

# Gloucestershire Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Strategic Partnership

## Priorities for October 2024-October 2025

### Introduction

How does the VCSE (Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise) sector build bridges that foster collaboration with Gloucestershire's public sector organisations, so that together we can better serve the population of the county?

We find that our public sector partners are often asking themselves a similar question: how do they build bridges with a VCSE sector which comprises so many constituent parts?

The VCSE Strategic Partnership is working to develop cross-sector relationships which help us all to take steps towards answering these questions. Fundamentally this is long-term work. The challenge is to gather and represent a sector which serves a diversity of communities and interests, but whose organisations are fundamentally glued together by a drive towards social, economic and climate justice. The following plan specifies the steps we will take over the coming year to take this relationship-building forward.

### Our purpose

The primary purpose of the VCSE Strategic Partnership is to provide the overall strategic direction and governance of VCSE engagement with One Gloucestershire Integrated Care System (ICS) and to act as convenors and connectors of the VCSE sector as a whole. Our responsibilities are:

1. Overseeing the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the VCSE and the ICS.
2. Promoting a culture of collaboration both within the VCSE and between the VCSE and the ICS. This includes:
  - a. Identifying opportunities and sharing them with VCSE organisations.
  - b. Understanding and responding to barriers experienced by VCSE organisations.
3. Setting strategic priorities for VCSE sector engagement with the ICS.
4. Representing the VCSE across ICS governance and decision-making bodies at system level.
5. Facilitating communication at a senior level between the public sector and the VCSE sector and ensuring a flow of information between them.
6. Triaging requests for VCSE representation.
7. Providing good governance, ensuring that representation is effective and accountable to the VCSE.

## Developing a plan

Last year we intentionally mapped our planned activity against each of our key responsibilities. This was relatively straightforward as much of our time was spent creating the architecture needed to fulfil our responsibilities.

These structures are now in place. Our new priorities have emerged from discussions with VCSE sector leaders at a series of round table events, and are more strategic, crosscutting and focused on relationships. Therefore, rather than start with the responsibilities, we have indicated how each priority relates to them and why it is within scope.

Triaging requests for representation is now ‘business as usual’ so does not have an associated priority action, although it is a responsibility we continue to fulfil.

## Our priorities for October 2024-October 2025

**Commissioning:** Prepare the sector for collaborative commissioning using an alliance model.

- Support the development of partnerships of VCSE organisations who are committed to bidding collectively for public sector contracts.
- Seek out opportunities to codesign fresh approaches to commissioning.
- Provide constructive challenge to commissioning practices that threaten or erode local civil society.

**Related responsibilities:** 2 – promoting a culture of collaboration; 5 – facilitating communication.

**Infrastructure:** Work with the VCSE sector and the Integrated Care Board to develop an agreed model for VCSE infrastructure.

- Co-design what VCSE infrastructure would best support organisations and community groups in the years ahead.
- Consider the place of infrastructure organisations in supporting CICs.

**Related responsibilities:** 2 – promoting a culture of collaboration.

**Representation:** Ensure that we hear from a wider range of voices, including those that are under-represented and are well-placed to represent key themes at a strategic level.

- Focus on key themes we are hearing from the sector in at least one meeting per quarter.
- Hold quarterly joint meetings with VCSE Integrated Locality Partnership representatives.
- Work with the VCSE sector and NHS organisations in Gloucestershire to review and renew our Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).
- Explore the feasibility of an agreed and meaningful MoU between the VCSE sector and Gloucestershire County Council.

- Plan elections to re-populate the VCSE Strategic Partnership in 2025; consider how we can be more representative of Gloucestershire’s communities and best facilitate a smooth transition from the current membership to the new membership.
- Identify and implement a better process for appointing reps.

**Related responsibilities:** 1 – implementation of the MoU; 3 – priorities for VCSE – ICS engagement; 4 – representation; 7- good governance.

**Collaborative leadership:** Foster collaboration both within the VCSE sector and between the VCSE sector and elected representatives.

- Engage with recently elected MPs, and other elected representatives, and encourage them to get to know the VCSE sector.
- Research how CICs are contributing to the VCSE landscape in Gloucestershire.
- Offer leadership development opportunities to the next generation of sector leaders.
- Host at least one event, or series of events, that enables the sector to come together to network, influence and show its strength.

**Related responsibilities:** 1 – implementation of the MoU; 2 – promoting a culture of collaboration.

**Communications:** Improve our communications so there is greater promotion of news, research and information that supports cross-sector collaboration.

- Increase the circulation of our quarterly newsletter, In Partnership, and expand the content to include news from Integrated Locality Partnership representatives.
- Provide readable, jargon-free summaries of key local developments that impact on the sector.
- Promote local research that is relevant to our work.
- Develop a positive narrative about the contribution of the VCSE sector in Gloucestershire.
- Individually, share news, information and updates with our networks.

**Related responsibilities:** 2 – promoting a culture of collaboration; 5 – facilitating communication.