



# Medway VCS Partnership, Collaboration and Transformation

*An Introduction*

We've already celebrated today the remarkable work of the sector in Medway – and later you'll hear more about some of our achievements in working collaboratively and our plans to build on those successes.

The VCS Leaders Network (an embodiment of collaboration) has been a champion and driver for the sector throughout this journey...

# Medway's VCS Leaders Network

A journey with growing purpose



**VCS Leaders Network**

# It all started nearly 7 years ago....

- The notion that the sector in Medway was a rich pool of professional talent and skills, highly motivated people, delivering essential services for a range of needs groups
- We came together to share experiences, share views and harness a single sector voice
- We progressed our togetherness to formally meeting, around 3 or 4 events each year, developed networks further, and the steering group created a plan of work to be achieved together

# Gaining traction...

- After a series of events together, we reached a common understanding on key issues facing the local sector
- We rallied around the formal consultation on business rates
- We attended in force at a Medway Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- We were influential in ensuring the Voluntary Sector was recognised in formal local plans for procurement
- We became the voice of the sector and we started to make ourselves heard

# “Together we can achieve something remarkable” ...

- Encoded in the VCS leaders at the time of inception, a DNA which remains to this day.....
- We always knew that doing more together, would be the enabler to a more successful, sustainable, impactful sector
- We hosted formal collaboration training, and confronted brutal facts about why it often doesn't work
- We speed dated – which was nice, and again, accelerated our networking, drawing more organisations in to the network, and into our conversations

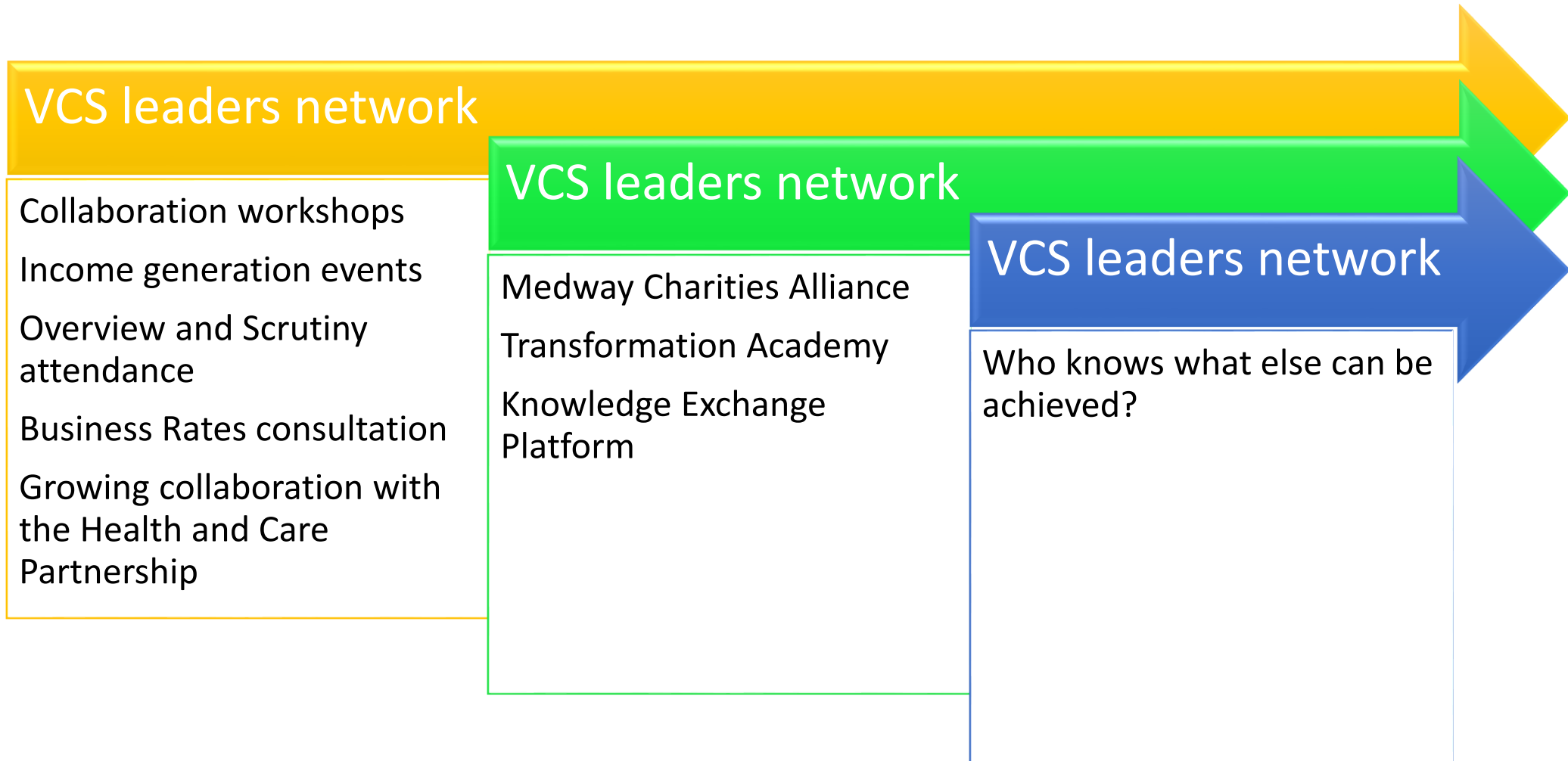
# Along came Covid...

- In March 2020, of course our plans were derailed somewhat, for every organisation, for every volunteer, for every staff member, and for every local authority, the world changed
- We went into crisis response mode, and we the Voluntary Sector, showed those in power that we were indispensable.
- We reached people who needed us faster than ever before, we mobilised together, we supported each other, we supported the local authority and we heard from all quarters that the response would not have been possible without the sector.

# It's not over until it's over.....

- We are still experiencing a clouded world, the Covid dust hasn't settled, and we have adapted, adopted new protocols, and carried on with the essential work that needs to happen, for the people that need us the most.
- Amid the pandemic, ideas for the future were borne, a crystallising thought that we have to do things differently now, in a post-Covid changed world.
- Those ideas will be showcased later on today.
- But most importantly, we need to keep the VCS Leaders Network on track, and here is why

# Adding weight to the flywheel





# The flywheel is turning....

- Its taken nearly 7 years, but together we have put our shoulders to the wheel collectively, to turn the sector flywheel to accelerate our achievements, increase our impact and reach more of the people that need us the most
- But this collective effort comes from a single understanding and commitment to know that we can do more as a collective
- As the wheel has turned, and increased in speed, we have seen the possibilities emerge, but there is more to do, more challenges ahead, and we need to keep the wheel turning and need more shoulders to help the effort

# Challenges ahead.....

- True costs of service provision, the challenge to overcome the vast gap between real costs, and contract /grant values
- Third sector recruitment (social care charities)
- Local Council Plan

## **The future...**

- Get involved, take part in the steering group if you have the time; work with us to help continue the transformation of the sector in Medway.
- Participate in all that the Transformation Academy and Alliance has to offer.
  - Spread the word and encourage your VCS peers to get involved too....  
*‘together we can achieve something quite remarkable’.*



# Medway Charities Alliance

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Introduction and Overview

# The Medway Charities Alliance

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- Mid lockdown 2020, and idea was shared with a couple of the sector's leaders.
- That idea germinated, and continued to grow and flourish. The idea that a formal alliance of charities across Medway, could further help transform the local voluntary sector
- As part of a collaborative bid, we have secured funding to deliver this idea, alongside the Transformation Academy
- The Lottery was excited about this initiative, and believe in it so profoundly that they have committed significant resource to support its creation.

# So let me explain...

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- A new company\* will be formed, by the founding members, with a criteria created to add further membership
- The company will formally share resources, the back of house resources that are expensive to buy individually, but essential to a charity to survive, grow, meet legislation requirements etc
- Human Resources, IT infrastructure, Payroll services, Fundraising, Bid writing, Marketing and Digital marketing, consultancy services, secretariat services etc.
- The possibilities are endless.....to be defined by the members

# Shared resources=shared costs

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- By pooling resources formally, we can find efficiencies in our costs, saving money together by working together, we can free up more money to push to the frontline services we all deliver.
- If you are buying in payroll services, or policy writing services, the Alliance could offer you these same services, at a reduced cost.
- A provider of services that truly understands your circumstances, complexity, staff and service users
- The Alliance created for the sector, run by the sector, owned by the sector

# Building the Alliance

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- We are looking for a few founding members, organisations with resources and skills to “Put in” to the alliance model once created.
- We want to build a range of services, in return for share ownership of the alliance, which serves the sector in Medway at reduced cost, in a connective and holistic way, which negates the need for repetition across our sector.
- The alliance vehicle will likely generate some surpluses, which will be returned to the owning members as unrestricted income, or, by agreement with the owning members, be put to use in the sector to further accelerate our shared goals

# Work is underway...

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- Right now, we are in early discussions with legal professionals to find the most appropriate structure for the alliance, most likely a simple company limited by shares.
- Our next stage is to canvass the sector for those interested in becoming founding members, and a criteria for this will be shared soon.
- If you have within your organisation, a key skills that you feel can be shared with the sector, boosted for the benefit of all, then perhaps you should consider being a founding member



# We need dedication, open minds and commitment...

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- We need organisations to take a step into the unknown, if you can, to commit to trying this model out.
- We believe it can work, and can be the best thing to happen for the sector in a long time. So do the Lottery funders, they are really keen to see it succeed.
- But it will require some time, dedication, and a change in mindset for you, and your trustees...

# Its not about giving something up....

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- Its about putting something in...
- Remember the old days? The empty housekeeping pot in the middle of the dining room table?
- We all need to come home to the table, and put our share in the pot, this will ensure that we can support our sector locally ourselves, that we can support each other to innovate, gain essential funds for our services.
- We can't wait for someone else to come and help us, we need to help ourselves.