

Greater Together

MEMBERSHIP PROSPECTUS

2011

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Contents

	Page Number
Executive Summary	4
Introduction and Background	9
Brief Overview of the Operating Environment	12
Consortium Vision, Mission, Underpinning Values and Business Principles	13
Consortium Model and Operating Structure	18
Legal Structure and Governance Arrangements	21
Benefits of Consortium Membership and Associated Expectations	23
Main Operational Issues	26
Approach to Quality Assurance	31
How Organisations Join the Consortium	32
Membership Eligibility Criteria	33
Appendix 1: Definition of associate membership and enumeration of benefits	39

MEMBERSHIP PROSPECTUS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Executive Summary

Introduction and Background

The purpose of this Membership Prospectus is to explain what Greater Together, the new consortium for not-for-profit providers of services for children, young people and families in Lancashire, is about, and to invite organisations to apply for membership.

All organisations wishing to join the consortium need to complete the separate application form.

The goal of the consortium will be to safeguard and grow high quality VCFS service provision for children, young people and families across Lancashire, through working with commissioners to co-design services, creating a single point of contracting, and by tendering competitively for public service contracts via a range of channels.

Brief Overview of the Operating Environment

Generally, the campaign of cuts in public sector finance presents both threats and opportunities for the sector. VCFS organisations will need to be much more competitive and efficient to be able to survive in the new, more challenging operating environment wherein competition from the private sector is growing. However, the sector could be in a key position to benefit as more services, which hitherto were the exclusive domain of the public sector, are outsourced to non-state providers, framed by the Big Society agenda.

Consortium Vision and Mission

The collaborators have developed a clear **vision** for the consortium:

We believe that together we can learn more, progress faster and deliver better than we can apart and therefore have a duty to collaborate for the benefit of those we serve. The result will be a thriving local community in which all children, young people and families, including the most disadvantaged and vulnerable, are able to achieve their full potential

The **mission** of the consortium is to:

To win significant resources to sustain and grow high quality, children, young people and family-related provision within the local voluntary, community and faith sector, in response to identified needs

Consortium Model and Operating Structure

The joint venture will be organised as a formal consortium that will be collectively owned by its members.

It will be established as a separate legal body with the provider organisations taking up membership of this body. The defining features of this model are as follows:

- Member organisations comprise (by clear majority) the consortium's governing body/Board, alongside representation from key external stakeholders and independent perspectives, including the local authority
- The consortium creates a single funding portal/point of contracting (i.e. the local authority and other commissioning bodies/funders commission/contract with the new legal entity which will be responsible for setting up and managing sub-contracts/SLA's with individual consortium members)
- It operates through a hub and spokes structure (the hub being the central infrastructure that acts as the executive engine of the consortium, including negotiating and sub-letting contracts, while the spokes are the various individual member organisations/providers)

Legal Structure and Governance Arrangements

The consortium will be structured as a company limited by guarantee with registered charitable status (i.e. charitable company). This was deemed to be fit for purpose for consortium-working and capable of offering a number of advantages, not least that it is a model that suitably accommodates the potential 'pipelining' of local authority funds.

Benefits of Consortium Membership and Associated Expectations

There are a number of general benefits that the consortium will generate for its member organisations. These fall under the following headings:

- Quality Improvement
- Negotiating Power and Funding Prospects
- Image and Profile
- Resource Use
- Strategic Capability

Expectations include:

- Interest in, support for, and promotion of the development and furtherance of the consortium as a whole and not merely the respective agendas or vested interests of certain member organisations

- Inputting ideas/information into, and providing support for, joint tenders and applications
- Adhering consistently to the values of the consortium

Main Operational Issues

Roles and Functions of the consortium

Generally, the consortium hub will seek to secure funding and business development opportunities at an area-wide level and will also ensure smooth and efficient fund contract management. To avoid duplication and to build on existing technical capacity within the local sector hub functions will be outsourced, as appropriate.

Funding

The consortium hub will be paid for via a contract top slice mechanism.

It will need to be sufficiently dynamic to expand and, if necessary, *contract* in line with fluctuations in the funding market, increasing and decreasing its capacity to balance with the inflow of cash.

A key underlying principle of the internal resource allocation ratio between hub and member organisations is that ***the vast majority of funding should be invested in the essential requirements of delivery*** with more money as a result getting through to the individual client, and correspondingly less being absorbed by bureaucracy and administration.

Approach to Quality Assurance

The consortium will adopt a quality assurance policy that all member organisations must adhere to when delivering on behalf of the consortium. This will include the requirement for member organisations to produce an annual Self-Assessment Report (SAR) that will entail providers identifying their current strengths and weaknesses and formulating an improvement plan to build on the former and address the latter.

The consortium will build on the high-quality systems and practices that already exist across the provider network in the area.

How Organisations Join the Consortium

Organisations need to complete the separate Application for Membership Form.

A formal application process is needed to ensure that organisations are actively committed to the consortium vision and value base and can meet certain standards/thresholds.

Membership Eligibility Criteria

To become a member of the consortium organisations will need to demonstrate that they can meet certain eligibility criteria.

There will be 2 categories of membership available: full (basically, organisations that are 'contract-ready') and associate (basically, organisations that are not yet 'contract-ready').

There are 12 key eligibility criteria divided into 2 parts:

Part 1: Universal Criteria

- ✓ Sector (not-for-profit organisations and social enterprises)
- ✓ Provision of services for children, young people and families
- ✓ Provision of services for the vulnerable and hard-to-reach
- ✓ Area of operation
- ✓ Commitment to consortium working
- ✓ Commitment to sharing expertise via a time bank
- ✓ Commitment to safeguarding

All members, full or associate, will need to demonstrate that they meet all of these universal criteria.

If organisations cannot meet all of these criteria, they will not be granted membership of the consortium.

Part 2: Contract-Readiness Criteria

- ✓ Financial health
- ✓ Quality systems
- ✓ Suitable organisational policies
- ✓ Suitable governance
- ✓ Technical capacity

All full members will additionally need to demonstrate that they meet all of these contract-readiness criteria.

MEMBERSHIP PROSPECTUS

FULL DOCUMENT

Introduction and Background

The purpose of this Membership Prospectus is to explain what Greater Together, the new consortium for not-for-profit providers of services for children, young people and families in Lancashire, is about, and to invite organisations to apply for membership.

All organisations wishing to join the consortium need to complete the separate application form.

The Prospectus has been structured in such a way as to present a 'hierarchy of detail'. The key points are summarised in the Executive Summary at the beginning of the document. Please read through this summary first. If, based on the summary, you think the consortium venture is something that could be an appropriate development for your organisation, then please read through the main body of the document before arriving at a final decision about whether to apply for membership or not.

Young Lancashire, a second tier support organisation for the voluntary youth sector in the county, has been actively engaged for the last few months in bringing organisations together to discuss the potential for closer collaborative working. Young Lancashire has also invested some funding (via Capacitybuilders and the Children's Workforce Development Council) to pay for external, independent advice from a consortium specialist, Neil Coulson.

Two key scoping meetings were held on 15 and 16 March 2011, attended by a total of over 60 local providers. These meetings were designed to introduce the concept of closer collaboration and, as a result, broad endorsement from the Voluntary, Community & Faith Sector (VCFS)¹ was secured for the idea of setting up a working group to drive forward the consortium initiative, including drafting this membership prospectus.

A person specification for working group membership was widely disseminated and resultant applications for membership were independently vetted, with a particular focus on evidence of commitment, leadership capability, social entrepreneurship and business acumen. The Consortium Working Group that emerged out of this process is composed of the leaders of a range of key organisations across the county. These are:

¹ The VCFS encompasses the full range of independent, not-for-profit organisations, including voluntary sector agencies, charities, faith groups, community groups and social enterprises.

Barnardo's
Blackburn Diocese
Curious Minds
Early Break
Fylde Coast Women's Aid
Groundwork Lancashire West & Wigan
Home-Start
Intact (Ingol & Tanterton Community Trust)
LEBP (Lancashire Education Business partnership)
n-compass
The Children's Society
The Prince's Trust
West Lancashire CVS
Young Lancashire

These are all not-for-profit agencies working to tackle disadvantage and improve quality of life. Though the partner agencies share a lot in common, they are all separate, independent agencies with their own management and accountability structures and with their own unique ways of working. This difference and independence will be protected and strengthened under the consortium arrangement.

At the same time as securing broad endorsement from the sector, considerable work has been done to keep commissioners informed of the process and to secure their buy-in to the consortium initiative. This has involved commissioners from both Lancashire County Council and the local PCTs attending and actively contributing to working group meetings. Commissioner involvement in this way is perceived as a key emerging strength of the consortium.

The goal of the consortium will be to safeguard and grow high quality VCS service provision for children, young people and families across Lancashire, through working with commissioners to co-design services, creating a single point of contracting, and by tendering competitively for public service contracts via a range of channels.

The focus will be on building on the capacity and track records of existing VCFS organisations to deliver a range of bespoke, high quality services at the point of need.

A key driver for the establishment of the consortium is the current economic climate, with consortium formation being designed to strengthen the resilience of the VCFS in the face of significant cuts in public sector spending and the growing threat of competition from non-sector providers.

There will be two categories of consortium membership:

- *Full membership* – this will be for VCFS organisations that can demonstrate that they meet all of the membership eligibility criteria and that they are ‘contract-ready’ (effectively, this means that by meeting all of the eligibility criteria a full member ‘pre-qualifies’ to be considered for a sub-contract through the consortium, though whether a sub-contract is actually awarded will depend on a range of additional factors relating to the overarching contract framework)
- *Associate membership* – this will be for VCFS organisations that are not currently able to meet all of the eligibility criteria, but which have the potential to convert to full membership and hence ‘contract readiness’ in due course, with appropriate support and development (see Appendix 1 for a more detailed description of associate membership and its benefits)

All organisations wishing to apply for membership of the consortium need to complete the separate application form (see attached). This includes all the working group/interim board members, who will have to apply for consortium membership alongside every other interested organisation.

If there are any aspects of this document that are unclear or that require further explanation, then please feel free to contact any of the individuals who have been involved in the working group process, whose email addresses are provided below:

Name	Organisation	Email address
Ali Barkley/Malcolm Clarke	Intact (Ingol & Tanterton Community Trust)	ali.barkley@intact-preston.org.uk malcolm_clarke@hotmail.co.uk
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Dave Packwood	Barnardo’s	dave.packwood@barnardos.org.uk
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Jacquie Mutch	Groundwork Lancashire West & Wigan	jacqueline.mutch@groundwork.org.uk
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Luke Bidwell	Early Break	lbidwell@earlybreak.co.uk
Rob Jackson	The Children’s Society	rob.jackson@childrenssociety.org.uk

Brief Overview of the Operating Environment

The contemporary environment is (and will be for the next few years) dominated by the new government's deficit reduction plans

Generally, the campaign of cuts in public sector finance presents both threats and opportunities for the sector. VCFS organisations will need to be much more competitive and efficient to be able to survive in the new, more challenging operating environment wherein competition from the private sector is growing. However, the sector could be in a key position to benefit as more services, which hitherto were the exclusive domain of the public sector, are outsourced to non-state providers, framed by the Big Society agenda.

The significant scaling down of public sector funding, and the heightened drive towards public sector efficiencies is putting commissioners under pressure to reduce transaction costs by not only seeking to establish joint buyer syndicates but also pooling existing multiple contracts into a single, aggregated commission.

This growing focus on economic restraint, increased efficiency and greater value for money within the contemporary operating environment forms the context for the proliferation of VCFS consortium developments nationally.

The drive towards rationalisation is resulting in the emergence of what might be described as 'single points of contracting/fund management'. This is where a number of separate bodies consort together to form one contracting channel or funding pipeline designed to create economies of scale and efficiency gains.

At a local sub-sector level, key issues include the adoption of 'Total Family' approach, which sees the child as part of a family and understand the potential support they have available to them through the family, and prevention and early intervention, which promotes prevention/early intervention as a means of supporting and building resilience amongst children, young people and their families, particularly those that may be vulnerable, before poor outcomes develop.

Proposals contained in *Transforming service delivery for children and young people – a multi agency strategy for action* (Children's Trusts in Lancashire, January 2011) makes recommendations for "partners to become more effective at working with the 'third sector'..." (p3).

The multi-agency strategy for action also highlights a number key issues and challenges including a perception of fragmentation within current service delivery arrangements.

Consortium Vision, Mission, Underpinning Values and Business Principles

The collaborators have developed a clear **vision** for the consortium:

We believe that together we can learn more, progress faster and deliver better than we can apart and therefore have a duty to collaborate for the benefit of those we serve. The result will be a thriving local community in which all children, young people and families, including the most disadvantaged and vulnerable, are able to achieve their full potential

The **mission** of the consortium is to:

To win significant resources to sustain and grow high quality, children, young people and family-related provision within the local voluntary, community and faith sector, in response to identified needs

Underpinning Values

Consortium members' practice values

The consortium will operate with a number of what might be described as 'practice values'. These will underpin the services that will be delivered through the consortium and member organisations will be expected to adhere to them. They are summarised as:

- Working collaboratively
- Addressing social and economic inequalities
- Offering holistic, person-centred services
- Championing and promoting social justice
- Contributing to environmental sustainability
- Inter-linking locally-based services/interventions and wider community regeneration practice
- Using locally-delivered initiatives and projects to generate added value by promoting social cohesion, developing local social capital and building sustainable community capacity
- Ensuring a commitment to self-empowerment – enabling children, young people and parents to take control over their own lives and to be the originators and catalysts of their own personal development and self-improvement strategies
- Supporting children, young people and families to discover and fulfil their own potential
- Encouraging co-operation and mutuality through collective approaches to self-help
- Ensuring non-judgmental, anti-discriminatory practice
- Ensuring respect for persons
- Ensuring empathic understanding of beneficiary needs

- Providing free or affordable services at the point of need

Critically, what will guide and govern the consortium's work throughout will be an unwavering commitment to the needs of the clients or end-users of the services and initiatives provided through the county-wide network of agencies. All decisions about consortium strategy, financial objectives, joint working etc will be taken from the standpoint of ensuring that the needs of Lancashire children, young people and families are effectively met.

The consortium will make a special effort to engage with and meet the needs of hard to reach groups within disadvantaged communities of both place and interest.

The consortium's core operating values

The consortium will also adhere to a number of what might be described as 'core operating values', which will inform how it will conduct itself in its day-to-day business and define its ethos. These values are as follows:

□ Voluntary, Community & Faith Sector focus

The consortium is a collaboration of agencies operating in the VCFS.

What binds the collaborators is a clear commitment to individual user and community benefit, the intention being to build on the value-driven approach of the not-for-profit sector to deliver the shared consortium vision.

□ Objectivity and impartiality

The consortium will be focused impartially upon the objective needs of all the member organisations, which shall be equal in status. It will not be dominated by the particular self-interests of certain organisations or individuals.

Consortium members will need to strive at all times to be open, honest and transparent in their involvement in consortium affairs. Representatives of the consortium will be required to operate with integrity and to work for the good of the whole consortium.

Where there are a number of member organisations that can demonstrate that they can provide activities/services in line with relevant commissioning criteria, any associated contract income secured will be sub-contracted to those organisations on a transparent and fair basis, proportionate to delivery capacity and subject to appropriate quality and monitoring/reporting thresholds.

These values of objectivity and impartiality are informed by Nolan's seven principles of public life.

□ **Member ownership and control**

The members of the consortium will own and control it by clear majority. The consortium will be organised along formal lines; in other words, as a new legal entity. A key feature of this model is member ownership. This will provide for an inclusive and dynamic partnership where members, and through them the end users, are able to input ideas and shape strategy and provision on an ongoing basis.

The consortium will have 2 categories of membership – full and associate. Full members will be deemed to be ‘procurement-ready’, having demonstrated that they already meet certain sub-contracting/due diligence thresholds. Associate members will be deemed to be not yet ‘procurement-ready’ but have the genuine potential, with the structured support of the consortium, to achieve this and therefore convert to full membership status in due course. Both categories of members will be actively engaged in controlling the consortium’s affairs and being involved in the governance arrangements.

The consortium will combine support with self-reliance. By bringing providers together into a single point of contracting essential support and enabling infrastructure in the form of a central hub will be created. At the same time, the consortium members will control the work of this hub through a democratic governance arrangement.

□ **Influencing patterns of supply**

Through creating a unified delivery mechanism, the consortium will seek to influence the strategic direction of VCFS-sponsored children, young people and family’s provision across the county. The consortium will give the sector the capacity to co-design, plan and co-ordinate resource allocation in the most efficient and effective way, ensuring optimal patterns of provision across the area.

□ **Protecting autonomy and strengthening organisations**

The consortium will be set up as a separate legal entity with each member retaining its independence, local autonomy and accountability. The consortium is not designed to threaten individual organisations’ autonomy or about merging or subsuming their independence into a larger structure.

Within this, the hub is designed to be a mechanism *internal* to the consortium, serving the needs of each individual member organisation, and not an external, self-serving structure.

The organisations that make up the membership base will each have their own ways of working designed in specific response to a particular set of circumstances and conditions in which they are operating. The consortium will be sensitive to this diversity in implementing any strategy to standardise systems, processes and methods across the provider network.

The consortium will respect the special strengths and particular approaches of different member organisations and build their capacity to become more effective as independent, locally accountable bodies, including bidding for and managing their own funds and managing their own quality improvement strategies.

Inherent dynamism and responsiveness

The consortium will not operate as a closed circle of collaborators but will be constantly open to the potential for new members to come on board. This commitment to 'ensuring contestability' will promote and safeguard vitality and dynamism within the provider network.

Levels of support within the consortium structure will evolve over time, adapting to the changing needs of member organisations and their respective stakeholders. Moreover, the consortium will actively encourage member organisations to establish and maintain partnerships and networks outside of the consortium so that they can develop their potential further.

Business Principles

As a social enterprise, Greater Together will adhere to a number of business principles. It will:

- Apply business skills and commercial principles in order to flourish as a social enterprise operating within the VCFS
- Set clear business objectives
- Only pursue funding/contracting opportunities that are in the best interests of the consortium stakeholders
- Explore and take advantage of opportunities within a planned approach, drawing on the consortium's strategic position within the county and beyond
- Create and use management information as an integral part of business and strategic planning
- Undertake short and long-range business and financial forecasting

- ❑ Focus on outcomes rather than inputs and outputs
- ❑ Streamline the consortium's management and back office functions
- ❑ Adopt a total, "whole organisation" approach to developing business awareness, skills and understanding; in other words, ensuring that business development capability is not just invested in a few individuals but embedded across the entire consortium
- ❑ Employ business and financial analytical tools (e.g. competitor analysis, break-even analysis etc) as a natural, routine function of maintaining the consortium
- ❑ Take decisions about areas of potential work/activity on the basis of sound business and financial analysis, as part of a continuous risk management strategy
- ❑ Review on a regular, systematic basis, existing areas of work for on-going viability, as part of a continuous risk management strategy
- ❑ Maintain strong internal research and development capacity to underpin analysis of the opportunities and threats within the business environment and to inform business development strategies

All members of the consortium will need to 'sign up' to these business principles.

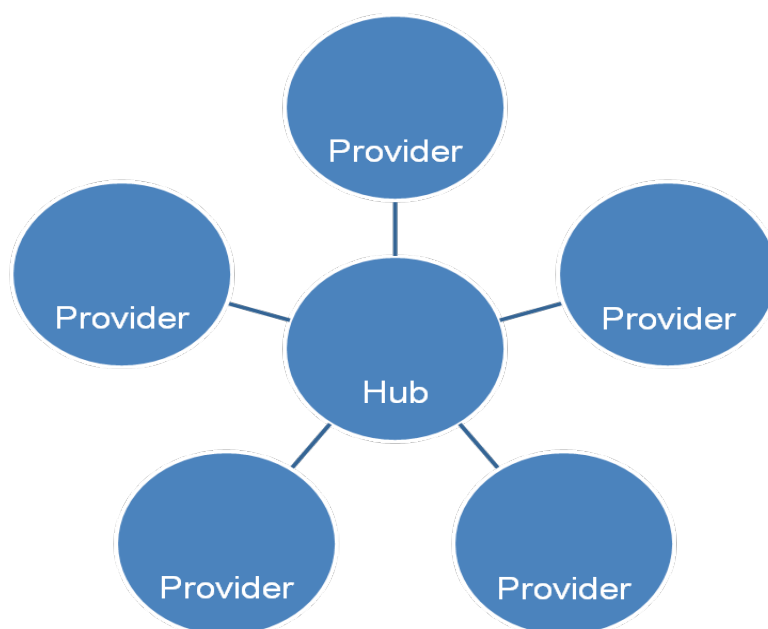
Consortium Model and Operating Structure

The joint venture will be organised as a formal consortium that will be collectively owned by its members.

It will be established as a separate legal body with the provider organisations taking up membership of this body. The defining features of this model are as follows:

- Member organisations comprise (by clear majority) the consortium's governing body/Board, alongside representation from key external stakeholders and independent perspectives, including the local authority
- The consortium creates a single funding portal/point of contracting (i.e. the local authority and other commissioning bodies/funders commission/contract with the new legal entity which will be responsible for setting up and managing sub-contracts/SLA's with individual consortium members)
- It operates through a hub and spokes structure (the hub being the central infrastructure that acts as the executive engine of the consortium, including negotiating and sub-letting contracts [accountable to the Board and wider membership], and the spokes being the various individual member organisations/providers – see figure 1). The Board will have the option of outsourcing central management/technical functions to agencies both internal and external to the membership, as befitting the consortium's business strategy and operating needs.

Figure 1



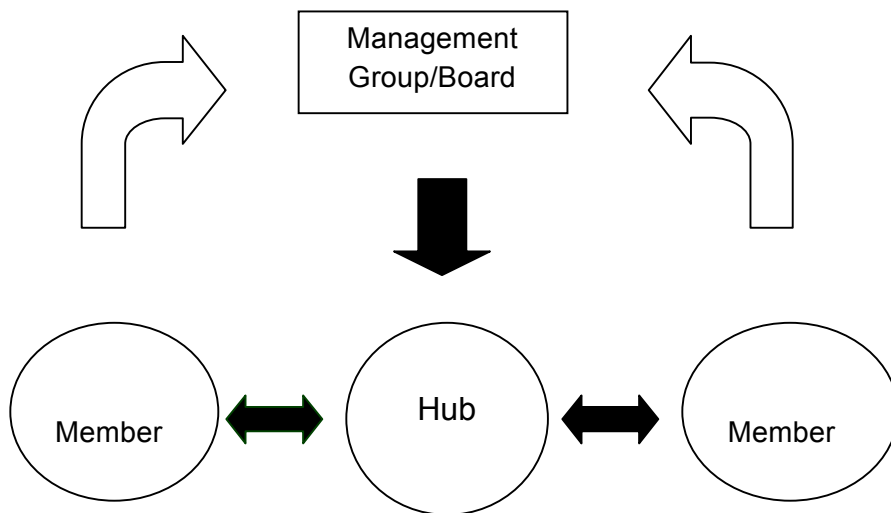
Through the hub infrastructure the consortium will be able to act as the executive interface between funders/regulatory bodies and the VCFS organisations providing frontline services.

The hub will have a range of technical and secretariat duties: negotiation, tender writing, contract management, resource allocation, quality improvement and organisational capacity building (within the specific context of public service delivery). The hub will ensure smooth and efficient fund/contract management and proactively seek out new opportunities on behalf of the membership.

The hub will also be tasked with building the capacity of member organisations so that they are better able to meet the requirements and thresholds of the commissioners/procurement agencies. This could range from arranging informal networking opportunities through to organising formal training for members. This capacity building brief will be delivered in partnership with existing, carefully selected infrastructure support organisations.

The hub and its work will be managed by the consortium Board, which will be composed primarily of representatives from member organisations (see figure 2).

Figure 2



How the contracting and sub-contracting process will work in practice

In order to deliver its vision of improving the life chances of disadvantaged and vulnerable client groups, the consortium needs to secure resources and subsequently allocate those resources to member organisations in a way that ensures optimal service delivery. This will involve the consortium in negotiating a number of key stages in a cycle of service co-design, resource acquisition and resource allocation.

Acquiring resources will involve two main approaches. A central objective of the consortium is to work with commissioners to establish a 'pipeline' arrangement, whereby funding can be channelled to the consortium and therefore to frontline providers via a unified, aggregated grant aid or negotiating commissioning mechanism. At the same time, the consortium will have the capacity to bid for contracts on an open and competitive basis.

In brief, the consortium will:

- Accelerate and expand the sharing of information and intelligence about what local communities actually need, building on VCFS providers' unparalleled experience of delivering locally rooted, user-led services
- Engage in the co-design of services
- Shape service specifications/tender frameworks so that they are fit for purpose in terms of meeting the needs of the client groups that are being targeted by the member organisations
- Identify appropriate funding/tender opportunities for the consortium to pursue
- Submit consortium funding bids/tender proposals
- Subject to the funding bid/tender proposal being successful, award sub-contracts to members, based on either joint delivery planning or an open and competitive sub-tendering approach
- Monitor performance against sub-contracts (more detail on how the contracting and sub-contracting process will work is contained within the consortium business plan)

Legal Structure and Governance Arrangements

The consortium working group has determined that the most appropriate legal model is a company limited by guarantee with registered charitable status (i.e. charitable company). This was deemed to be fit for purpose for consortium-working and capable of offering a number of advantages, not least that it minimises risk through the guarantee facility at the same time as strengthening mutualism and co-operation through the fiduciary responsibilities implicit in charity law.

As the consortium will be structured as a charitable company it will need a board of trustees. The board of trustees will be composed of a blend of executive managers from the member organisations and individuals outside of the consortium membership with an interest in the delivery of public services by the VCFS. The latter component of the board constituency will have a strong focus on representation from the local authority and the local business sector, and will be designed to build a strong degree of independence into the overall board structure.

The board will meet on a regular basis, as befitting the business needs of the consortium, and will be responsible for the strategic direction of the joint venture and for overseeing day-to-day management issues. Accountability for the consortium's work will rest wholly with the board. The leadership and overall strength of the board will be essential therefore to the success of the consortium as a whole.

Places on the board will be the subject of open contest on a twelve-monthly basis through the Annual General Meeting (AGM), with trustees standing down/retiring on a three-year rotation basis. This will involve a process of application/nomination, followed by an election where numbers are sufficient for places to be contested. All member organisations will get the opportunity to vote at the AGM.

Board members will be elected on the basis of a Role Description and Skills Profile that sets out the relevant skills and experience required. Overall, the Board will need to have a healthy balance of skills, including business know-how and entrepreneurial acumen, and stakeholder perspectives, including a reflection of key community needs.

Work will be done to ensure that clients/service users have a voice within the governance structure.

All board members will be required to provide a list of involvement and association with other groups/activities when joining and to declare any potential conflicts of interest that might arise in carrying out any of their duties.

Decisions at board meetings will be based generally on a consensus of those present. However, where this is not possible, decisions will be taken on a majority basis.

Benefits of Consortium Membership and Associated Expectations

Benefits

It is envisaged that Greater Together will generate a number of benefits for its member organisations. These have been clustered under the following headings:

- Quality Improvement
- Negotiating Power and Funding Prospects
- Image and Profile
- Resource Use
- Strategic Capability

The consortium will:

Quality Improvement

- Enable its member agencies to meet clients' needs better by increasing provider capacity and by focusing on sustained improvements in the quality and impact of frontline service provision
- Encourage the sharing of expertise and good practice, leading to better, improved services, including the use of time-banking methods to promote shared learning
- Facilitate the joint delivery of services and activities

Negotiating Power and Funding Prospects

- Increase the prospects of securing funding and winning tenders at a county-wide level; this will enable member organisations to build on their existing funding bases
- Foster greater negotiating and bargaining power through increased scale and capacity for service delivery
- Enhance member organisations' competitiveness within the external funding environment
- Create a single, unified point of funding/contracting, and in so doing increase attractiveness to funders/contractors
- Strengthen and extend the advocacy and influencing capacity of member organisations

Image and Profile

- Increase marketing capacity, with marketing and promotional activity undertaken individually by member organisations being supplemented by centralised, consortium-wide actions in this area
- Extend and heighten member organisations' public profile

Resource Use

- Generate economies of scale and efficiency savings through the rationalisation of resources
- Free up member organisations, where practicable, to maintain, consolidate and enhance their core focus on frontline delivery by transferring, at least by some extent, contract management requirements to a specialised enabling and support infrastructure

Strategic Capability

- Improve strategic planning through a centralised, co-ordinated function that guides, shapes and collates the different, separate strategic aims and objectives of each member organisation
- Establish more concerted and sustainable research, development and intelligence-gathering capacity, with greater resultant focus on innovation and new ways of working
- Enable joint needs assessment and programme planning to be undertaken

In addition, the establishment of the consortium will bring technical benefits through efficient contract management. For example, a consortium approach would potentially make it possible for any contingent shortfall in output from certain sub-contractors to be offset by an excess in output from others, with the associated contract funding being transferred between providers through an appropriate reconciliation process. This will mean that overall contract compliance can be achieved.

Expectations

Running alongside the range of benefits, there will be some expectations of member organisations in terms of their general contribution to the consortium. These are in addition to the specific roles and functions of member organisations set out in the next section on *Main Operational Issues*.

These general expectations are as follows:

- Interest in, support for, and promotion of the development and furtherance of the consortium as a whole and not merely the respective agendas or vested interests of certain member organisations. As previously outlined, members will need to be open, honest and transparent in their involvement in consortium affairs and consortium representatives will need to work for the good of the whole consortium.
- Inputting ideas into the further development of the consortium
- Inputting ideas/information into, and providing support for, joint tenders and applications
- Participating in capacity building initiatives
- Joining appropriate clusters
- Adhering consistently to the values of the consortium

Main Operational Issues

Roles and Functions of the consortium hub

Generally, the hub will seek to secure funding and business development opportunities at a county-wide level and will also ensure smooth and efficient fund contract management. To avoid duplication and to build on existing technical capacity within the sector hub functions will be outsourced, as appropriate.

The hub will have a range of specific functions:

- **Leading the strategic and business planning process** – to include reviewing the operating environment, undertaking joint needs analyses, setting objectives and targets, assessing risks, appraising options, undertaking full cost analyses and determining unit prices
- **Developing policies** – e.g. Health and Safety, Equality and Diversity, Conflicts of Interest etc
- **Engaging in co-design and influencing the shape of relevant service specifications and associated commissioning frameworks**
- **Negotiating a funding portal arrangement**
- **Submitting consortium tenders** (including negotiating Pre-Qualification Questionnaire [PQQ] processes where applicable)
- **Setting up and implementing an appropriate system for awarding sub-contracts** based on the following principles/criteria:
 - Contract compliance (including compliance in the following areas: profile of project deliverables and associated outcomes against specified statement of need, quality assurance, financial accounting, outcome accounting and value for money benchmarks)
 - Delivery capacity of providers
 - Potential impact
 - Fairness
 - Transparency

- **Setting up and implementing an appropriate system for monitoring the performance of sub-contractors**
- **Implementing measures to maintain and improve standards of delivery across the consortium** – to include adopting a consortium-wide QA policy and strategy, overseeing self-assessment reporting (or some other appropriate form of internal verification/moderation) and improvement/development planning, managing external inspections, where applicable etc
- **Undertaking financial management for the consortium** – to include:
 - Managing the consortium’s contract income and specific hub expenditure
 - Producing management accounts
 - Liaising with external auditors
 - Preparing income and expenditure forecasts
 - Preparing cash flow forecasts
 - Subjecting contract opportunities to break-even analysis
 - Calculating common unit costs
 - Determining pricing strategies etc
- **Co-ordinating strategies to build the capacity of the provider network** – to include use of a range of capacity building methods, e.g. training, mentoring, networking etc, and drawing wherever possible on the resources of established second tier agencies and the provider network itself
- **Raising the profile of the consortium** – to include the development of a marketing and PR strategy

Roles and Functions of consortium Members

The following specific roles and functions are in addition to the general expectations of member organisations set out in the section on *Benefits of Consortium Membership and Associated Expectations*.

- **To design and deliver:**
 - *High-quality and responsive services to local client groups*
- **To collect and provide to the hub, for the purpose of performance management and to assist with the design of future services:**

- *Information/data relating to organisational strategic aims and objectives, outcome performance, financial expenditure etc*

The importance of effective and efficient transfer of monitoring information from member organisations holding sub-contracts to the hub cannot be over-stated. This is why the efficient provision/transfer of information (using tailored software systems as appropriate) is a condition of membership.

The consortium will develop a unified framework for contract-related monitoring that will apply across the provider network and which will focus on the monitoring and recording of outcomes.

Monitoring information will need to be sent regularly to the hub for audit and accounting purposes. Member organisations will have a responsibility to send information:

- On time
- In a form which is complete, clear and accurate

The hub will provide help, support, guidance and training, as appropriate, in all these matters of record-keeping, data collection, information management and administration.

To participate in:

- Consortium meetings/networks

To manage:

- The affairs of the consortium generally through active participation (either directly or via accountable representatives) on the consortium board and sub-committees

Funding

Funding Strategy

The consortium will focus on securing large public service contracts at a county-wide level, up-scaling in scope and capacity in order to be in a position to achieve this.

Hub or secretariat functions will be sustainable through the allocation of a sufficient top-slice of recurrent contract funding.

Generally speaking, the consortium hub needs to be sufficiently dynamic to expand and, if necessary, *contract* in line with fluctuations in the funding market, increasing and decreasing its capacity to balance with the inflow of cash. For this purpose the hub will be seen merely as a business instrument, an internal mechanism that enables the consortium to function, rather than as a key stakeholder within the new company. Packaging up hub functions and outsourcing these within the consortium membership will facilitate this vision.

This flexibility and responsiveness, built into the core operations of the consortium, will be essential to its long-term viability and success.

□ ***How funding will be allocated between the central hub and member organisations***

The consortium will need to determine an appropriate division of funding between essential hub functions and the requirements of the member organisations. This 'resource allocation ratio' will need to ensure that funding is directed predominantly at frontline service delivery, whilst at the same time safeguarding the central enabling infrastructure and ensuring that the consortium is sustainable.

This ratio will be effected through the 'top-slicing' of contract funding, and will be determined and subsequently reviewed by the membership through its overall management structure and after due consideration of all the relevant issues. Therefore, it is not possible at this point to give a precise statement of the level of funds that a member organisation will achieve (this precise amount of funding would in any case depend upon analysis of what any member organisation planned to deliver, e.g. the nature of services provided, projected number of people benefiting from those services, etc).

However, it is important to state at the outset that an underlying principle of the internal resource allocation ratio between hub and member organisations is that ***the vast majority of funding should be invested in the essential requirements of delivery*** with more money as a result getting through to the individual client, and correspondingly less being absorbed by bureaucracy and administration. This approach is in line with the general aspiration of statutory bodies/commissioners and the government, especially in the current climate of financial austerity, to see less money wasted in superfluous bureaucracy and more money correspondingly reaching where it is most needed – the individual client or service user.

It has been determined by the consortium working group that the internal resource allocation ratio should be roughly 9:1 in favour of delivery (or, in other words, of the member organisations as opposed to the hub), with, moreover, efforts to reduce further the proportion going to central administration (working towards a ratio of 19:1) as the consortium evolves and becomes more efficient.

In percentage terms this means that the contract top-slice figure would be equivalent to no more than 10% of the contract value, with the aim of reducing this to 5% over time.

In return for their financial contribution (through the contract top-slice) to the hub, member organisations will enjoy the range of benefits that membership will bring, including access to funding. Also, the shift in the balance of contract management functions away from frontline providers towards a specialist contract management unit is expressly designed to create efficiency savings for those providers.

Approach to Quality Assurance

The consortium will adopt a quality assurance policy that all member organisations must adhere to when delivering on behalf of the consortium.

This will include the requirement for member organisations to produce an annual Self-Assessment Report (SAR) that will entail providers identifying their current strengths and weaknesses and formulating an improvement plan to build on the former and address the latter.

The consortium will build on the high-quality systems and practices that already exist across the provider network in the county.

The keystone of this Membership Prospectus is a series of membership eligibility criteria (see later section). These criteria include requirements relating to quality assurance.

Rigorous contract management systems and procedures will be put in place. To begin with, only appropriately quality-assured providers will receive sub-contracts. Also, the attainment by sub-contractors of the appropriate quality standards will be reviewed at key census/evaluation points (this will include visits to providers to carry out provider reviews). This process will identify cases of under-performance.

A key feature of how the consortium overall will operate is the use of joined-up capacity to drive up standards. This might involve, for example, proven high quality providers mentoring and supporting other providers that have identified weaknesses, as part of a collective quality improvement strategy. The aim will be to secure specialist capacity building funding to resource these types of targeted networking/organisational development approaches, working in partnership with existing infrastructure support organisations.

Additionally, the consortium will seek to secure in its own right an appropriate quality assurance accreditation.

It will also align its approach to quality with the performance management frameworks of commissioners, such as the QIPP (Quality Innovation Productivity & Prevention) framework within the NHS.

How Organisations Join the Consortium

Organisations need to complete the separate Application for Membership Form (see attached).

A formal application process is needed to ensure that organisations are actively committed to the consortium vision and value base outlined earlier and can meet certain standards/thresholds.

At this initial stage, the interim board will organise a membership verification process which will result in a formal decision on whether or not to grant applicants membership. This process will involve a review of the submitted application forms and will be led by a panel consisting of a cross-section of interim board members (adhering to appropriate, pre-determined protocol) along with external, independent representation.

Once it is in place the full board will assume responsibility for membership recruitment.

Membership Eligibility Criteria

To become a member of the consortium organisations will need to demonstrate that they can meet certain eligibility criteria.

Such criteria have been set because the consortium is a joint business venture geared towards the acquisition of significant contract funding/income. Being a business venture of this nature will require new ways of thinking and working to be developed amongst VCFS organisations across the county. Also, knowing that member organisations meet certain thresholds will help to build confidence within the consortium and foster a culture of collective reliance.

There will be 2 categories of membership available: full (basically, organisations that are 'contract-ready') and associate (basically, organisations that are not yet 'contract-ready').

To reiterate, full membership will not automatically qualify the organisation to receive a sub-contract (though it does provide what might be described as a 'pre-contracting platform'). The provision of a sub-contract will be subject to technical contract negotiations between the consortium hub, the individual member organisation and the procurement agency/commissioner.

There are 12 key eligibility criteria divided into 2 parts:

Part 1: Universal Criteria

- ✓ Sector (not-for-profit organisations and social enterprises)
- ✓ Provision of services for children, young people and families
- ✓ Provision of services for the vulnerable and hard-to-reach
- ✓ Area of operation
- ✓ Commitment to consortium working
- ✓ Commitment to sharing expertise via a time bank
- ✓ Commitment to safeguarding

All members, full or associate, will need to demonstrate that they meet all of these universal criteria.

If organisations cannot meet all of these criteria, they will not be granted membership of the consortium.

Part 2: Contract-Readiness Criteria

- ✓ Financial health
- ✓ Quality systems
- ✓ Suitable organisational policies
- ✓ Suitable governance

✓ Technical capacity

These contract-readiness criteria are designed to mirror the typical criteria set out within Pre-Qualification Questionnaires (PQQ's).

All full members will additionally need to demonstrate that they meet all of these contract-readiness criteria.

If organisations cannot meet all of the contract-readiness criteria, but meet all of the universal criteria, they will be offered associate membership (though with the potential to convert to full membership in due course) – see Appendix 1 for more detail on associate membership status.

Within the application form organisations will have the option of solely addressing the universal criteria and not progressing onto part 2; in other words, just applying for associate membership at this stage.

Where it is not clear from the application form and any supporting information submitted that an applicant organisation meets a particular criterion, the board will seek additional information, as appropriate, and, where necessary, use its discretion to arrive at a decision on eligibility.

Each of the criteria is now defined.

Part 1: Universal Criteria

- **Sector (*not-for-profit*)**

Any prospective member must be a children, young people and families service provider in the not-for-profit sector and have clear and transparent charitable objectives².

Any member will need to have clear social objectives and it is anticipated that in practice most will be registered charities and companies limited by guarantee, though this is not a specific criterion of membership.

Typically, members will be independent providers, run by volunteer management committees/boards. Some will be local organisations serving the needs of particular geographical communities in Lancashire, while others will be county-wide or national agencies covering the entire area.

² It is important to point out that this precludes any organisation that is based on a share capital model (including a CIC limited by shares), which involves distribution, *by any degree*, of surpluses to *private* shareholders.

It is expected that organisations will be able to generate strong 'social added value'. This might involve developing and training volunteers who are disadvantaged within the labour market (or experiencing some other form of disadvantage) so that, in the process of inputting their free time, they can enhance their skills and employability and improve their lives.³

Any prospective member will also need to be a user-led organisation with clear strategies and policies in place for involving service users in all aspects of the organisation and its work.

- ***Provision of services for children, young people and families***

To be a member of the consortium an organisation must be able to *provide*⁴ children, young people and family services. Such services could be the main or indeed only activity of the organisation, or might form one part of a broad portfolio of different activities.

There is an expectation that members, as well as providing services themselves, will also be committed to utilising/purchasing⁵ children, young people and families' services, where appropriate, from micro organisations within the local community (the consortium itself may also undertake this broader purchasing role). This will link integrally to the development of an expansive, buoyant and dynamic supply chain that takes full account of wider community delivery capacity at a grass roots level. Such progressive supply chain development will have significant added value benefits in building local social capital and generating wealth through local multiplier effects within disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

³ It is anticipated that the consortium may wish in the future to work also with organisations outside of the not-for-profit sector, though the latter are not the target of the current membership recruitment drive, as inscribed within this Prospectus.

⁴ Being a provider implies that the organisation is in direct control of the activities on offer and of the outputs and outcomes that are generated by those activities; as opposed to an organisation that hosts (*Host*) or promotes (*Promoter*) services provided through a third party, e.g. a local community association using its centre to host outreach youth provision delivered by a statutory or VCFS partner.

⁵ This would not entail another layer of sub-contracting but instead would involve more flexible purchasing arrangements (e.g. paying on invoice, spot purchasing etc).

- ***Commitment to working with the vulnerable and hard-to-reach***

Whilst delivering open provision, the consortium will simultaneously have a clear emphasis on providing services to the most vulnerable, marginalised and excluded children, young people and families in Lancashire. This approach is reflected in the consortium's vision statement and practice values. Prospective members must mirror this approach in their own day-to-day work.

This does not mean that, in order to be eligible, organisations have to work exclusively with vulnerable/hard-to-reach individuals and groups, but that the *pervading ethos or overriding mission* of organisations must be about addressing vulnerability and disadvantage.

- ***Area of operation***

Prospective members must be operating in the geographic county of Lancashire. The principle of localism is a cornerstone of the consortium's entire approach, so this criterion is pivotal.

The interim board hasn't attempted to articulate this criterion as it is difficult to define with any meaningful degree of precision. Instead, the onus will be on organisations to demonstrate as part of the application process, through the submission of a brief narrative, how they are *locally rooted* organisations.

- ***Commitment to consortium working***

As the joint venture will be organised as a formal consortium, majority owned and controlled by its members through a democratic governance structure, its strength will be in the contribution made by all the members.

Therefore, members must be willing to make a positive contribution to the consortium and its work. This includes:

- Consistently supporting the work of the consortium, even in areas and aspects that are not directly relevant to the work of the individual organisation
- Commitment to participating actively in the governance requirements, and adhering to the consortium's code of practice, ways of working and protocol
- Commitment to sharing expertise, knowledge and experience with other members (see the next criterion)

- ***Commitment to sharing expertise via a time bank***

Consortium members, full and associate, must be committed to sharing their expertise. This builds on the previous, more general criterion relating to consortium-working.

It is anticipated, on the one hand, that larger organisations that have already been delivering public service contracts will be able to share with smaller, less developed organisations their expertise and good practice in contract management, financial stewardship systems and skills etc. On other hand, those same smaller organisations will have their own particular areas of expertise that they could share, such as niche service delivery, specialist ways of engaging with hard-to-reach client groups etc.

A time bank mechanism, centrally co-ordinated by the consortium hub, will be set up to facilitate this sharing of expertise to ensure that it is systematised and based on mutual obligation and reward.

- ***Commitment to safeguarding***

Members will also need to demonstrate that they rigorously meet relevant safeguarding standards. Specifically, they need to fulfil the four Safe Network national core standards that are designed to help non-statutory organisations put in place clear safeguarding arrangements for children, young people and vulnerable adults:

- safer staff and volunteers – recruitment, induction and supervision
- child protection
- preventing and responding to bullying
- avoiding accidents and running safe activities and events

Part 2: Contract-Readiness Criteria

- ***Financial Health***

Prospective full members must be in sound financial health, so that the consortium can be assured that its sub-contractors are financially sustainable and have appropriate financial management systems in place to manage sub-contracts effectively.

- ***Quality Systems***

To be accepted for full membership an organisation must be able to demonstrate that it can meet appropriate standards.

A key indicator of this will be the organisation already operating with an externally recognised and validated QA system or set of standards (e.g. PQASSO, Investors in People, ISO 9001:2000 or equivalent), or be actively engaged in putting such a system in place.

Any QA system will need to be reinforced by a strong and sustained commitment to Continuous Professional Development and organisational improvement, in line with the on-going requirements and expectations of the commissioning bodies.

At this juncture the working group/interim board does not wish to be prescriptive about which systems should be adopted by organisations, as it recognises that the use of QA systems will vary according to the precise nature, size, remit and operating circumstances of providers. Instead, prospective members will need to demonstrate how their chosen system safeguards standards of quality within the organisation.

- ***Suitable organisational policies***

Linked to quality systems and processes, a full member needs to possess a raft of policies (e.g. Equal Opportunities, Health & Safety etc) that it systematically implements and regularly reviews.

- ***Suitable governance***

A full member needs to be well governed. There needs to be good systems in place for recruiting, supporting and developing Board members, and the Board members need to be fully aware of their roles and responsibilities and execute their duties efficiently and diligently. The organisation also needs to have suitable constitutional powers.

- ***Technical capacity***

Organisations need to have the technical capacity to hold, manage and deliver sub-contracts. This includes information management capability. Prospective full members must be able to provide the consortium with regular information relating to client numbers, case details, financial performance etc. Information must be provided on time and in a form that is complete, clear and accurate. This requirement is fundamental to the entire operation.

Appendix 1: Definition of associate membership and enumeration of benefits

Associate membership of the consortium will be offered to organisations that meet all of the stated universal criteria but not all the contract readiness criteria set out in the Membership Prospectus.

Associate members will be deemed to have the potential to add value to the consortium through association and, in return, derive benefits from such association.

In particular, it is anticipated that organisations that start out as associate members will have both the ambition and capability to convert in due course (especially through benefiting from the capacity building services made available through the consortium) into full members with the potential to hold sub-contracts.

The benefits of associate membership include:

- Access to advice, information and support through the consortium relating to strategies for building the capacity of the associate member in order for it to progress, as appropriate, to become a full member eligible to receive funding via sub-contracting arrangements
- The potential to play a role in consortium service delivery outside of sub-contracting arrangements, e.g. being spot purchased or paid on invoice for specialist or niche services that add value to the contractual supply chain
- Access to advice, information and support through the consortium relating to general issues pertaining to organisational development, and specifically quality assurance and the functional aspects of managing information and managing finances
- The potential to network with other members, full and associate, in order to facilitate the transfer of goods and services, including skills and know-how

Associate members will play a full role in the strategic management of the consortium, including having full voting rights at the company's general meetings and the power to nominate individuals to stand for election for the Board of Trustees.