need to make a transition. (Infrastructure organisation)

Each local infrastructure organisations had engaged differently with One East Midlands across the region, with some seeing regional infrastructure as part of a jigsaw that helped them to deliver services more effectively, and others seeing it as less important and instead preferring to concentrate on local funders with more money for the VCS,

Their work around European funding enabled other infrastructure organisations to get on with their day job, someone else was looking after it for you. (Infrastructure organisation)

It is essential that infrastructure support enables front line VCS organisations to help meet the needs of the communities and individuals they serve. If those organisations are to have the maximum public funding available to them the overriding priority is to make infrastructure support relevant and useful to and influential with those public agencies and bodies that either directly or indirectly provide the majority of that funding. (Infrastructure organisation)

National infrastructure

There was no suggestion that generic national infrastructure would be able to step in and undertake the role of regional infrastructure, nor a wish from national infrastructure to do so. Comments about national infrastructure included that it was too remote, was mainly focused on the needs of larger organisations and it just did not have the local knowledge to be of practical use on the ground nor to build relationships with local commissioners and decision makers.

One funder commented that they had done some work with some of the national specialist or umbrella infrastructure organisations, e.g. those that represent one type of organisation. This may be helpful for specific programmes but does not play the role that One East Midlands has played, bringing the diverse sector together locally.

6. The future for regional support

6.1 How will people carry out work without One East Midlands?

What commissioners wanted fitted with the purpose of One East Midlands, to hear the voice of the sector and to be able to increase its capacity and capability by providing information, advice and training.

One East Midlands provided an effective level of access for the commissioners and a knowledgeable partner. There is a danger that commissioners will either not take the trouble to contact local infrastructure (their resources to do this are also being reduced) and that local infrastructure will not have the capability (in terms of knowledge, expertise or relationships with their local VCS) to undertake that engagement effectively.

Commissioners suggested that without One East Midlands they may:

- Contact some key organisations individually, possibly through local authorities, but with concerns about loss of trust and neutrality
- Work through local authorities as it's in their interest to get information out
- Not be able to involve the VCS because of time constraints
- Not be sure because of concerns about local infrastructure politics and purpose
- End up at the doors of some local infrastructure that does have understanding and capacity, but miss out others

The question for local commissioners is will they need to put more resources into the information advice and training of the VCS to enable it to provide effective local services? The question for the VCS is will its access to funding be reduced even beyond the effect of austerity reductions if it does not receive the information, advice and training at previous levels enabled by One East Midlands? This is particularly difficult for the VCS in areas where infrastructure support is either not available or provided by smaller organisations e.g. district based. It is likely to affect small and medium local organisations rather than national or regional level orgs who may be big enough to have the expertise required or links into national umbrella bodies.

6.2 Future work possibilities

The following areas emerged from the research as potential areas of work for which there may be funding, although each would require some development:

- **ESIF technical assistance**, e.g. D2N2 planning to take on someone to engage with the VCS – this could potentially be a sub-regional role. Other local infrastructure is through to the second round of technical assistance. Further discussions would need to take place with other LEPs and local infrastructure to determine other opportunities here.
- **Devolution** – the development of combined authorities could benefit from representation and development role. Without One East Midlands there won't be a single organisation to go to and local authorities will need to approach a range of organisations and deal with their complexities and politics.
- **Health and social care** – existing liaison with regional health bodies to build relationships through Regional Voices. There will also be the health and social care side of the devolution agenda and the VCS role in transformation. A number of respondents suggested that there was health funding available.
- **Consortium development** for large tenders, either national programmes such as the Work Programme or Transforming Rehabilitation, but also tendering from combined authorities and a move for bigger projects to better demonstrate impact. This could include the possibility of setting up a regional consortium that would be able to apply for contracts and raise funding through contracts or membership. There is a mixed picture in the region of consortia to respond to these opportunities and potentially a need for support to develop consortia but also to link them up at a sub-regional or regional level.
- **The “market” in infrastructure** – with a potential opportunity to earn income for consultancy work, for example support for large scale funding bids, support to organisations receiving capacity building funding from the Big Lottery or other capacity building programmes, or delivery of tenders.
- **Information provision**, newsletters etc. – this was a highly valued part of One East Midlands' work and it may be possible that organisations may be prepared to pay for the circulation of information etc. that they would otherwise struggle to do themselves.
- **Funding for business support** was a suggestion made by one of the commissioners for the role that it plays in enabling organisations to build capacity and win contracts.

Recommendation

Any of these options can be scoped out further and pursued if a decision is taken to continue a regional infrastructure service.

6.3 Suggestions for sustaining regional support

These are some of the suggestions from the survey about how regional infrastructure support could be sustained.

- **Membership**

Although I appreciate free training access to newsletters and other information. I think small charges to organisations like ours would be acceptable if it meant keeping the service on offer. (Survey respondent)

- **Restructuring infrastructure and consortium working** – suggestions included:

Merge existing local sector infrastructure bodies [but] this is not likely to happen. (Survey respondent)

There are several organisations that have roles to play, from established CVS organisations and new organisations/consortia. (Survey respondent)

Regional tendering consortium funded from successful bids. (Survey respondent)

A flexible core, which works at different geographical levels / thematic levels. (Survey respondent)

- **Need for public / grant funding** – infrastructure is not an easy function to find funding for from trusts and foundations but there may be the possibility for some funding for specific projects.

I really don't know how another organisation would have the capacity to fill the gaps. Funding could be applied for but that would take someone to be paid to apply for enough funding bids so it's a hopeless case unless the government step in again. (Survey respondent)

A proper commitment from the government to support a structure through the Cabinet Office and the LLEP structure. (Survey respondent)

- **Health funding** – there were suggestions that there could be further funding available from health bodies,

Health has lots of regional training money that the sector has not been able to access - if there was a regional approach to better care together that would enable the sector to access some of the development funds. (Survey respondent)

Maybe a hub and spoke model for infrastructure across greater geographies. With the strength of some regional infrastructure, there may be an opportunity to support local specialist infrastructure and consortium to deliver information to networks and to co-

*ordinate activity. Funding could be better used from the Department of Health.
(Survey respondent)*

Funding from LEPs – a number of people mentioned the need for ongoing support to the to ensure that the ESIF programme was delivered effectively,

Funding opportunities include the usual 'technical support' strands of EU funding, and D2N2 and Local Authorities chipping in. (Survey respondent)

Delivery through national bodies – this was a suggestion that might help with reducing the costs of delivery through economies of scale, although funding would still need to be found,

If there's not going to be a regional focus, then could provide support through national specialist infrastructure bodies [who] could be funded to do regional work, but there needs to be better understanding by statutory authorities, trusts and foundations, about the vital role that these organisations play. (Survey respondent)

6.4 Key elements of future regional infrastructure

Based on the findings from this research the elements below would appear to be important in considering future infrastructure:

- **Geography** – any new arrangement would need to cover a large area to meet the requirements of commissioning/decision making bodies for scale and reach, but not necessarily the current East Midlands, and being able to overlap would be beneficial to cover emerging structures It should not however not too large that it loses the elements below.
- **Trust** – it must have the trust of organisations in its area, particularly trust of organisations. This research indicates that One East Midlands has been a trusted organisation as a result of the competencies of the staff but also because it is a “pure” infrastructure body that aims to not compete with frontline or local infrastructure organisations.
- **Relationships, connections, and networks** – it needs to be able to talk to the right people and to be able to broker relationships within and between sectors, being able to link local and national.
- **Expertise, capability and capacity** – can talk the language of commissioners and be a credible representative of the sector.

The following isn't crucial but contributions to the research indicate that it would be highly beneficial:

- **A relationship with local infrastructure** – to be clear about role and to get best value from undertaking work at the appropriate level, linking up local organisations where needed.

In order to achieve these, there does need to be some sort of core presence, a person or people who are able to build up relationships, trust and expertise to be able to think ahead and to spot and develop opportunities.

Recommendation

If a decision is taken to continue a regional infrastructure service of some kind the elements above should be used to shape it.

6.5 Possible organisational structures

Keeping One East Midlands as an organisation as it is at the present (including with a broadened geographical remit) is one option but there could be others, outlined below, for example one interviewee suggested having a “hub and spoke” model.

Whilst having a separate organisation with its own board has benefits in terms of ownership and independence, it also brings extra work in running the organisation as well as delivering the outcomes and impact of the work.

Governance, strategic direction options:

- Keep One East Midlands, including the possibility of it becoming a body that commissions or develops work rather than delivering it.
- Through a network or partnership organisations, e.g. local infrastructure organisations who could oversee a project within either another single organisation or within a range of organisations depending on need. Local VCS consortia could also be joined up to fulfil this role.
- Through another organisation, including still retaining its One East Midlands branding, identity and a regional advisory group.

Staffing and delivery options:

- This research suggests that there is a need for a “Director” who is the lynchpin of the organisation and carries out the strategic development work, relationship building, identifying opportunities etc. The Director could be employed by One East Midlands, by another organisation, or the relationship could be as a contracted individual or organisation.
- Further work could be carried out by:
 - Staff who are specifically employed to undertake One East Midlands work
 - Staff who are shared with a host organisation
 - Associates who could be individuals or people from other organisations (e.g. local infrastructure organisations or other partners)

Examples of different organisation types include:

- **Reaching People** consortium in Leicester and Leicestershire (www.reachingpeople.org.uk) is a charity and company limited by guarantee and has a one day a week Chief Executive who is also the Chief Executive of another organisation. Her role is to coordinate the activities of members including strategic direction and bidding for funding. There is also part time administrative support.
- **Centre for Responsible Credit** (<http://www.responsible-credit.org.uk/>), a dedicated unit within the Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion (www.cesi.org.uk). The CfRC has a Director, who then draws in people from the Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion (e.g. researchers or events staff) or associates from elsewhere as needed.

Recommendation

If a decision is taken to continue a regional infrastructure service, different organisation forms should be considered

7. Conclusion and next steps

This research has demonstrated a role for regional infrastructure, with potential changes to geographical remit, and organisations and decision makers / commissioners alike will miss One East Midlands role. However, the resourcing of any future work still remains highly uncertain. Perhaps organisations collectively need to consider what they will lose in order to identify whether there is an appetite to either identify how to keep One East Midlands or to put something else in place.

For commissioners, decision makers, funders and other partners:

- Is it important for commissioners to have an organisation with wide scale and reach it can work with efficiently to do what One East Midlands have done?
- What extra work will it cause funders as a result and what will it cost them to undertake it themselves?

For organisations:

- What will the VCS lose as a result of the loss of One East Midlands?
- Might regional / sub-regional and national commissioners decide that engagement with a range of organisations at different levels is too complex and time consuming and so not involve them at all?
- What would organisations, particularly infrastructure organisations, need to organise themselves at sub-regional level to be able to open up opportunities for the across the region?

The current and future board needs to make a decision about whether it has the capacity and appetite to continue to pursue an independent regional infrastructure body, or whether the role is to undertake the development necessary to hand the remit to someone else. It's important to note that there is an aspiration amongst staff and trustees to effect a planned closure in a best practice manner. It may be that the 26 November conference provides a clear answer to the questions about One East Midlands' continuation or closure, but if it doesn't there is a danger that the ending could not be as neat as had been hoped for.

Recommendation

1. Ask at One East Midlands conference 26 November whether people (a) want to do something about this; and (b) whether they are prepared to put some resources into it or spend some time getting some resources.
2. If there does appear to be an appetite to do something and to commit resources from (a) organisations and partners (a) spend time with local "movers and shakers", including infrastructure organisations, consortia leads, representatives etc. to further scope out an action plan.

3. Approach commissioners and other funders to continue the dialogue and identify what's possible.

4. Make a decision on next steps.

Appendix one ~ survey respondents

Type of organisation

Frontline organisation providing services or activities directly to communities	49
Infrastructure organisation supporting other organisations	38
Government or public sector	15
Other funder of the (not government or public sector)	1
Educational body, e.g. university or college	8
Private sector organisation	3
Other	17

Area of Delivery

Derby City	23
Derbyshire	25
Leicester City	19
Leicestershire	21
Lincolnshire	12
Northamptonshire	17
Nottingham City	33
Nottinghamshire	29
Rutland	10
Other	20

Annual turnover

Nothing to £9,999	7
£10,000 - £24,999	1
£25,000 - £99,999	14
£100,000 - £249,999	14
£250,000 - £999,999	18
£1m+	19

Client Group

Black and minority ethnic people and refugees	7
Disabled people	9
Faith communities	3
Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people	2
Older people	6
Women	4
Young people	7
No we work with everyone	47
Other	14

Please note that respondents may have picked multiple categories for some of these answers.

Appendix two ~ list of interviewees

Alison Adams	Cabinet Office
Andria Birch	WEA
Azlina Bulmer	Charity Bank
Beata Polanowska	Signpost to Polish Success
Carolyn Perry	Rushcliffe Council for Voluntary Service
Deborah O'Callaghan	NICE
Fiona White	One EM chair / Lincs infrastructure
Gary Beharrell	Lloyds TSB
Helen Briggs	Rutland CC
Jane Carr	Voluntary Impact Northamptonshire
Jayne Quantrill	One East Midlands
Jenny Hand	LASS / Reaching People
Justin Davis Smith	National Council for Voluntary Organisations
Kevan Liles	Voluntary Action LeicesterShire
Laurie Moran	CEFET
Lee Harrison	Association of Directors of Adult Social Services
Mark Foley	Department for Communities and Local Government
Matthew Wheatley	D2N2
Peter Oban	Sustrans (EM)
Richard Hasledine	ConnectMore Solutions
Sarah Collis	Self Help Nottingham
Sarah Hassell	Public Health England
Sean Tizzard	Big Lottery
Simon Worsley	One EM Board / EMVY Chair
Stephen Cooper	LCIL
Stuart Young	East Midlands Councils
Sylvia Green	Rural Action Derbyshire