Collaboration and knowledge sharing in the voluntary and community sectors

What are its implications for the wider system?
Our purpose

› To have a conversation about what we know about translating an intention to collaborate into something that leads to better services for people.

How

› Talk about our experience of developing a consultancy development programme with third sector leaders.
› Test the idea that leaders who have developed consultancy skills make for good collaboration partners.
Why are we interested in the voluntary and community sector?

- NHS Five Year Forward View (FYFV)– the voluntary and community sector (VCS) plays a key role in meeting our health and care challenges

- There are more than 36,000 VCS organisations providing health and social care services across the UK

- VCS organisations are driven by a social mission and work closely with communities
Leadership challenges for the VCS

Organisations

› Good leadership is essential for the success of any organisation, but historically very little space, time or funding has been devoted to leadership development in the VCS (1)

› Although VCS is increasingly valued for its contribution to health and care, there is still a long way to go before it is treated as an equal partner and its full potential is realised (2)

› In addition, the sector is under pressure: increase in demand for services, cuts in funding, decrease in trust

(1) Marsh, Cabinet Office; House of Lords Select Committee, Stronger Charities for a Stronger Society March 2017
(2) National Voices, A new relationship with people and communities Feb 2017
Leadership challenges for the VCS

Leaders

› isolation and lack of support
› wide range of tasks
› constant struggle for funding, short term contracts, low reserves
› forging new relationships with the public/private sector
› not having the ‘authority’ of a large organisation – harder to get voice heard
› May need to lead across a system, not just their own organisation
Cascading Leadership skills pilot programme

- A pilot programme was launched in March 2016 in partnership with Comic Relief.
- 15 GSK IMPACT Award winners offered themselves as consultants to 15 VCS organisations (clients) to explore a new way of strengthening the leadership of the VCS.
- Short term intervention. Consultants did not manage or direct - offered support, facilitation.
What makes it distinctive?

› It is not a deficit model assuming the sector is in need of external support, but builds the VCS’s assets, capability and potential

› It developed the skills of both those receiving and providing support - the VCS consultants were trained and received group and individual supervision

› Those providing the support were currently working in the VCS and already fully understood its needs and challenges
Positioning the role

- Expert
- Process
- Guru

Client know less

Both agree

Shared ignorance
Characteristics

› Slow it down
› Open questions
› Kindness
› Testing
› Holding anxiety
This has been our experience; what connections are you making in relation to your own collaborative style and work?