

1. Purpose

The Alliance provides a strong, independent and credible strategic body for the voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) sector across Lancashire and South Cumbria.

It currently exists to be the conduit between the VCFSE sector and the health and care system across Lancashire and South Cumbria:

- Representing the interests of the VCFSE sector
- Influencing system strategy, policy, commissioning, and decision-making
- Enabling coordination across places, themes and networks

For the purposes of these Terms of Reference, the health and care system includes NHS bodies, local authorities and other strategic partners involved in improving health, wellbeing and care across Lancashire and South Cumbria.

2. Status

The Alliance:

- Is a strategic, sector-led forum
- Is independent of statutory partners
- Is not a delivery body

3. Principles

The Alliance operates according to the following principles:

- Independence – maintaining clear independence from external partners
- Subsidiarity – decisions taken at the most appropriate level
- Transparency – open, fair processes for membership and roles
- Proportionality – structures and processes remain light-touch and realistic
- Trust – working on relationships and shared understanding
- Collective responsibility – members act on behalf of the sector, not individual organisations
- Distributed leadership – leadership shared across members, themes and places

4. Functions

The Alliance will:

- Provide strategic input into system planning and decision-making
- Support coordination, participation, and two-way communication across systems
- Enable insight from the VCFSE sector, communities and people with relevant lived experience to inform policy, strategy and the development of services
- Identify and agree priorities and positions on key issues to provide a shared focus for members activity, inform discussions and recommendations, and ensure activity is aligned with the needs and interests of members and the wider VCFSE sector.

5. Membership

5.1 Composition

The Alliance will operate as a small strategic leadership group of up to 15 members. In appointing members, the Alliance will seek an appropriate balance of:

- Connections to recognised geographic places across Lancashire and South Cumbria
- Strategic, thematic and sector expertise aligned with the Alliance's agreed priorities
- Equality, diversity and inclusion perspectives, including the experiences of communities facing inequality or under-representation
- Connections to relevant VCFSE networks, constituencies and external partnership forums

The balance of membership will be reviewed in response to changes in the Alliance's priorities, system arrangements and the needs of the wider VCFSE sector.

Thematic expertise will be determined by the Alliance's agreed strategic priorities and reviewed as priorities change. The Alliance will not seek to include every relevant theme within its core membership. Additional expertise and participation may be secured through thematic leads, wider networks, advisory input and task and finish groups.

5.2 Expectations

Members will:

- Act collectively and in the interests of the wider VCFSE sector
- Contribute actively to discussion and decision-making
- Maintain a two-way relationship with their networks or constituencies

Members will not:

- Act primarily as representatives of their own organisation
- Commit the Alliance, its members or networks, to action without agreement.

5.3 Membership criteria and review

Membership is subject to the criteria and expectations set out in Appendix 1.

Membership will be kept under review, and continued participation will depend on active engagement and contribution. In considering the balance of membership, the Alliance will have regard to the needs and perspectives of rural, coastal, urban and other communities that may experience inequality or un-representation.

5.4 Wider sector involvement and accountability

The Alliance is accountable to the wider VCFSE sector through the VCFSE Assembly and ongoing engagement with VCFSE networks, organisations and communities.

This accountability will include:

- Sharing agreed priorities, positions and relevant decisions
- Providing opportunities for the wider sector to raise issues and contribute views
- Reporting on the Alliance's activity and external representation
- Seeking wider input where an issue requires broader sector engagement
- Explaining how sector feedback has informed Alliance discussions and decisions

The detailed arrangements for engagement, communication and reporting will be agreed by the Alliance and reviewed regularly.

5.5 Appointment process

Membership will be determined through the process set out in Appendix 3. This will include:

- A clear expression of interest or nomination route
- Assessment against the membership criteria set out in Appendix 1
- Consideration of the overall balance and size of the Alliance
- Appointment decisions will be made by the Alliance, with the aim of maintaining a credible, effective and representative leadership group.

Membership is not automatic and will be limited by the need to maintain an effective group size and balanced composition.

6. Independence and conflicts of interest

To protect the independence and credibility of the Alliance, members will:

- Act in the interests of the VCFSE sector collectively
- Declare relevant, potential or perceived conflicts of interests
- Maintain a Conflict-of-Interest register
- Follow the action agreed by the Chair to manage a conflict

Depending on the nature of the conflict, this may include recording the interest, limiting the member's involvement, not participating in a decision, or withdrawing from the relevant part of a meeting.

7. Leadership. Chair and Vice-Chair



The Chair and Vice-Chair will be appointed through an agreed and transparent process for a term of three years. They may be reappointed following review and with the agreement of the Alliance.

- Appointed through an agreed and transparent process
- Accountable to the Alliance
- Appointed for a term of three years, with the flexibility to reappoint where appropriate and subject to the needs of the groups.

8. Meetings and decision-making

Meetings will be structured to make best use of members' time, with focused agendas and concise papers.

The quorum will be one third of the Alliance's current appointed membership, rounded up to the next whole number. The Chair or Vice-Chair should be present. Where neither is present, members may appoint another member to chair that meeting.

Decisions will normally be made by consensus. Where consensus cannot be reached, a decision may be made by a simple majority of members present and eligible to vote. In the event of an equal vote, the proposal will not be carried and may be reconsidered following further discussion or information.

9. Representation

The Alliance will agree processes for appointing representatives to external partnerships and forums. Individuals representing the Alliance externally are expected to:

- Reflect agreed positions
- Maintain a clear two-way flow of information

Representatives will operate in line with the Representative Roles and Responsibilities Protocol (App. 2).

Representatives appointed by the Alliance to external partnerships or forums will be accountable to the Alliance but will not automatically become core Alliance members. Where an external representative is not an Alliance member, they will be invited to relevant Alliance discussions and will receive the information needed to fulfil their representative role. The Alliance will maintain a record of representative appointments, reporting arrangements and terms of appointment.

10. Support arrangements

Where participation or engagement funding is available, the Alliance will agree principles and priorities for its use. Such funding may be used to support representation, engagement, events, travel, back-fill and support for sector networks where appropriate.

The Alliance may appoint a host organisation to provide coordination and administrative support, including management of funds where required.

Any such arrangements will be agreed separately and kept under review.

11. Supporting documents

The Alliance maintains supporting documents to set out expectations in more detail, including:

- Appendix 1: Membership Criteria and Expectations
- Appendix 2: Representative Roles and Responsibilities Protocol

These documents will be applied proportionately to maintain a credible, effective and trusted leadership group.

12. Review

These Terms of Reference will be reviewed annually and updated as required. The review will take account of changes to the health and care system, Local Government Reorganisation and the Alliance's agreed strategic direction.



Appendix 1: Membership Criteria and Expectations

1. Eligibility and expectations

Membership is contingent on suitability at appointment and continued contribution. Members must:

- Be from a VCSE organisation that has a demonstrable and substantial connection to and operates within the Alliance's geographic footprint.
- Be a CEO or equivalent senior leader with delegated authority
- Bring relevant strategic insight, expertise or leadership
- Have the capacity to engage consistently
- Maintain an active two-way connection to a wider constituency or network
- Act in the collective interests of the VCSE sector
- Uphold the Alliance's principles, including independence, transparency and collective responsibility

2. Attendance and engagement. Members are expected to:

- Attend and actively contribute to meetings
- Attend at least two-thirds of meetings over a 12-month period
- Provide input where unable to attend

Persistent non-attendance or disengagement will be treated as an inability to fulfil the role.

3. Standards of conduct

Members must contribute in a way that supports the credibility and effectiveness of the Alliance.

Unacceptable behaviour includes:

- Prioritising organisational or local interests over sector interests
- Failing to declare or manage conflicts of interest
- Repeatedly failing to deliver agreed roles or actions
- Misrepresenting the Alliance externally
- Undermining trust, collaboration or the reputation of the Alliance

4. Review and consequences

Membership is not automatic or permanent and will be kept under review. Where expectations are not met, the Alliance may:

- Raise concerns and seek improvement
- Agree proportionate mitigations
- Decide not to reconfirm membership
- End membership where necessary

Decisions will be taken on a proportionate and transparent basis to maintain a credible and effective leadership group.

Before membership is ended because expectations have not been met, the member will be informed of the concerns and given a reasonable opportunity to respond. A decision will be made by members who are not directly involved in the matter and will be recorded with reasons.

The individual may request a review where they believe the agreed process was not followed or relevant information was not considered. The review will be undertaken by an appropriate person or group not involved in the original decision.

Appendix 2: Representative Roles and Responsibilities Protocol



1. Purpose

This protocol sets out expectations for Alliance members and individuals representing the Alliance on external boards, committees or partnerships.

2. Role

Representatives are expected to:

- Speak on behalf of the VCFSE sector
- Act in the interests of the common good
- Maintain a clear two-way connection with their constituency
- Promote collaboration across the sector
- Bring both issues and solutions to discussions

3. What the role is not

Representatives are not expected to:

- Represent their own organisation's interests
- Act as a personal advocate or commentator
- Be an expert on all issues

4. Core responsibilities

Representatives will:

- Act collectively on behalf of the VCFSE sector
- Be accountable to the Alliance and wider sector
- Prepare for and participate actively in meetings
- Maintain effective communication with the sector, including feeding in and reporting back
- Raise issues that require wider sector input
- Reflect agreed Alliance positions in external settings

5. Representation discipline

When representing the Alliance externally, individuals must:

- State the relationship with the Alliance
 - That you are there as "the LSC VCSFE Alliance rep", as well as your day-job.
- Reflect agreed positions, or clearly state when a view is not yet agreed
- Maintain a consistent and coherent message
- Act within agreed mandates or roles
- Ensure timely feedback to the Alliance and wider sector

6. Conduct and expectations

Representatives are expected to:

- Work constructively and in good faith
- Contribute to an environment of trust, challenge and mutual respect
- Respect confidentiality where required
- Declare and manage conflicts of interest appropriately

7. Capacity and commitment

Representatives should:

- Have sufficient time and capacity to fulfil the role
- Attend relevant meetings and briefings
- Ensure continuity of representation where possible



8. Attendance

This section applies to attendance at the external board, committee, partnership or forum to which the individual has been appointed as an Alliance representative. Failure to attend three consecutive meetings without reasonable explanation may result in the representative appointment being reviewed or ended.

9. Collective working

Representatives are expected to:

- Support collective positions once agreed
- Balance openness with a “one voice” approach externally
- Manage competing organisational interests transparently
- Work constructively with other representatives and partners



Appendix 3: Membership Application and Selection Process

1. Purpose

This appendix sets out the process for applying to and appointing members to the Alliance.

The process is intended to be:

- Open and transparent
- Proportionate
- Focused on maintaining an effective, balanced and credible leadership group

2. Principles

The application and selection process will:

- Be accessible to relevant VCFSE organisations across Lancashire and South Cumbria
- Apply consistent criteria based on Appendix 1 (Membership Criteria and Expectations)
- Take account of the overall balance, diversity and size of the Alliance
- Avoid creating unnecessary barriers or bureaucracy

3. Routes into membership

Membership may arise through:

- An open expression of interest process run through Alliance communications channels
- Targeted invitations to fill identified gaps in expertise, geography or representation

All routes will be assessed against the same criteria.

4. Expression of interest

Organisations wishing to join the Alliance will be asked to submit a short expression of interest, setting out:

- The organisation and its role in the VCFSE sector
- The proposed representative (CEO or equivalent)
- Relevant experience, insight or expertise
- The constituency, network or area of the sector they connect to
- Their capacity to contribute to Alliance activity

The process will be kept proportionate and not overly onerous.

5. Assessment and selection

Applications will be considered by the Alliance (or a small, delegated group acting on its behalf).

Assessment will be based on:

- Alignment with the membership criteria (Appendix 1)
- The individual's ability to contribute at a strategic level
- The organisation's connection to a wider part of the sector
- The contribution the applicant would make to the overall balance of the Alliance

Decisions will also take into account:

- The current size of the Alliance
- Gaps in representation, expertise or geography
- The need to maintain an effective working group

6. Appointment decisions

- Appointment decisions will be made by the Alliance
- Decisions will be recorded and communicated transparently
- Feedback may be provided where appropriate



Membership is not automatic and will be limited by the need to maintain an effective group size and balanced composition.

7. Term and review

Members will be appointed for a term of three years and may be reappointed following review. Reappointment will take account of continued eligibility, engagement, contribution and the overall balance required within the Alliance.

Membership will end where a member:

- Resigns
- Ceases to hold the role or organisational connection on which their appointment was based
- Is no longer able to meet the membership expectations
- Reaches the end of their term and is not reappointed
- Is removed through the process set out in these Terms of Reference or an agreed supporting procedure

Where a member changes role or organisation, the Alliance will consider whether they continue to meet the membership criteria. Membership will not transfer automatically to either the individual or their successor.

8. Wider involvement

Organisations that are not part of the core Alliance may still contribute through:

- Thematic leads or sub-groups
- Task and finish groups
- Wider VCFSE networks and engagement routes

This ensures broad participation without expanding core membership beyond a manageable size.

