



# POST-BREXIT: What next for voluntary sector disability organisations?

*“VODG members and the disability sector more widely should be left in no doubt that VODG has a track record of working on exactly the kinds of issues that have become even more prevalent after the leave vote.”*





## SUMMARY

The Voluntary Organisations Disability Group (VODG) represents leading organisations. Together our members support over one million disabled people, employ over 85,000 staff, and have a combined turnover in excess of £2.5 billion.

The EU referendum result (or post-Brexit) will bring significant change, challenge and opportunities for voluntary sector disability organisations. Members have alerted us to the following risks and issues post-Brexit:

**Austerity and funding** - VODG members are dependent on public sector funding and further expenditure cuts could leave an already under-funded sector in deeper crisis. EU funded programmes are also at risk.

**Workforce retention and future supply** - Uncertainty within the labour market following the result could reduce providers' abilities to recruit in the short term. In the longer term there are broader workforce planning requirements to ensure an adequate pool of skilled and caring staff in the future.

**Community cohesion, rights and the risk of distraction** - VODG members report risks about further social divisions in society,

reductions in community cohesion and losing progressive approaches to rights. A further risk is around distraction and the raft of domestic issues that voluntary disability organisations urgently need Government and policy makers to address.

As a first step in a much longer process VODG will:

- Seek negotiations with Government and other key agencies on the impact of post-Brexit for disability organisations.
- Establish a regular programme of stock takes from organisations identifying outcomes and outputs with regular communications back to Government, relevant agencies and the wider sector.
- Create a post-Brexit risk register and use this to escalate issues to Government, policy makers and key agencies.
- Seek to work in partnership across the sector, always being anchored to a vision for full choice and control for disabled people.
- Keep members abreast of post-Brexit developments and provide additional intelligence and reports when required.

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The EU referendum result will bring significant change, challenge and opportunities for voluntary sector disability organisations.

The Voluntary Organisations Disability Group (VODG), represents leading organisations, whose members together support over one million disabled people. We all share a collective vision for full choice and control for disabled people.

VODG's existing priorities are to focus on:

- funding and commissioning,
- workforce, and
- policy, regulation and legislation.

During the referendum campaign VODG was deliberately neutral. Following the referendum result the existing strategic priorities for the group have been reviewed across the membership.

## SNAPSHOT OF POST-BREXIT RISKS AND ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY VODG MEMBERS

### Austerity and funding

VODG members are dependent on public sector funding and further expenditure cuts could leave an already under-funded sector in deeper crisis. As local authorities, clinical commissioning groups and other funders seek to make savings the impact will be felt by people who use services, as their packages of support are reduced.

Not for profit disability organisations have received EU funding to support research, rural development programmes and infrastructure projects in social care. These are now at risk.

*"The EU has been pretty far-sighted when it comes to funding research and development of supportive technology for older people and those with a disability. Will some of the £350m a day be redirected to this work?"*

*(VODG member)*

*"The inevitable destabilising of the economy and likely retraction will in time have an inevitable impact on funds available for public spending."*

*(VODG member)*

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## SNAPSHOT OF POST-BREXIT RISKS AND ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY VODG MEMBERS



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### Workforce retention and future supply

Social care relies on a workforce from outside of the UK – in some services around one quarter of the frontline workforce originate from the EU. The implications of changes to employment terms for existing non-British EU employees working within the sector could be significant. If EU staff become anxious and leave there will be an immediate impact on capability and

capacity within the sector, which will compound existing workforce shortages<sup>1</sup>.

Uncertainty within the labour market following the result could reduce providers' abilities to recruit in the short term. In the longer term there are broader workforce planning requirements to ensure an adequate pool of skilled and caring staff in the future.

### Community cohesion, rights and the risk of distraction

VODG members report risks about further social divisions in society, reductions in community cohesion and losing progressive approaches to rights.

A further risk is around distraction and the raft of domestic issues that voluntary disability organisations urgently need Government and policy makers to address.

<sup>1</sup>VODG (2016) *How do disability organisations recruit, retain and develop the right workforce?*  
Available: [www.vodg.org.uk](http://www.vodg.org.uk)

*"We currently employ a number of nurses from elsewhere in the EU. Given the difficulties recruiting nurses at present, we are particularly concerned about the impact that leaving the EU could have on our staffing. We have a number of concerns regarding the status of these staff after leaving the EU, and how our ability to attract and recruit staff will be affected in future. Having a clear understanding of what will happen in the months and years ahead is vital for our staff and workforce planning, to the arrangements made by our staff from elsewhere in the EU, in addition to ensuring the confidence and peace of mind of the people that we support."*

(VODG member)

*"We want the progressive policy agenda on rights for disabled people to be maintained and progressed further and that it must not be reined back."*

*"The focus for Government for how many years is likely to detract attention from our causes."*

*"Lack of national leadership and clarity around implementing a Brexit strategy causing other programmes to fall off the agenda (such as halving the unemployment gap)."*

(VODG members)

## NEXT STEPS

Our members' feedback, surveyed immediately after the EU referendum recognises that post-Brexit will further challenge VODG's existing strategy. However, it does not require a new set of priorities. The implications and subsequent actions will take VODG and its members to different points but can all be contained within our existing focal areas and membership offer. For example, VODG will continue to call on Government to provide sustainable funding for social care that reflects the actual costs of provision. On workforce there needs to be clarity on the employment status of existing EU migrants and the opportunities providers have to secure parts of the workforce from the EU. An area of special attention will be on ensuring progressive approaches to disability rights and equality.

*"VODG's priorities are further complicated in this post-Brexit landscape and will take us to different points, but are not a wholly new focus for VODG. Our core values and aims remain unchanged. Our priorities around funding and commissioning, workforce and policy, regulation and legislation resonate even more in the post-Brexit context."*

*VODG members and the disability sector more widely should be left in no doubt that VODG has a track record of working on exactly the kinds of issues that have become even more prevalent after the leave vote. The long-term implications are bigger, yet unknown, so our immediate focus is about establishing where we are at. Throughout this process we will continue to work in a collegiate and collaborative way across the membership and the sector more generally to ensure high quality support for disabled people is paramount on the agenda."*

*(Steve Scown, VODG chair)*

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## NEXT STEPS



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### **A collaborative and collegiate partner**

VODG's existing partnerships and relationships with key agencies across the sectors will be harnessed to steer progress through post-Brexit policy. VODG will be a collaborative and collegiate partner. We will continue to co-produce, provide support or challenge, but always in the interests of promoting full choice and control for disabled people. Critical to these alliances will be established approaches that seek to influence based on the combined expert voice of members in ways that are open, honest and supportive of progressive approaches for disabled people.

### **Strategic priorities and actions**

The post-Brexit agenda will be absorbed into VODG's strategic priorities.

In doing this VODG will do all it can to support our members, and the voluntary sector, through the post-Brexit process. As in other influencing work our approach will be significant, sustained and impactful.

We recognise that the long-term implications of post-Brexit are unknown. VODG's immediate focus is on establishing where

the sector is at key points through our stock take activities, seeking to influence the policy landscape as it emerges and providing timely support and information to our members.

As a first step in a much longer process, through to the end of the business year 2016/17 VODG will lay the groundwork by:

- Seeking negotiations with Government and other key agencies on the impact of post-Brexit for disability organisations.
- Establishing a regular programme of stock takes from organisations identifying outcomes and outputs with regular communications back to Government, relevant agencies and the wider sector.
- Creating a post-Brexit risk register and use this to escalate issues to Government, policy makers and key agencies.
- Seeking to work in partnership across the sector, always being anchored to a vision for full choice and control for disabled people.
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## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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**Q**

**What is the current operating context within which disability organisations work?**

**A**

Social care and disability services are under enormous strain, a result of over five years of austerity<sup>2</sup>. Over the last five years funding reductions total £4.6bn. The sector is at risk of a further £1bn funding gap entering 2016–2010<sup>3</sup>. Organisations are also struggling to secure the right talent in a sector that will increasingly require more frontline staff to deal with demographic changes and increasingly complex needs<sup>4</sup>. The policy, regulatory and legislative context within which voluntary sector disability organisations work continues to evolve, and an important focus of VODG’s work is influencing the agenda to support a collective vision for full choice and control for disabled people.

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<sup>2</sup>VODG (2015) *How should third sector disability organisations respond to funding and commissioning pressures?*  
Available: [www.vodg.org.uk](http://www.vodg.org.uk)

<sup>3</sup>Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (2016) *Budget survey 2016*.  
Available: [www.adass.org.uk](http://www.adass.org.uk)

<sup>4</sup>VODG (2016) *How do disability organisations recruit, retain and develop the right workforce?*  
Available: [www.vodg.org.uk](http://www.vodg.org.uk)

**Q**

**What shaped VODG’s three existing strategic priorities around 1) funding and commissioning, 2) workforce and 3) policy, regulation and legislation?**

**A**

VODG identified priorities through an exercise conducted in 2015 that involved trustee interviews with member chief executives and was also supported with an online survey across the entire membership. The priorities were reviewed again in 2016 and remain unchanged ahead of VODG’s next membership engagement exercise later in the year 2016/17.



**Q**

**What support can VODG offer to staff?**

**A**

VODG runs a series of networks that bring managers and directors together under a number of professional disciplines. The implications of post-Brexit will be addressed in each of these. In 2017 we will be running a series of regional events for frontline managers where the support they need around post-Brexit issues will be addressed.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**Q**

**How can VODG – a national infrastructure body – support such different interests across the UK?**

**A**

VODG’s primary focus is on the English context. We recognise there are tangible differences across the country, which might require new ways of working for VODG, as well as further developing partnerships with a broader range of community and other organisations.

## VODG PROFESSIONAL NETWORKS

- Finance
- Human resources and workforce
- Learning and development
- Marketing and communications
- Operations
- Personalisation
- Quality and safety

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**Q**

**How can we feed in issues and questions to shape VODG’s policy responses and campaigns?**

**A**

We will provide regular updates. (VODG members can join that circulation by emailing [info@vodg.org.uk](mailto:info@vodg.org.uk).) The stock takes and other reviews will provide an opportunity to co-produce across the membership.



## VODG's distinct approach

VODG is the national body that represents leading voluntary care, support and disability organisations that together support over one million disabled people.

Our members are diverse in size, history and strategies but share values such as the promotion of rights for disabled people, approaches to citizenship and user choice and control.

Our values are brought together in a vision for full choice and control for disabled people.

Together VODG members:

- support over one million disabled people,
- employ over 85,000 staff, and
- have a combined turnover in excess of £2.5 billion.

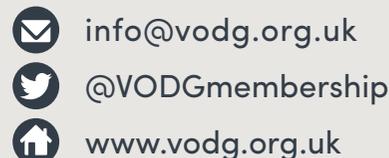
## VODG's activities

VODG works on behalf of its members to influence and develop policy that impacts upon disability organisations, to build relationships with Government and key agencies and to promote good practice.

By influencing policy and practice, providers can deliver progressive, high quality and sustainable services that uphold individuals' rights and meet the needs of disabled people.

VODG's existing partnerships and relationships with key agencies across the sectors within which disability organisations operate, will be harnessed to steer progress through post-Brexit policy.

## VODG'S DISTINCT APPROACH



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