



2024 **IMPACT** **REVIEW**

Welcome to our Impact Review 2024



This has been another significant year for the voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) sector in the North West and we have experienced a number of opportunities and challenges.

The cost-of-living crisis has not gone away, with significant increases in the numbers of children and families living in poverty across the region. While the UK-Shared Prosperity Fund has been extended by one year, with a 40% cut, the future of VCFSE-led economic delivery remains extremely uncertain.

Community cohesion is more important than ever in the wake of riots across the country. We have a new Government launching a revitalised Covenant, possibly providing fresh opportunities for influencing decision making and shaping delivery, and lots of questions about how we are seen nationally.

The new wave of devolution discussions across the region comes on the back of Metro Mayor elections. Liverpool City Region and Greater Manchester having Labour Mayors aligned politically with national Government for the first time since their establishment.

Greater Manchester's single settlement, the first devolution deal under a Labour government, could set the tone for how we are included in delivering devolution across the region.

Over the past 12 months since our last impact review, we have had a busy year delivering against the objectives within our Strategic Plan and supporting our partnerships across the North West.

Having been successful in receiving investment from the National Lottery, we now have a dedicated Policy and Influencing Team (PIT) focused on driving forward key areas of work and ensuring that the sector is well positioned to influence policy and decision making.

Our PIT team is working hard to build the sector's regional voice, ensuring that the sector is recognised for its crucial role in boosting economic growth and building healthy, strong communities across the region.

As well as influencing on a regional scale, we have continued to support and develop sub-regional VCFSE partnerships across the North West, of which our key work in these areas is shared in this review.

We have made great progress in representing the sector sub-regionally, particularly around health system transformation with the North West being the first region to have full VCFSE partner membership on our Integrated Care Boards, further strengthening our VCFSE influence on the health and care agenda.

We are also supporting partnerships in the sub-region to advocate for the sector's role in devolution with great strides made in some areas, particularly in Greater Manchester, with continued work to further develop this evolving area.

Warren Escadale, CEO at VSNW

About VSNW

As England's first regional Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) infrastructure organisation, we pride ourselves on our unique role as a voice of and support for the full range of voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise activity across the North West.

Established in 1997, we are a membership organisation that connects to the region's voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise sector through VCFSE infrastructure, equalities networks and providers.

The latter includes large regional and national providers, while through local infrastructure organisations and equalities networks we look to support grassroots community organisations that constitute the vast majority of the 50,000+ groups working in the North West.

As of the end of March 2024, **VSNW membership** includes 190 members, consisting of 128 full members and 62 associate members.

KEY AREAS OF WORK AND INFLUENCE



Devolution

Ensuring that the VCFSE sector is a key partner in our region's devolution journey



Prevention

Emphasising the importance of prevention and early intervention to tackle inequalities, with VCFSE provision and expertise leading the way



Growth

Enhancing and celebrating the VCFSE sector's role in boosting economic growth and supporting people into meaningful work and training

Increase connectivity within the VCFSE sector

North West VCFSE Representation

We continue to foster and support healthy, connected partnerships that bring value to the sector in each sub-region. By leveraging local networks and relationships, we focus on maximising positive impact for VCFSE organisations and our communities across the region.

Supporting strong partnerships across the North West's VCFSE sector remains at the core of our operating model and the sector has full regional representation through local partnerships:

VS6

Greater Manchester
VCFSE Leadership Group
The sector's voice in devolution

Cheshire & Warrington
Infrastructure Partnership

Cheshire & Merseyside
VCFSE Health & Care
Leaders Group

**Lancashire and South Cumbria
VCFSE Alliance**

Connected • Supported • Influential

Locally
Organised
Communities
Across
Lancashire

Cumbria Third Sector Network

(Logos: VS6, GM VCSE Leadership Group, CWIP, C&M VCFSE Health and Care Leaders Group, Lancashire VCFSE Alliance, Lancashire LOCAL, Cumbria Third Sector Network)

Our vision is to play our part in developing or supporting healthy, connected partnerships that deliver value for the sector in each sub-region. Through our partnership work with these VCFSE infrastructure groups, we have connections to the 50,000+ organisations operating across the North West and provide them with a regional voice to influence policy and decision making. But we know we can do more.

VSNW Policy and Influencing Team

Through our successful National Lottery Community Fund investment, we have established our core **VSNW Policy and Influencing Team (PIT)** to scale up our regional work and connect and support the voice of the sector.

To achieve this, we have identified eight key impacts that we will deliver against.

Shaping the Future of the North West: Eight Impacts

1. Set standards in defining excellent co-design and co-production
2. The regional adoption of Fair Funding agreements
3. NW VCFSE Commissioning Review Panel to support improved commissioning, procurement and collaborative working
4. Securing investment for NW VCFSE groups
5. Rebuild VCFSE pipelines for skills and employment across the North West
6. Develop a Centre of Excellence for the VCFSE Role in Health Creation
7. Support the sector's role in the Convention of the North
8. Transformation in VCFSE-Academic joint working

We have started work on six of these projects, with the imminent publication of key research reports looking at the sector's role in maximising social value outcomes, employment and skills and partnership working with primary care networks. We have also developed the VSNW Funding and Commissioning Awards, to both celebrate excellent partnership working between funders and the VCFSE sector and to develop understanding of best practice for commissioning the sector.

VSNW Regional Round-Up:

We have recently re-launched our quarterly VSNW E-bulletin, known as the "VSNW Regional Round-Up". The Round-Up provides updates of our work for the VCFSE sector in the North West, useful information and opportunities for any organisations or individuals signed up. You can access our latest bulletin here and sign up to receive future bulletins on our website.



Regional Race Equality Networks: We are proud that we now have three strong, race equalities networks across the North West for organisations led by or supporting racially marginalised communities. These are:

- **Greater Manchester Ethnic Communities Network**, which is now constituted: gmecon.org.uk
- **Cheshire and Merseyside Phoenix Way Network** set up by One Knowsley with VS6, CWIP and VSNW in support.
- **Lancashire BME Network**, lead for Phoenix Way North West, which has rebranded as Inclusive North: inclusivenorth.org.uk



Ben Gilchrist (L) with candidates at the Greater Manchester VCFSE Hustings

Events: Throughout 2023-24, VSNW managed 128 events, network meetings, roundtables, and workshops with 700 different North West VCFSE leaders and supported 17 strategic VCFSE networks. Included in these diverse events were two **VCFSE Metro Mayor Hustings** events in **Liverpool City Region** and **Greater Manchester**, in collaboration with the VS6 Partnership and the Greater Manchester VCSE Leadership Group.



Candidates at the Liverpool City Region VCFSE Hustings with Ellen Loudon (R)

The events provided an opportunity for VCFSE organisations to meet Mayoral candidates in each sub-region and put forward their concerns and questions on behalf of their organisations and communities.

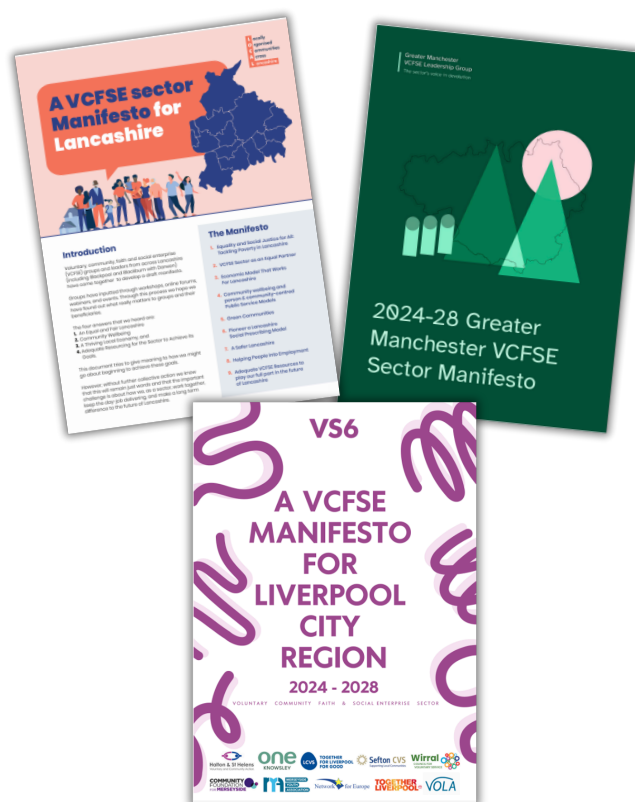
Candidates also had the opportunity to network with VCFSE representatives and signed their commitment to each of the sub-regional partnership's manifestos. As devolution becomes more widespread across the region, we look forward to continuing to connect the sector into such events.

Enable influence and be an effective voice for the sector

Regional manifestos: Through consultation, task and finish groups, workshops, and surveys, we have helped to develop **collective, sector-led strategies and implementation plans** across the North West. These include manifestos and delivery plans for the sector in **Liverpool City Region** (VCFSE Manifesto 24/28), **Lancashire** (LOCAL Manifesto), **Cheshire and Warrington** (setting core priorities) and **Greater Manchester** (VCFSE Manifesto 24/28). This work is crucial to support the successful lobbying of policy and decision making sub-regionally and provides opportunities for the VCFSE sector to align with key local priorities to ensure that the sector has a voice and representation in public sector policy development.

Sector representation: Through our regional partnerships, the sector now has streamlined means to appoint and support sector representation at the highest levels across the region. Taking the lead from **Lancashire and South Cumbria VCFSE Alliance** and their work around recruiting representatives, we are now driving work forward to our other sub-regions. In **Greater Manchester**, there are now 50 VCFSE leaders sitting on just under 100 boards and committees, representing our sector and communities. We are now looking at supporting this work in **Cheshire and Merseyside** through the Health and Care Leaders Group.

VCFSE investment: Over the last two years, our influencing and demonstration of the sector's value, has resulted in **£18.4m investment into the sector**.



This investment supports the sector's role in skills and employment, health and social care, tackling poverty, community-led economic development, and wellbeing and prevention. While we feel this is a notable achievement, we recognise that our work, alongside our partners, has driven far greater investment into the local sector than any single VCFSE organisation could accomplish independently.

Health and Care Transformation: The **North West** is now the first region to have the VCFSE sector as **full partner members** on all **Integrated Care NHS Boards**, alongside a full set of health inequalities strategies with the sector embedded as a key partner, further strengthening our VCFSE influence on the health and care agenda.

Our **Cheshire & Merseyside VCFSE Health and Care Transformation Programme** has secured over £400k funding from NHS Cheshire & Merseyside, highlighting confidence in the sector by the health system. The programme aims to embed the VCFSE sector as a key delivery partner crucial to working towards collective goals, including improving population health, addressing inequalities and delivering the Marmot “All Together Fairer” recommendations.

Key to the delivery of the programme is the **Cheshire & Merseyside VCFSE Health & Care Leaders Group**, which brings together VCFSE organisations operating at place, networks of identity and experience and larger providers to connect into the wider Integrated Care System.

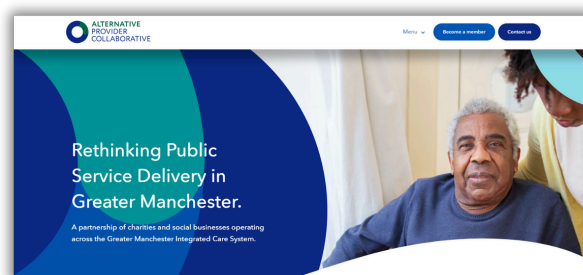
Work so far has demonstrated the impact that partnering with the VCFSE sector can achieve, with significant cost-savings identified for hospital discharge, an award-winning cancer prevention and early detection programme, co-designing a roadmap and securing £54k in funding to support CVD prevention, and a strengthened VCFSE offer to those with the most complex, greatest needs.

A grant programme was also developed, with £20k secured per year, per place to build VCFSE infrastructure capacity and improve partnership working. We have secured increased VCFSE representation on key system decision making boards and forums during the year. Representation from the sector is now embedded in priority programme areas including children and young people, urgent and emergency care, place-based partnerships, primary care and population health.

In **Greater Manchester (GM)** there has been significant progress made on strengthening relationships between the VCFSE sector and the population health system to increase the sector’s delivery role in early intervention and prevention.

Work has included the development of GM’s community-led CVD and diabetes work; in Primary Care Networks and local referral pathways; establishing a data and intelligence community of practice and active participation in the Live Well system design.

The continuing development of the **GM Alternative Provider Collaborative**, as a key player in the health provider commissioning system, and the exploration of the implications of the new Procurement Act for the VCFSE sector in GM, have been key areas of work.



The sectors’ role in the three-year **GM Sustainability Plan** will be important moving forward, with pillars three (reducing prevalence) and four (proactive care) likely to require significant VCFSE support as the sector are already involved programmes of work that are working to maintaining the population in good health and avoiding future cost through prevention.

The Integrated Care Board is currently considering a number of papers which will clearly establish operational arrangements for commissioning, Fair Funding and VCFSE delivery in the GM Integrated Care System.

Answer Cancer: The **Answer Cancer** programme has pioneered new models of working with the sector: mobilising hundreds of community organisations and 4,621 community champions, providing on the ground engagement, campaign-tools, training and grants. Through our **Bee Seen, Get Screened** campaign, over 80,000 people can now access paid time off to attend NHS cancer screenings. Answer Cancer continues to demonstrate the vital role of the VCFSE sector in tackling health inequality and driving population health and prevention initiatives, particularly in communities where previous models and approaches have been less successful.

**ANSWER
CANCER**



Fair Funding: One of our key 8 impacts for shaping the future of the sector in the North West includes the rolling out of a regional Fair Funding Protocol. The protocol consists of a number of core and optional elements that provide a guide for public sector bodies and other funders on how to plan their grant funding, commissions and managed contracts with VCFSE organisations. The protocol aims to ensure that commissioning and funding of the VCFSE sector is fair and promotes principles such as longer-term funding agreements, annual contract uplifts, minimum three months' notice for contract changes, and improving access to procurement for VCFSE organisations. Work in **Greater Manchester**, in gaining sign up from public sector partners, has had much success, with the **Greater Manchester Combined Authority** agreeing to adopt the protocol, and with **NHS Greater Manchester** committing to developing their own version of the protocol which links to their new Provider Selection Regime. **Lancashire LOCAL** has been conducting extensive engagement with the sector to refine what elements of the protocol would be most beneficial, with an aim to develop a sub-regional protocol that meets the need of Lancashire's VCFSE sector.

Demonstrate the value of VSNW and the sector as a whole

Building VCFSE Insights and Intelligence: Most recently in the last 12 months, the **Cheshire and Merseyside State** of the Sector report was published. This flagship report was collaboratively developed by VSNW, VS6 Partnership and Cheshire & Warrington Infrastructure Partnership

and produced in partnership with NHS Cheshire & Merseyside. The 113 page report provides in depth analysis of VCFSE intelligence collected to inform this report, and provides a breakdown by place for each borough in **Cheshire and Merseyside**.

This is a flagship report and has been highly commended by our public sector partners, including Metro Mayor Steve Rotherham who identified supporting the recommendations from within the report as a key pledge in his Liverpool City Region re-election manifesto.

Each sub-region now has access to a recent “State of the Sector” analysis, evidencing the size, scale and scope of the VCFSE sector and its contribution to building healthy communities and reducing health inequalities.

Maximising Social Value: In collaboration with Social Value Portal and NHS Cheshire and Merseyside, we will soon launch a groundbreaking roadmap to maximise social value outcomes through the VCFSE sector. This roadmap, aligned with regional priorities like addressing health inequalities and strengthening community resilience, will drive strategic, integrated working for impactful social value across **Cheshire and Merseyside**.

Developed through interviews with over 20 cross-system leaders and multiple workshops, a key gap identified was underutilisation of the VCFSE sector’s potential. The roadmap introduces the **"Partner VCFSE" commitment—a call for all regional organisations to deepen collaboration with the VCFSE sector by 2025 as a catalyst for a social value economy.**

Organisations making this commitment pledge to assess their current VCFSE engagement, identify opportunities to enhance collaboration, and set ambitious targets for increased support.

The VCFSE sector in C&M



19,500+
VCFSE organisations



36,000+
Employees



352,000
Volunteers



£896.5million GVA
to Cheshire and
Merseyside economy
per year

We will be working on socialising the commitment, roadmap and the recommendations in the report throughout the public and private sectors, and widening the reach of this report beyond to the whole of the North West.



"This report is a groundbreaking piece of work that came about through co-production. For our ICS to be truly successful, we need to work with all our partners to understand the needs and requirements and then work together to find a solution. The VCFSE sector is an integral part of this, and I'm delighted that we've been able to develop this work, with colleagues, that puts social value at the heart of all that we do."

**Dave Sweeney, Director of Partnerships,
Cheshire and Merseyside Health and
Care Partnership**

Employment and Skills Provision:

One of our eight key impacts, as outlined earlier in this review, is to develop a strategy for building back a VCFSE pipeline for employment and skills, forming a building block for a VCFSE economic delivery model to ensure that there is investment in community-centred delivery to address inequality across the North West.



To explore the VCFSE sector's role in employment and skills provision, VSNW worked with The Researchery to interview 15 North West VCFSE leaders to

understand what actions need to be taken to ensure that the role of the sector in employment, skills and growth is both recognised and strengthened.

The report has recently been shared with Rachel Reeves MP, in her role as Chancellor of the Exchequer, in a letter outlining the important role of the sector in this agenda.

VSNW Funding and Commissioning Awards:

In order to build up our understanding of what “good” looks like in terms of commissioning and funding, VSNW have launched our first Funding and Commissioning Awards. These awards aim to recognise organisations and funders that have demonstrated exceptional commitment and innovative approaches to funding and commissioning the VCFSE sector in the North West.

Applications for the awards were open for two months, with VCFSE organisations encouraged to nominate individuals or teams they have had a positive experience with. The current nomination categories are listed below, with the aim to build the awards over time:

- Outstanding Grant Funder
- Outstanding Commissioner – Local or Combined Authority
- Outstanding Commissioner – NHS



Research and engagement networks:

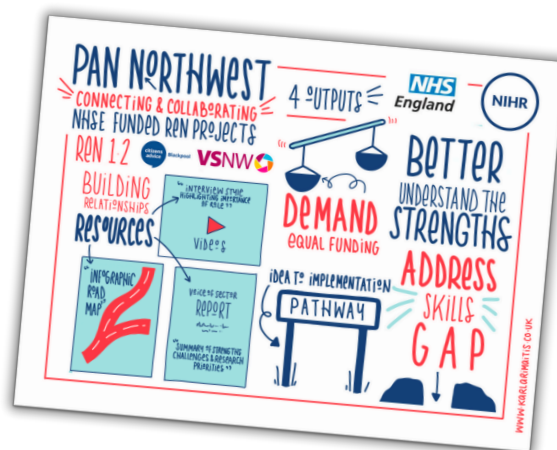
Last year also marked the start for us in terms of developing new partnerships and relationships with the **National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR)**. Transforming relationships between the VCFSE sector and research institutions and academia is one of our eight key impacts we are working towards, and VSNWs work delivering **NHS England's Research and Engagement Network (REN)** programme across **Cheshire and Merseyside** and **Lancashire and Cumbria** has been instrumental to this.

We have been forging partnership working between the sector and **NIHR's Applied Research Collaboration (ARC)** to scale up the sectors access and involvement in health and care research, and have produced numerous outputs designed to drive collaborative action. These include a "Voices of the Sector" report, an access to research infographic and a "Get to Know the Sector" explainer video.



Our research and communications team is currently leading on developing tools to further drive forward this working, including an online collaboration portal to provide direct links for

VCFSE organisations and research institutions/academia to discuss and collaborate on research projects.



Championing the role of infrastructure: At VSNW, we are passionate about the vital role that VCFSE infrastructure plays in building the sector's capacity as a key strategic partner in decision-making at national, regional, sub-regional, and local levels.

Supporting our sub-regional infrastructure partnerships is a priority, with an essential focus on celebrating and sharing the significant impact these partnerships achieve.

The **VS6 Partnership** in the **Liverpool City Region** has just published its impact report, covering a four year period from 2020 to 2024, highlighting achievements including securing over £7million in funding for the sector, the development of a city-region wide volunteering portal, and work on priority areas such as digital inclusion, sustainable and affordable food, and tackling health inequalities.

We are looking for VSNW Trustees

We are currently recruiting VSNW Board members. If you are interested in becoming a trustee and helping us drive forward our crucial work, now is the time to get involved. Join us in enabling the VCFSE sector to positively shape the future of the North West.

To find out more about Board member recruitment, please visit our website: www.vsnw.org.uk/trustees

Join our growing network and become a VSNW member!

At VSNW, we empower the VCFSE sector to reach its full potential and influence decision-making at every level.

As a membership organisation, we prioritise members when consulting the sector for valuable insights to best support and champion its activities.

Your voice and experiences matter, and membership makes you an integral part of driving meaningful change.

Membership with VSNW is free, without formal commitment. We value members who act as communication bridges between VSNW and local community groups, ensuring important information and opportunities are effectively shared, strengthening collective capacity for lasting impacts.

Join VSNW to connect with like-minded organisations, access resources, and help build a collaborative sector. Your involvement shapes strategies and amplifies the voice of the VCFSE community.

The benefits:

- By joining us your organisation will be a part of strategic voluntary sector network in the North West.
- We will provide opportunities to meet voluntary organisations and share good ideas from all over the region.
- Our relationships with VCFSE sector leadership groups and local government bodies provides access to important networks and decision-makers at regional level.
- You can be part of policy debates and help to influence the development of the North West.
- You'll be the first to hear about our regional conferences and assemblies.
- Membership is free.

To find out more about the benefits of VSNW membership and to access the membership application, please visit our website at
www.vsnw.org.uk/become-a-member

VSNW is the regional voluntary sector network for the North West. Our mission is to enable the voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) sector to positively shape the future of the North West.

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