



Lancashire and
South Cumbria
**VCFSE
Alliance**



**Lancashire and
South Cumbria**
Integrated Care Board

**Lancashire and South Cumbria
Integrated Care Board and
voluntary, community, faith and
social enterprise (VCFSE) sector
partnership agreement**

I. Introduction.

This is a partnership agreement between the Lancashire and South Cumbria (LSC) Integrated Care Board (ICB) and the Voluntary, Community, Faith, and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) sector, represented by the LSC VCFSE Alliance.

“The VCFSE sector” in Lancashire & South Cumbria means charitable groups and organisations, community groups, the community work of faith groups, and social enterprises.

The VCFSE sector brings specialist expertise and fresh perspectives to public service delivery and is particularly well placed to support people with complex and multiple needs. It has a long track record promoting engagement and finding creative ways to improve outcomes for groups with the poorest health, and a unique role centralising lived experience in system thinking, making it an essential partner in addressing health inequalities.

VCFSE organisations are a valuable part of Lancashire and South Cumbria’s economy and society, and the offer is vital as shown through their ability to mobilise at speed and scale during the recent pandemic.

VCFSE organisations work across every aspect of tackling inequality and inequity in LSC and often connect with people who do not necessarily fit neatly into a specific category of health condition. This support includes supporting skills development, volunteering, employment, and enterprise; health and social care; housing; transport; environmental issues and carbon reduction; poverty reduction; inclusive economic growth and inclusive governance. They work at a variety of scales, have close links with businesses and the private sector, and are trusted in communities of place and characteristic.

Local authorities and the NHS have recognised the role of the VCFSE sector as a strategic partner in transforming our health and care system into one focused on people and communities, prevention and early action. This agreement seeks to make the successful integration of VCFSE groups, organisations and leaders the way we do things here.

Building our ambition for innovation and partnership on what already works well.

It is clear from local and national experience that effective VCFSE sector representatives “at the table”, where and when important decisions are being discussed, researched, planned and made across an ICS has significant impact. Active involvement of the VCFSE Sector in decision making, as equal partners, to create and co produce actions to bring about change is critical in improving outcomes.

This increased VCFSE involvement means that people and communities are more likely to be discussed, and prevention and community engagement more likely to be considered across service planning and commissioning.

Progress has been made by the Alliance with the presence of VCFSE representatives and organisations on decision making bodies however, there is some way to go before the level of collaboration and coproduction we aspire to is achieved.

Furthermore, the level of VCFSE engagement and involvement differs between localities, programmes and organisations. The journey towards becoming equal partners needs a shift in power, resources and a greater amount of truly collaborative activity.

This new agreement sets out joint commitments, which aim to continue the transition towards greater parity in the relationship between the VCFSE and statutory sectors. This shift in the balance of power and how we will



work together will also require each of us to take different responsibilities, for example in our investment, delivery, or engagement – we will share the delivery and the accountability for our actions.

To maximise the VCFSE contribution, the ICB will recognise its value, incorporate its people and approaches, and invest in its services and capacity, where appropriate. VCFSE leaders and organisations will focus on developing their collaborative capability, shared leadership and building trust, workforce capacity and capability, diversifying income base and creating new partnerships and collaborations within their 'ecosystem.'

The agreement will build from and work with existing structures across each Place, recognising the different needs and requirements of each, and its populations in order to be successful in its aims.

2. Purpose.

The purpose of this agreement is to commit to new ways of working between sectors rooted in co production and built on what we already know works well and, importantly, what we know doesn't work well. It establishes a framework for collaboration and the culture we aim to develop, involving VCFSE leaders and organisations in the development of our Integrated Care Board, from involvement in statutory boards and committees, programme and transformation boards and service planning, delivery, and evaluation.

VCFSE representatives will be supported in a variety of ways by their peers and system partners to effectively influence the work to build the local economy, tackle inequality and inequity, and improve the health and wellbeing of the people who live in LSC.

This agreement is signed by the Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board and on behalf of the sector by the VCFSE Alliance.

Scope.

This agreement sets the conditions for effective partnership working and is intended to work in several ways. It will be supported by a joint implementation plan which will be a live document and it is expected that the scope will evolve to include other organisations with an interest in;

- Reaching a shared vision, ways of working, principles and a set of commitments which underpin our partnerships and relationships.
- Building effective partnerships and relationships between the statutory sector and VCFSE networks, representatives, and groups and organisations across different geographies e.g. Region, System, Place, Neighbourhood and natural communities.
- Establishing a more robust and mature approach to contracting and commissioning with the VCFSE sector, with a move to longer term, more stable funding models that enable future planning and partnership working around agreed priorities across the system and in Places and neighbourhoods.
- Creating a shared understanding of the shape, scale and contribution that VCFSE organisations make towards tackling inequality in society, creating a more inclusive economy and addressing the climate crisis, how that impacts on the work of statutory partners already, and our potential to enhance this.

- Maximising the principle of co-production and recognising the ability of the VCFSE sector to deliver beneficial outcomes, including appropriate information and data sharing agreements and systems.

3. Shared Vision.

By working together, we will be creative and responsive to improve the lives of people in all our communities across Lancashire and South Cumbria.

Mission.

To develop an effective, transformative partnership between the Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board and the Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise sector.

To be an effective transformation partner, the VCFSE Alliance across Lancashire and South Cumbria will be Connected, Influential and Supported. We will utilise the multiple strengths, flexibility, responsiveness, innovation and knowledge of the sector to be a permanent transformation partner.

4. Shared values.

- Person and Community led:** We will develop and deliver services that make a measurable, lasting, positive difference to individuals and communities by working with local groups and communities of interest to inform impactful change with diverse voices and perspectives and building on community assets. We will take a person-centred approach to service delivery, demonstrating our shared commitment to community empowerment and defining what this looks like together, that builds on people's strengths, responds to needs, and promotes self-care and independence.
- Honest and Transparent:** We will build trust and act with honesty and transparency; we will actively listen to and respect each other's views, we will be fair in how we share opportunities and recompense organisations, we will be solution-focused in our approach to difficult conversations and aim to find common ground.
- Equitable and Inclusive:** We will develop ways of working which address our different organisational starting points, and commit to developing a new model of shared, strategic planning, decision making and evaluating, in which diverse expertise is valued. We will work together to remove barriers to inclusion.
- Collaborative:** We will take a whole system approach to addressing the health and care needs of the population of LSC. This means building a shared understanding of our different approaches and ways of working, co-designing services where appropriate, co-producing ways of tackling problems together, sharing responsibility and, through agreement, relevant risk and resources. We will encourage innovation and learn from our experiences.

5. Joint principles of working, and culture.

- We will collaborate to maximise on the opportunities to be creative and share the risks to achieve the best possible outcomes for individuals, communities and our organisations.
- We view each other as critical friends. We will invest time in learning about each other's sector, developing mutual understanding and assimilating our learning into our behaviours and practice.

- We will hold spaces to have difficult conversations when required, committed to being open to ideas, debate, challenge, and discussion, through formal and informal channels.
- We will support each other and hold ourselves to account, act according to our values and regularly review our working relationship.
- To ensure we work in a trusting relationship we will be as transparent as we can be, whilst recognising that there are times this will be constrained.

Transparency by the ICB about where and how decisions are made is key for the VCFSE sector to have trust, equality and equity in influencing decision making.

Transparency by VCFSE sector organisations about their characteristics, successes and challenges is key to gaining the greatest possible benefit from this partnership.

- We will develop engagement structures that enable VCFSE organisations to have a voice on issues that matter to them and the communities they work with. This will be done in a way that is proportionate, impactful, and fair.

6. Shared commitments.

The success of this agreement and the following shared commitments will rely on the recognition, adoption and action at a System, Place, and Neighbourhood level.

The actions invested in at system level aim to enable and facilitate what is happening in places, neighbourhoods and communities. All commitments will be achieved in partnership and equitable involvement from all ICS partners, with the ICB taking this first step.

Joint commitments.

- Work together to achieve a permanent reduction in inequalities and inequity within LSC, addressing the social, environmental, structural and economic determinants of health and wellbeing.
- Embed the VCFSE sector as a key and equal delivery partner of services for communities in LSC.
- Build a financially resilient VCFSE sector that is resourced to address our biggest challenges in LSC.
- Grow the role of the VCFSE sector as an integral part of a resilient and inclusive economy
- Create meaningful mechanisms to make co-design of local services the norm, including expanding channels for service design to be informed by lived experience and demonstrate a commitment to defining together what community empowerment means and looks like across Lancashire and South Cumbria.
- Create a comprehensive workforce programme to support organisational and workforce development for VCFSE employers based on and facilitating a more integrated workforce

VCFSE SECTOR COMMITMENTS

We will prioritise areas of our strategic engagement with the ICB based on VCFSE capacity and a mutual agreement concerning where we add most value.

We will appoint representatives who have a mandate to be a voice for the VCFSE sector. They will have regard to the Nolan Principles and commit to maintaining their impartiality, reflecting a diversity of perspectives, clearly articulating our collective messages and being transparent about the limitations of their reach. They will openly share information and opportunities with the VCFSE sector.

We will work collectively to take a strategic lead and define our priorities based on local intelligence.

We will collaborate within the VCFSE sector to work strategically with the ICB; this includes building relationships and cohesion within the sector, exploring opportunities for joint working and sharing information and resources.

We will actively participate in service design, strategic planning and prioritisation including undertaking commissioned work to support the ICB to involve local communities and communities of interest in the planning and design of services.

We will create volunteering opportunities, strengthening community cohesion and resilience by enabling local people to contribute their skills and time.

ICB COMMITMENTS

When a need for representation is identified by either party, we will recognise, respect, and work with the pathways established for engagement with the VCFSE. We will commit to ensure VCFSE representation is sought through these channels in a transparent way

We recognise the difference between VCFSE representation and VCFSE participation by single organisations and will recruit to boards and working groups with this difference in mind supported by the Nolan Principles.

We will welcome input from the VCFSE sector to ensure senior ICB system leaders are informed about what is important to the sector and communities. We are committed to an ongoing dialogue with the VCFSE sector and respect them as an equal strategic partner.

We value the infrastructure for the VCFSE sector and will support this where we can, including funding it where relevant and appropriate, with agreements that are meaningful to both sectors.

We commit to appropriate and proportionate procurement processes for the VCFSE sector. This includes frameworks and grant funding and consideration for length of contracts/grants. We understand the need for timely payment of invoices. We also recognise the importance of full cost recovery and are committed to commission on this basis.

We will explore the implications of the Provider Selection Regime with sector.


We will work to understand how we can better utilise the intelligence and data that the VCFSE sector holds to inform decision making and we will share data with the sector where we can.

We recognise that the VCFSE is an equal partner that sometimes has a different perspective. We respect the sector's right to challenge and campaign without this impacting on the funding relationship with the ICB.

7. Review of the Partnership Agreement

It is recognised that this partnership agreement is a firm statement of intent for collaboration and effective partnership working between the ICB and the VCFSE sector. As this relationship develops, it is expected that this partnership agreement will iterate to reflect the maturity of the relationship. Therefore, the partnership agreement will be reviewed in April 2024 and updated to reflect the progress made in the relationship between the ICB and the VCFSE sector.

Signed on behalf of the VCSFE Sector by
Tracy Hopkins on behalf of Lancashire and
South Cumbria VCFSE Alliance



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Signed on behalf of the ICB by
Emma Woollett, Chair of Lancashire and
South Cumbria Integrated Care Board



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