



Public Health
England

Using rapid intelligence reviews to strengthen the voice of the voluntary and community sector in local commissioning: Yorkshire and Humber

About Public Health England

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Challenge

The voluntary and community sector (VCS) contribution to health and wellbeing is significant, for example:

- in 2010 there were 14,218 third sector organisations¹ in Yorkshire and Humber with an annual turnover estimated at £2.75 billion²
- in 2011 the Third sector trends study estimated that 3% of total employment in the region was in the third sector with rates varying between 1.1% in North Lincolnshire to 4.7% in North Yorkshire
- the proportion of people who volunteer at least once a month for Yorkshire and Humber is estimated to be 22.3% with quite wide variation between local authority areas³

However intelligence relating to the sector is generally poorly represented in statutory processes such as Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNA) and Joint health and wellbeing strategies (JHWS).⁴ This means that commissioning tends to be led by an analysis that relies on public sector data sets – which present a narrower view of need and activity.

There are a number of reasons why this situation exists, they include:

- local statutory commissioners and analysts have tended to be led by national datasets that are based around the performance of public sector services and their private sector equivalents
- the local voluntary and community sector consists of large number of small and diverse organisations whose services are often tailored to specific communities. The size of these organisations means that their main focus is providing a service directly to their community or interest group. They are not in a position to provide strategic system level information to local commissioners
- the local voluntary and community sector often lack the capacity and skills to provide this information in a consistent and useable form and do not have a tradition of sharing data with each other to create a system level view

¹ Companies Ltd by Guarantee, Industrial and Provident Society, Community Interest Company, Housing Association, Faith Group - Northern Rock Foundation Third Sector Trends 2010

² Crowe M. Third sector organisations in Yorkshire and Humber. Yorkshire and Humber Forum; 2011 [cited 2014 Mar 7]. Available from: <http://www.involveyorkshirehumber.org.uk/uploads/files/3rdsectororgsyhbriefingjan11.pdf>

³ Mohan J, Geyne Rajme F, Kane D. Third sector trends study: paid work and volunteering in Yorkshire and Humber. Involve Yorkshire and Humber and Northern Rock Foundation; 2011 [cited 2014 Mar 7]. Available from: <http://www.involveyorkshirehumber.org.uk/uploads/files/reports/workforce-yorkshire-and-the-humber-final.pdf>

⁴ Gamsu M, Abbas J. Moving to an enhanced JSNA: a temperature check on progress across Yorkshire and Humber. Yorkshire and Humber Public Health Observatory; 2012 [cited 2014 Mar 7]. Available from: <http://www.yhpho.org.uk/resource/view.aspx?RID=148924>

The project

The overall aim of this project was to develop and road test a replicable methodology (light touch, not resource intensive, not overly technical) which would allow voluntary and community sector intelligence to be captured in a form that can be easily used by health and wellbeing commissioners. The project focused on working with three pilot areas to develop rapid intelligence appraisal/gathering on a priority identified locally.

Outputs

The project aimed to produce a short strategic report for each district - capturing voluntary sector intelligence relating to the topic under investigation.

The intention was to focus on the insights that the VCS could bring. The exercise was not to try to make the case for these VCS organisations specifically but rather to bring their understanding of the issue to the attention of local policy makers and commissioners and to provide organisations working in this area make a stronger case for this issue.

The two rapid intelligence reviews were:

- rapid review: foodbanks in Sheffield - November 2013⁵
- a trusted hand to hold: Wakefield rapid review of services for pressured parents - November 2013⁶

⁵ Involve Yorkshire and Humber. Rapid review: foodbanks in Sheffield. Involve Yorkshire and Humber; 2013 [cited 2014 Mar 7]. Available from:

http://www.vas.org.uk/UserFiles/File/Miscellaneous/Sheffield_Food_Report_NEW.pdf

⁶ Involve Yorkshire and Humber. A trusted hand to hold: rapid review of some of Wakefield Voluntary and Community Sector Services for pressured parents to inform commissioning, design and delivery of health, wellbeing and social care services in Wakefield. Involve Yorkshire and Humber; 2013 [cited 2014 Mar 7]. Available from: <http://www.nova-wd.org.uk/assets/files/131213-a-trusted-hand-to-hold-vfinal.pdf>

What we did

Working in partnership with Involve Yorkshire and Humber (the regional infrastructure organisation) three areas in Yorkshire and Humber volunteered to take part in the project. From the outset it was essential that there was strong local ownership of this work and that local activity was taken forward within existing resource constraints.

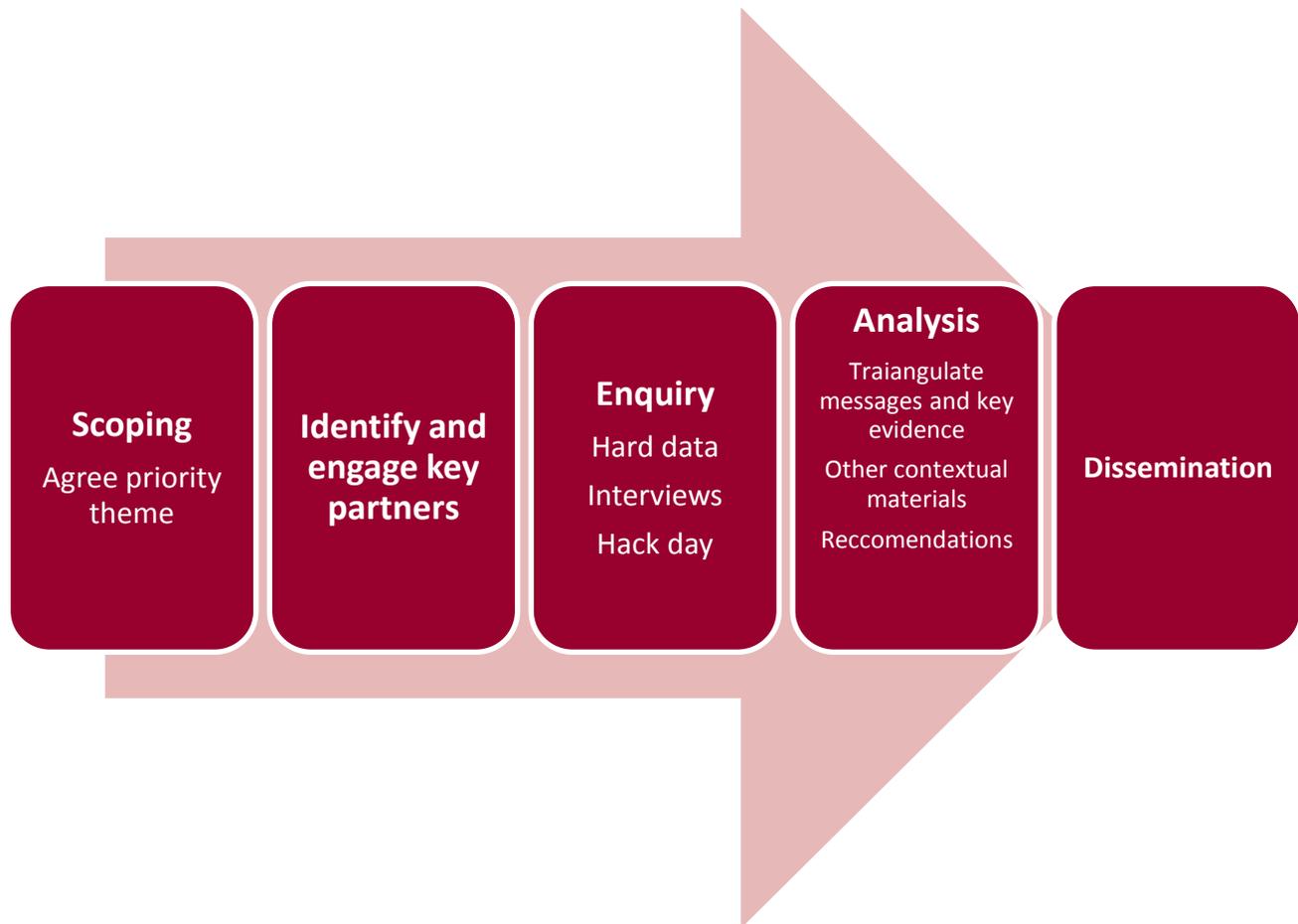
The requirements were as follows:

- each voluntary sector partner needed to bring with them the relevant JSNA lead from the local authority. This was to ensure that the findings from the work would then feedback in to the local JSNA / JHWS system
- the voluntary sector partners would lead on identifying a relevant strategic topic. This topic should be one that the sector felt was an important issue locally but one that required further attention
- it was important that this topic although identified by the VCS was also one that statutory partners agreed merited further investigation - this required negotiation
- project consultancy⁷ was funded through Yorkshire and the Humber Public Health Observatory (YHPHO) (now Public Health England) which also provided some analytical support. All local involvement was provided through existing resources. This was important because the project aims to produce a model that is replicable within current resource constraints

Voluntary sector organisations from Bradford, Sheffield and Wakefield put themselves forward.

⁷ This was provided by Professor Mark Gamsu and Involved Yorkshire and Humber

Methodology



Scoping

In all three cases the first phase was a scoping meeting. Each of these meetings involved:

- the project consultants - Professor Mark Gamsu and an officer from Involve Yorkshire and Humber
- local VCS representatives - usually including a Council of Voluntary Services (CVS) or equivalent
- YPHO (now part of Public Health England)
- a local authority JSNA team

| Bradford | Sheffield | Wakefield |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Bradford CVS | Voluntary action Sheffield | NOVA Wakefield District |
| JSNA team members | JSNA team members | JSNA team members |
| | Manor and Castle Development Trust | Local authority policy lead |
| YHPHO | YHPHO | YHPHO |
| Project consultants | Project consultants | Project consultants |

Discussion at the scoping meetings included a significant element of negotiation. One of the key issues was to identify an area that the VCS felt was significant, not sufficiently understood but where there was already some local policy interest in this agenda. This would mean that the project would be more likely to connect with existing concerns about deficit or performance.

In the case of both Sheffield and Wakefield the issues that were chosen had a good fit with issues identified respectively by the Sheffield Fairness Commission and the Wakefield Poverty and Prosperity Commission, in Bradford there were plans to refresh the Learning Disability Strategy.

The topic areas that were agreed by the scoping meetings were:

- Sheffield - Food Banks
- Wakefield - Pressured Parents
- Bradford - Transition from adulthood to old age for people with a learning disability

Although Bradford continue to be committed to taking this work forward they were not able to contribute further to the project at this stage.

The organisations

Once the topic had been chosen the local team identified the VCS organisations who were to be involved. At this stage the relationship between the local lead VCS organisation and these other organisations was crucial. It was important that the lead voluntary organisation understood the local VCS environment. Local credibility and trust were essential to promote and negotiate involvement.

- Sheffield - 11 food banks were approached, all were run by volunteers.
- Wakefield - 6 VCS were identified as the key organisations in this sector. They were identified by NOVA Wakefield District and also through being suggested by each other as contacts were made.

Enquiry

The original aim was to keep the resource implications for engagement by the local VCS as low as possible. This meant that the team needed to lead on the work, placing as little demand on the organisations themselves as possible. The project therefore did not use questionnaires but instead sought to use a 'hack day' approach⁸, inviting representatives from the named organisations to come together over one day to share experiences and build a collective 'story' around the issue.

One of the key aims was to move as quickly as possible from capturing siloed datasets or organisational views to a sectoral narrative that included qualitative and quantitative data, analysis and recommendations.

In order to help representatives share the story in a structured way we focused on three distinct areas:

Hard data

- how many people used the service?
- what issues did they present?
- what services were offered?
- who referred?

Stories

- what were the lives of the people who used the service like?
- what context did they live in?
- what were their personal experiences and stories?

Pathways

- how had people found their way to the service and why?
- what happened to them when they received a service?
- where did they go?

⁸ Hack Days or Hackathons come from the software development world and usually describe an event where computer programmers and others collaborate intensively over one or two days - often with the aim of creating useable software (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hack_day).

The Sheffield experience

The project stuttered at the beginning because no food banks turned up to the 'hack day'. When reviewed the team agreed that this was because the backbone of this service is provided by volunteers. For understandable reasons volunteers were committed to providing a practical food bank service and were not motivated to attend a workshop whose potential impact was, at best, unclear.

Instead the team decided to take the questions and go as "roving reporters" to each food bank having negotiated visits beforehand. One of the strengths of the team model here was not just capacity - most team members did no more than two visits, but because everyone took part in interviews this helped with subsequent analysis.

This approach was successful. All interviews were written up and shared with respective interviewees.

The Wakefield experience

The six voluntary organisations involved were invited to the workshop. In this case - unlike in Sheffield - all organisations had paid staff. All organisations agreed to attend although on the day, two were unable to attend.

Information was gathered through three sets of interviews built around the themes identified above. A brief summary of initial thoughts was shared at the end of the session.

Analysis

Each of the local teams re-assembled and reviewed the data gathered and together pulled out key evidence, analysed it and agreed outline recommendations. In addition the teams considered whether there was broader contextual material that needed to be used to locate the findings more strategically. For example, existing references in the JSNA and current and previous strategies.

The final reports therefore included:

- the data gathered

Using rapid intelligence reviews to strengthen the voice of the voluntary and community sector in local commissioning

- description of broader policy fit and link to evidence
- analysis of data
- recommendations

The final reports were produced by the consultancy team with comments from the local teams.

Dissemination and impact

The reports were professionally designed and local teams took responsibility for disseminating them. Assessment of impact need to be treated with caution for two reasons. First, the reviews are seeking to engage with priority setting and commissioning process that work to timescales measured in years and second both are concerned with issues that are multi-factoral where there are already a number of actions in place.

What is clear from the stories below is that both reports generated tremendous interest and engagement across the district and at all levels of decision making.

Wakefield

Wakefield identified three target audiences who would require different approaches for dissemination.

1. Commissioners – share report and promote value of findings and approach
2. Providers – raise profile of the work of VCS and how they can link in to those organisations
3. Voluntary sector – raise awareness of value of their contribution

Methods included:

- publish on the JSNA website - along with any other information on child poverty/pressured families and impact on health
- share approach and report with various partnership groups eg Engagement Partnership, Wakefield Together Partnership Coordinators group, Third Sector Strategy group, Transformation programme for Special Educational Needs and disability
- NOVA Wakefield District and Wakefield Assembly of voluntary sector organisations
- a national conference on the JSNA and the voluntary sector
- when needs assessments are being planned general dissemination of approach will also take place where this approach could be used to add value to other data sources

Sheffield

The report has been disseminated to:

- Director of Public Health (DPH)
- Sheffield Food Executive Group (SFEG) – (a working group of the Food and Physical Activity Board that reports to the Health and Well-being Board)
- Sheffield Food Strategy Electronic Network – 100 plus members
- Sheffield CCG to be circulated to Governing body, Executive Team and weekly round up.

It been shared by SFEG members within their organisations and has been referenced in the city's draft food strategy.

The Food Executive Group will own some of the actions tackling food poverty and supporting the food bank network and will also ensure actions around poverty – the underlying issues – are steered towards other decision makers. At the moment these have been taken up by Cabinet lead for Food and the Environment.

Sheffield recognises that there is further work to do to steer the review around other agendas. So far this has included incorporating a reference to the Rapid Review into a progress report on food poverty to the Fairness Commission. The recommendations from the review were also used in the development of a proposal for Fairness Commission funding to establish a food trust with food poverty as a priority.

The Rapid Review has also been used as evidence to support the development of an early years lottery bid 'Better Start Sheffield' aimed at under 3's ready to be submitted at the end of February.

What they said: views from stakeholders

“This process worked well in Sheffield because it was identified, led and conducted by people external to the Council or Clinical Commissioning Group. It helped that relevant JSNA people were involved because this allowed for a mutually important topic to be agreed upon. I agree however that the topic should come from the Voluntary and Community Sector.

The topic should be as specific as possible (ie akin to a research question) and it should chime with the priorities of the relevant local health and wellbeing strategy and/or knowledge gaps in the local JSNA. I think we should also highlight the real skills/assets available to us in Sheffield in terms of the qualitative research methods used as well as the local knowledge to gain access.

I personally think narrative analysis is a hugely powerful lens through which to explore these issues and it takes a high level of skill to do this effectively. This is why I think we ended up with such an empirically rich result and why we have been able to incorporate it so successfully into the range of evidence we use. I would be keen to see how we could therefore do this for more topics, rather than as a one off, and to discuss this further in the context of Sheffield’s JSNA.”

Louise Brewins Head of Public Health Intelligence Sheffield City Council

“this makes sobering reading I am struck that there appear to be two groups of clients - those who cannot for whatever reason manage the system and so are without access to benefits to which they are entitled, and those who get all they are entitled to, but that is not enough to keep them out of food poverty.”

**Dr Jeremy Wight
Director of Public Health Sheffield**

The Fairness Commission and Food Executive Group will “own » some of the actions around tackling food poverty and supporting the food bank network and will also ensure actions around poverty – the underlying issues – are steered towards other ‘decision makers’. We have further work to do to steer the review around other agendas. So far this has included incorporating a reference to the Rapid Review into a progress report on food poverty to the Fairness Commission. The recommendations from the review were also used in the development of a proposal for Fairness Commission funding to establish a Food Trust with food poverty as a priority.

The Rapid Review has also been used as evidence to support the development of an early years lottery bid Best Start Sheffield aimed at under three’s ready to be submitted at the end of February.

It is also worth noting that other discussion, reports and recommendations emanating from the Food Bank Network have also been well recieved and circulated. The detail from case studies in *this review* and its professional design perhaps help in particular in getting it noticed.

The learning has not just been about understanding the issue and therefore hopefully formulating appropriate actions but also much of the learning has been about the approach to take and in really listening to the VCS sector leading this work and to not take over.

Gill Lancaster Health Improvement Practitioner Advanced, Public Health

The JSNA has given this type of qualitative process credibility which is often dismissed as anecdotal. I would like to see this process used for other areas of strategic work such as the cities annual “State of Sheffield” report and work on developing resilient communities.

Debbie Mathews Chief Executive Manor and Castle Development Trust

“Co-producing the Food Bank review brought together strategic expertise from Public Health, the JSNA group and firsthand knowledge and engagement from Third Sector Groups.

Foodbank organisers cited considerable skepticism about engaging in a local authority initiative, given that local and national government policies and actions directly impact people’s need for emergency food.

The third sector led partnership approach gave the review real independence which enabled (critically) a voice to come *from* grass roots community groups *to* strategic decision makers rather than vice versa.”

Paul Harvey, Policy and Engagement Officer, Sheffield Third Sector Assembly

“The Rapid Review approach helps to address two critical areas regarding VCS input into the JSNA (and other strategic planning processes). The first is the tendency by planners and strategists to see service delivery purely in statutory terms. I regularly sit around tables where I am the lone voice reminding partners that many ‘public services’ are delivered by the VCS – but they are off the radar as they are not delivered or commissioned via statutory agencies and therefore somehow don’t register as part of the ecosystem of service delivery. It is difficult to reconcile the structure and approach of the VCS (hundreds of small, independent organisations with no overall lead) with that of statutory agencies (single, large entities managed by a CX and senior team), and this difficulty means it is easier to concentrate on larger, visible services that have contractual links to councils, CCGs etc.

The second point is the data that VCS organisations gather. This ranges from stories about clients, recounted with passion and verve, to quantitative data sets gathered for funders and commissioners. However, we are regularly reminded that the sector is very poor at gathering data and evidence (usually by well-funded think tanks in London), and much hand-wringing ensues. The Rapid Review approach offers a simple way of synthesising all sorts of information from time and resource-poor VCS organisations into a pithy document that addresses very specific issues, which can then be fed into broader strategic documents and planning processes.”

Alison Haskins

Chief Executive Nova Wakefield

“The approach highlighted that commissioned services often focus on the intended final outcome of an intervention and by doing so ignore all the small successes that are made on the way to achieving that outcome. It is important to capture these small steps systematically through approaches such as this.

Commissioners should be encouraged to use stories to see how issues are interlinked and co-dependent. Statistical data often only highlights single issues while stories highlighted the relationships between issues.

It is important to recognise that approaches such as this do have resource implications in particular for Joint Strategic Needs Assessment leads.

The two examples demonstrate that a one size fits all approach doesn’t work - it may also be appropriate to consider paying VCS organisations for their time in helping to pull together this work.

This approach does need to be implemented sensitively, in particular respecting the resource constraints that the VCS has to work within. They are very limited in terms of how much time they can devote to sharing information.”

**Helen Laird Engagement & Capacity Building Team Manager Public Health,
Wakefield Council**

“I was happy to be involved in the day, the process was good. I would be happy to be involved again with something like this as I think it could be valuable ...I do feel that it was an important thing to be part of”

“I felt the day went very well we were listened to and the report shows what the real issues are , and thanks for doing this as we can use the report to make positive changes starting with a information event we are holding for parents/carers of disabled children /adults and service providers. Also I have asked Young Lives to help me set up a consortium of disability groups”

Comments from VCS organisations in Wakefield

Resource implications

The dedicated funding for this work came from the Public Health Observatory. This paid for consultancy support included administration of the projects. Total funding was £7,000 for the whole process, Bradford, Sheffield and Wakefield. All of this was used to fund the project management and consultancy time. In retrospect the project was probably slightly underfunded.

It may also be appropriate to consider paying VCS organisations for their time in helping to pull together this work.

In addition each provided resource in kind, this was primarily officer time but also included use of meeting rooms.

A rough estimate of time is as follows:

| | Sheffield | Wakefield |
|---|--|---|
| 4 2 hour meetings - Planning, Design and Analysis | 3 local staff | 4 local staff |
| Workshop half a day | Not applicable | 4 local staff |
| Interviews X5 | 2 local staff | Not applicable |
| Interviewee time | 11 paid staff - 1.5 hour interviews | 4 paid staff half day workshop plus 1 initial meeting |
| Funded consultancy support | In addition to co-ordination and project management this includes participation in the above meetings, participation in some interviews, facilitation of workshop and analysis and writing of local reports. Co-ordination and project management 10 days senior consultant time 15 days | |

Key learning points

- topic selection – it is important that the VCS identifies the topic areas, however these need to be jointly negotiated with JSNA/JHWS leads so that there is a good fit with local priorities and concerns.
- co-production – a joint team including a credible VCS infrastructure organisation and local authority JSNA/JHWS lead officers is important
- independence – in both cases the teams pulling together the review did not directly include staff from the organisations working on this topic. As will be clear from the table above they were drawn from the local authority, local infrastructure organisation(s) and the external consultants. This helped ensure that the review was independent. This is important because, like all sectors the VCS is also subject to inter-organisational competition with stakeholders often very sensitive to perceptions about position and power. In the medium term it will be important to ensure that there is sufficient capacity at district level as long term reliance on external consultancy would not be sustainable or appropriate
- it is important not to be dogmatic here, it may be perfectly appropriate to involve VCS organisations who are providers in future reviews. It is however important to be sensitive to inter-organisational relationships and to manage perceptions that organisations might be promoting their service rather than sharing their intelligence
- sectoral leadership - infrastructure organisations such as a CVS or wellbeing consortium are important here - because they should bring:
 - knowledge of the sector - which are the key VCS organisations for a topic
 - credibility - able to broker involvement with VCS organisations
 - connections - with statutory organisations to ensure that the product is disseminated appropriately
- accountability - in both case studies findings and descriptions of individual organisations were shared in draft with stakeholders involved and their comments and views incorporated in any redrafts
- skills - importance of administrative co-ordination, project management, analytical expertise, policy analysis competence
- below the radar - some organisations like food banks have little interest in engaging at a strategic level, it is important to be sensitive to motivations of organisations who

are focussed on a front line agenda and make sure that there are local organisations who have credibility to negotiate engagement - see comments from Sheffield Third Sector Assembly

This rapid intelligence review process does appear to have merit. It should be possible to produce a rapid intelligence review such as this within 3 months. This model provides added value to the traditional JSNA process, it could permit a rolling programme of 2 to 4 topic areas to be explored each year at comparatively little cost.

The model offers a way of bringing topics that might be bubbling just below the surface to the attention of decision makers. It also helps develop a more co-produced relationship with the voluntary and community sector, helping move from a contractor model to one that is more co-produced and asset-based.

Acknowledgements

This report could not have been produced without the willing contributions of two key stakeholders.

First, the volunteers and staff of Sheffield Food Banks and voluntary organisations working with pressured parents in Wakefield and second, the teams of voluntary sector and local authority partners in Sheffield and Wakefield.

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| | |
|--|------------------------------------|
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| Wakefield Council | Helen Laird |
| Sheffield City Council | Louise Brewins and Jill Lancaster |
| Manor and Castle Development Trust | Debbie Matthews |
| Involve Yorkshire and Humber Smithson | Sarah Stead, Judy Robinson, Joanne |
| Public Health England | Scott Anderson and Ceri Wyborn |

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