Social Action
Shropshire
Compact Briefing

Shropshire Compact

What is social action?

Social action is about people coming together to help improve their lives and solve the problems that are important in their communities. It can include volunteering, giving money, community action or simple everyday neighbourly acts. The Cabinet Office defines social action as 'practical action in the service of others' which is:

- carried out by individuals or groups of people working together
- not mandated and not for profit done for the good of others –
- individuals, communities and/or society
- bringing about social change and/or value

Social action…

- empowers local groups, enabling local solutions and building resilient communities
- increases the resources available to achieve social goals
- offers new sources of expertise and knowledge
- enables broader and better targeted support
- creates new models for how society can respond to challenges
- helps reduce demands on public services

Can social action be generated through commissioning?

Generating social action through the commissioning process is challenging but, there is work that public sector commissioners can do to design commissioning processes so that they do not restrict or limit social action. We recognise the influence that public sector partners can have, including:

- Devolving power and resources so people are able to take action and design their own solutions
- Accelerating the development of projects through support and local influence
- Co-designing services with social action a core consideration
- Supporting the infrastructure behind social action (such as volunteer recruitment, management, training and skills).
- Encouraging and enabling more people to volunteer and take part in social action

There are many considerations within commissioning (before and after award), such as the way in which contract opportunities are promoted, the scale of opportunities, local management of commissioning budgets, the way in which contracts are paid, length of contract etc. There is also a need to ensure that the way in which resources are allocated is appropriate to the achievement of outcomes and social action. Coproduction can be an effective method of ensuring these considerations are made at all stages of commissioning.

Why focus on social action now?

In 2013 the Government launched the Centre for Social Action, part of the Government's vision for a 'bigger, stronger society'. The Centre for Social Action aims to identify and accelerate the development and spread of high impact social action initiatives. By March 2015 the Centre for Social Action invested £36 million in 215 social action projects covering 6 themes:

- health, ageing and care – improving health outcomes and helping people to age well and live independently for longer
- young potential and social mobility – helping young people to reach their potential
- rehabilitation – supporting ex-offenders to stop committing crime and to transform their lives
- community action – helping communities to come together to take action on issues they care about
- employment and prosperity – helping people get back to work
- digital – exploring how digital services can enable social action

In late 2015, The Cabinet Office and New Economics Foundation launched the Enabling Social Action Programme designed to enable the commissioning and implementation of social action across local public services. The programme has produced the Typology of Social Action (page 3).

What is happening in Shropshire?
Shropshire's Change and Compact Group is leading work within the county to learn from the Enabling Social Action national research, trials, and from our own local case studies and experiences. We will be gathering evidence and using it to influence the way in which we commission and coproduce local services.

The Enabling Social Action Programme, fits with Shropshire's work on Resilient Communities. Shropshire's Early Help Strategy, Better Care Fund Plan, Health & Wellbeing Strategy, Children & Young People's Strategy 2012, Shropshire Council's Business Plan and Financial Strategy and the Adult Social Care operating model all contain references to, or are designed around the development of resilient communities. At the centre of the development of Resilient Communities is a shared vision by Shropshire Council, the CCG and partners to:

- Increase the availability (and demand for) of universal early advice, information and guidance provision.
- Have a very different conversation about what a person needs and how their needs can be met within their local community.
- Reduce demand on expensive specialised services.
- Build on the existing resilience in Shropshire's communities so that people are able to help themselves and others to be happy, healthy and independent.

Shropshire has a strong culture of social action, cross sector working, collaboration and coproduction. Cross sector relationships and representation arrangements are supported by Shropshire's Voluntary and Community Sector Assembly. The VCS Assembly works on behalf of Shropshire's Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector. The sector is strong and diverse with approximately 1,184 registered voluntary sector organisations[1] and research suggesting there may be a further 1,127 small, informal community groups in operation within the county.[2]

How can I find out more?
Centre for Social Action
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/centre-for-social-action-funding
Centre for Social Action Innovation Fund – Nesta
http://www.nesta.org.uk/project/centre-social-action-innovation-fund
Social Action Publication – Harnessing the Potential
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-action-harnessing-the-potential
Enabling Social Action – New Economics Foundation (nef)
http://www.neweconomics.org/projects/entry/enabling-social-action
Shropshire VCS Assembly http://vcsvoice.org/

The Shropshire Compact
For more information about the Shropshire Compact use the details below:

🖥 **Website:** http://vcsvoice.org/the-compact/

🖱 **Email:** VCSAssembly@shropshire.gov.uk

☎ **Telephone:** 01743 252740

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[1] National Survey of Charities and Social Enterprises 2010 Cabinet Office, Office for Civil Society
http://www.nscsesurvey.com/results2010/download/
[2] There are approximately 3.66 'below the radar' unregistered community groups per 1,000 population. Mohan et al, Beyond Flat Earth maps of the third sector: enhancing our understanding of the contribution of 'below the radar' organisations. Briefing Paper February 2010, Northern Rock Foundation.
http://www.nr-foundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/NRF-TST-Report-Beyond-Flat-Earth.pdf

Typology of Social Action

Control

From left to right: professional control to community control

Type

Formal Volunteering	Time Credits	Peer Support	Campaigning and advocacy	Co-production	Community Asset Ownership	Co-operatively owned services	Community Organising	Unpaid care

Definition

Formal Volunteering	Time Credits	Peer Support	Campaigning and advocacy	Co-production	Community Asset Ownership	Co-operatively owned services	Community Organising	Unpaid care
The use of volunteers, through an established framework, to enhance and add capacity to public services delivered by public organisations or voluntary and community organisations	A time-based currency exchange mechanism that incentivises and supports people to volunteer in, and outside of, public services.	The mutual and reciprocal exchange of emotional and practical support between peers in and outside of public services.	People volunteering their time to make the case for changes or improvements to public services. This could be initiated by individuals, communities, charities, unions, or other civil society organisations.	A relationship where professionals and citizens share power to plan and deliver support together, recognising that both partners have vital contributions to make in order to improve the quality of life for people and communities	The legal transfer of a public or private asset (e.g. a building or park) to a formalised community group or organisation to own and manage for the community benefit.	Local Services that are owned and managed co-operatively by a range of local stakeholders – service users, members of the local community, and public sector workers.	An approach to community empowerment and development that focuses on one-to-one relationship building, community capacity and mobilising people-power to take action and address social inequality.	This type of social action can range from the unpaid care of raising a child, to caring for an elderly relative, to acts of neighbourliness, to wider examples of informal volunteering