



Memorandum of Understanding and the Engagement Framework

A Partnership Agreement between the Integrated Care Board (ICB), Somerset Council (SC) and the Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise Sector (VCFSE)

The MoU is a written understanding between partners setting out how they will engage and embed the VCFSE sector within the governance system and decision-making arrangements and collaborate with the sector in Somerset to deliver better health and wellbeing outcomes for the people who live here.

All ICS systems are expected to have a Partnership Agreement with their VCFSE Alliance in place.

A vision for embedding the VCFSE into the Somerset System

Our aim is that:

- Information flows two-ways and there is a route to disseminate information to the sector from the public sector as well as feeding up information from colleagues to inform public sector activities and services
- Representatives on strategic boards and groups are bringing the voice of the wider sector to those discussions rather than representing their own organisations
- There is intersectionality – with flexibility and peer support between thematic priorities and overall strategic partnership development
- This infrastructure offers an easier route for the public sector to consult and engage with the sector

The role of the VCFSE sector

Includes:

- the delivery of support and services to people and communities, through staff and volunteers
- insight from being embedded in communities
- a mechanism for accessing and hearing stakeholder voices – the VCFSE often has a lobbying and campaigning role and is able to reach into communities to hear voices that the public sector may miss
- experience of taking a holistic, preventative and person-centred approach to supporting community health and wellbeing
- links across and within different communities of interest
- ability to be flexible, adaptable and responsive
- expertise in impact measurement and co-design of services

Somerset's
VCSE sector

2154

charities with a
registered
postcode in
Somerset

40

newly
registered
charities

NEW

1000s
more

unincorporated
groups

SPARK
SOMERSET

73%

are micro (up
to £10k) or
small (£10k -
100k)



£328
million

combined
income*



£310
million

combined
expenditure*

*based on 2071 charities that declared their income/expenditure

87%

of the
workforce are
volunteers



270

Community
Interest
Companies...

... of which:

85

have an education
classification



31

have a health
classification



50

have an arts
classification



68%

work in partnership
with other organisations



With thanks to NHS
Somerset for their help
with sourcing this data

Shared Values

Following a workshop with the ICB, Somerset Council and Representatives from the Somerset Group of Charities in March a set of Shared Values was created that has informed the way in which the Memorandum of Understanding has been written and the ways in which partnership will be developed.

These values are:

We are collaborative

We take a whole system approach to addressing the health and care needs of people in Somerset.

We will work to build strong, long-lasting, authentic partnerships, supporting each other and sharing knowledge to achieve the greatest impact in our communities.

We have integrity

We will build trust and act with honesty and transparency. We will listen to and respect each other's views.

We are community-focused

We will work with local communities to design services that are informed by different perspectives, built on the assets of communities and their needs

We will strive for equity

We are committed to developing a model of shared strategic decision making, planning and impact measurement, in which everyone's expertise, knowledge and insight is valued.

We are innovative

We proactively seek opportunities to find creative solutions and adapt and evolve so that we can make a real difference to people in need.

Our shared commitments

- We will hold each other to account, live our values and regularly review our working relationship.
- We will collaborate to maximise on the opportunities and share risks and resources to achieve the best possible outcomes.
- We will ensure we work in a trusting relationship and commit to being as transparent as we can be. We will use plain English and remain mindful of our respective 'jargon' and the barriers this can present.
- 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.
- We see each other as critical friends. We will develop a mutual understanding of different approaches, challenges and ways of working. We will be open, honest and responsive. We will commit to having difficult conversations when required, tackling problems together and taking and adopting an outward mindset approach to challenging situations

VCFSE Commitments:

- We will support the strategic vision for Somerset, working alongside system partners. The support we provide will reflect our VCFSE capacity, knowledge, skills and expertise, so that we can add best value at all times.
- We will collaborate within the VCFSE sector to work strategically with the Public Sector; this includes building relationships within the sector, exploring opportunities for joined-up working and sharing information and resources.
- We will adopt a transparent process that will enable us to appoint representatives who have a mandate to be a voice for the VCFSE sector. Representatives will commit to impartiality, reflecting diverse 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 participate in problem solving, strategic planning and prioritisation, community engagement and service co-design, including undertaking commissioned work to support local communities.

Public Sector Commitments:

- When a need for representation is identified (by either party), we will recognise, respect, and work with the model that will be established for engagement with the VCFSE.
- We value infrastructure for the VCFSE sector and support this where we can, including funding it where relevant and appropriate, with agreements that are meaningful to both sectors. We commit to adopting an agreed model for engagement as a matter of priority.
- We are committed to an ongoing dialogue with the VCFSE sector and respect them as an equal strategic partner. We recognise that sometimes we may have different perspectives. We respect the sector's right to challenge and campaign without this impacting on the funding relationship with us.
- We commit to appropriate and proportionate processes and timescales for VCFSE participation, including those that relate to commissioning. This includes co-production, procurement frameworks, length of contracts/ grants, reporting mechanisms etc. We also recognise the importance of full cost recovery and are committed to commission on this basis.

Priority activities, putting the agreement into practice

- The Engagement Framework model for VCFSE engagement will be agreed, supported by long term sustainable investment into partnership structures & VCSFE capacity
- A commitment to a new way of working that is more inclusive and which creates more opportunities for cross-sector thinking and connections e.g. more workshop activities and task and finish groups, not just formal Boards and meetings
- VCFSE updates and showcase opportunities to be included in relevant system meetings, as appropriate e.g. ICB and Somerset Board.
- Explore the implementation of a 'buddying' scheme matching VCFSE leaders with key senior staff within the public sector
- Spark to enable regular open events at VCFSE to highlight key community services and activities
- Joint conference (March 2024) to showcase positive partnership working and emphasise the culture change we are seeking
- A commitment to offer places to the VCFSE on all relevant strategic and partnership boards.
- Review of commissioning processes - move to a more collaborative, effective and informed commissioning environment
- Identify Public Sector strategic leader(s) embedded in the Somerset system who can work in partnership with the VCFSE, champion the sector and advocate on their behalf internally.
- An overview of the VCFSE/Public Sector partnership & the value it brings to form part of induction process for all staff.
- Explore system-wide mechanism for gathering data, measuring impact and establishing social value.