

## **IMMEDIATE RELEASE: FRI 18/07/08**

### **Public sector claims to prefer charities to deliver its services yet fights shy of contracting them**

- Majority of Councillors & Local Authorities rate charities at least on par with public sector for service provision - yet only use them for 14% of services
- 3 in 5 rate charity provision of public services at least on par with delivery by companies – yet still use companies for 26% of services
- “Public sector spirit willing, conversion into charity contracts weak,” cautions Saxton

58% of Councillors and 50% of Local Authority staff think “charities are able to deliver public services as cost-effectively as local authorities”, respective figures rising to 63% and 59% when comparing charitable ability in this area with that of companies - according to the latest data (see attached summary slides). However, Local Authority staff estimate just 14% of services are provided by the voluntary sector, with companies bagging a quarter (26%) of all delivery contracts.

Leading not for profit sector think tank and research consultancy nfpSynergy’s inaugural **Local Authorities Monitor** conducted an online survey of a representative sample of 460 Councillors and over 420 Local Authority staff – from CEOs to those working in PCTs, social care, housing and education, plus finance and corporate divisions - investigating Local Authorities’ shifting attitudes and behaviour towards charities in England & Wales, notably vis-à-vis service provision.

Such pro-charity sentiments have been echoed recently through the conduit of the Office for the Third Sector ([www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/third\\_sector/news/news\\_stories/080626\\_laa.aspx](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/third_sector/news/news_stories/080626_laa.aspx)), with 62% (93) of England’s top-tier 150 Local Authorities seemingly choosing to prioritise at least one of the two new third sector National Indicators (NIs) - NI 6 (participation in regular volunteering) or NI 7 (creating an environment for a thriving third sector) - over the next three years. Phil Hope, Minister for the Third Sector, has called this “a defining moment”, adding that “a strong third sector will be a powerful partner in tackling other local priorities, from reducing social exclusion to promoting sport.”

However, such statistics and words – backing the use of charities to deliver services, via volunteers or contracts - seem to ring hollow “on the ground”, at the crucial level of action. On average, within their own particular specialisms, Local Authority staff estimate the percentage of services provided by the voluntary sector to be a mere 14% - rising to 26% for private sector delivery, and with 67% of delivery still retained within the public sector.

#### **nfpSynergy’s Driver of Ideas, Joe Saxton, said:**

“Charities should be encouraged by the public sector’s stated commitment to helping them thrive; and by the positive attitude of the majority of Councillors and Local Authority staff concerning their ability to deliver public services – not least when compared with the ability of companies or, indeed, Local Authorities themselves. However, all parties should question the seemingly low uptake of provision by the voluntary sector in a wide range of areas. The public sector spirit seems willing, yet conversion into charity contracts remains weak. Surely, actions speak louder than words.”

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**MEDIA INTERVIEWS: To interview nfpSynergy’s Joe Saxton about the significance of these latest findings or the Local Authorities Monitor itself, please contact:**

**Adrian Gillan, T: 0207 6 22 99 11; M: 0774 086 7215; E: [adrian@gillanmedia.com](mailto:adrian@gillanmedia.com)**

#### **Notes to editors:**

- **nfpSynergy**

nfpSynergy ([www.nfpsynergy.net](http://www.nfpsynergy.net)) is the UK’s *only* think-tank and research consultancy dedicated to the charity sector and not for profit issues. It provides ideas, insights and information to help voluntary and community organisations thrive in an ever-changing world. Regularly harvesting the social and charity-related views of public and parliament, media and business - not to mention not for profit organisations themselves - nfpSynergy has a vast and ever-growing knowledge pool from which to extract and deliver insights.