

LCR VCFSE Manifesto 2024 - 2028

Introduction

Our manifesto for the voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) sector in Liverpool City Region (LCR) summarises our ambitions and key asks of our public sector partners over the next four years. Our previous manifesto saw us achieve a great deal of success on behalf of the VCFSE sector in the region. We have further developed the sector's position and positive working relationships with our public sector partners, including the Combined Authority and NHS Cheshire and Merseyside.

However the last three years have not been without difficulties, with numerous challenges facing the sector such as COVID-19 recovery and the cost of living crisis. Despite this, the VS6 Partnership has continued to champion the role of the VCFSE sector and influence policy and decision making. In our new manifesto for the next four years we intend to continue our role in advocating for the VCFSE sector in Liverpool City Region to fully achieve our vision of a connected, compassionate and successful city region that is the home of social and voluntary entrepreneurship.

Key statistics about the VCFSE sector in Liverpool City Region

In December 2023, we published our [Liverpool City Region State of the Sector Report](#), a landmark report highlighting key statistics and insights into the VCFSE sector in the region. Our research has found that in Liverpool City Region there are:

- Over **11,500 VCFSE organisations** working to support those in need, committed to building thriving neighbourhoods, communities, towns, and cities.
- Just under half of these organisations are **grassroots “below-the-radar” groups** known for being vital components of communities, creating social and economic value and reducing demand on public services¹.
- A combined workforce of over **21,000 employees and 216,000 volunteers**, with volunteers providing over **289,000** hours of volunteering every week.
- The VCFSE sector contributes over **£795.9 million** to the Liverpool City Region economy each year.

Our Vision for Liverpool City Region

A place where the VCFSE sector, and its potential, is better understood and seen as essential to a thriving, attractive and inclusive economy.

The most vibrant, exciting and equal place in the country, where people feel connected, involved, and included.

A place where success is shared and measured through economic, health and social outcomes.

A place where everyone can contribute to improving our environment and becoming a net-zero City Region.

A City Region where everyone has access to opportunities with a good work life balance.

A place where everyone can have a sense of purpose, progress in life, and improve their prosperity.

A region where small and large organisations work together to enable people to thrive.

A place where diversity is respected, and everyone has their voices heard.

¹ [The Value of Small in a Big Crisis, 2021, Lloyds Bank Foundation](#)

VCFSE Manifesto

1. Key policy areas

a. Climate Change

- i. LCR Combined Authority to develop a climate change champion role for the VCFSE sector to support organisations to adjust to the climate transition and making Combined Authority climate policy work accessible for the sector.
- ii. Funding for the already fully costed “Going Green Together” online portal to support the translation of climate policy, provide information and advice, and guidance on energy efficiency audits and carbon reduction interventions for the VCFSE sector.

b. Cost of Living

- i. Clarity on the progress of the Combined Authority on their adoption of the recommendations provided by VS6 in the 2022 Sustainable and Affordable Food report.

c. Health Inequalities

- i. Ensure that there is VCFSE and health representation on the LCR Business and Enterprise Board in recognition of the wider contribution of the VCFSE sector to the economy, in terms of employment, skills and place-based regeneration of people and communities.
- ii. **31% of VCFSE organisations provide health and wellbeing services in Cheshire and Merseyside however only 8% report being funded by the NHS.²** Increased funding for the sector to provide effective early intervention and prevention services and embed the VCFSE sector role in prevention within health systems.

d. Employment & Skills

- i. Public sector partners to champion the role of the VCFSE sector in delivering employment and skills services, including digital inclusion and for children and young people, and recognising the role of volunteering as a progression route to employment.

e. Equalities, Diversity & Inclusion

- i. Align the work of the Phoenix Way Cheshire & Merseyside in supporting black and racially minoritised communities and VCFSE organisations to the LCR Combined Authority Race Equality Hub.
- ii. Genuine inclusivity, engagement and co-production with marginalised communities through collaboration with grassroots organisations across the region, with dedicated resource for their work.

2. Community Empowerment

- a. Public sector partners to put community consultation and empowerment at the heart of their decision making and service design, with appropriate levels of financial and other resources for community engagement.
- b. VS6 Partnership to be recognised as the first point of contact for the VCFSE sector in Liverpool City Region, with identified points of contact for us to engage within public sector partner organisations.

² [Cheshire & Merseyside State of the Sector, 2023, VSNW](#)

- c. Ensure that the VCFSE sector and LCR communities are connected into digital transformation work across the city region, including the use of the AI technology revolution.

3. Commissioning & Contracts

- a. Public sector partners to embed partnership working with the VCFSE sector as standard with adequate payment for VCFSE representation and expertise
- b. Ensure that commissions and contracts with the VCFSE sector allow for payment of the Real Living Wage, with inflationary cost of living increases built in to provide sustainability and resilience. **Only one in four organisations have had their contracts uplifted in line with inflation.**³
- c. Work with existing sector infrastructure to support local VCFSE organisations to access public sector commissioning opportunities and ensure that small organisations are not excluded by contract processes.
- d. To fortify VCFSE sector resilience and enable future planning, ensure consistent engagement throughout contract development particularly around the recommissioning and decommissioning of services.

4. VCFSE Sector Investment

- a. Work with the VCFSE sector to lobby for an effective progression of the UK-Shared Prosperity Fund that has a long term vision, utilising sector learnings from UK-SPF funding.
- b. Balance the need for funding innovation and the importance of established services with proven track records of impact and value, including VCFSE infrastructure organisations.
- c. Build on the success of #LCRCares grant funding and develop a dedicated small grants investment programme.
- d. **62% of charities are subsidising government contracts by £2.4bn every year.**⁴ Therefore future VCFSE sector investment must be in addition to what already exists. E.g., The management of volunteers within organisations is a resource cost and should be subsidised appropriately within contracts.

5. VCFSE Sector Workforce and Volunteering

There are over 21,000 people working in the LCR VCFSE sector, providing a value of £520.9million per year.

- a. "One Workforce" – A co-ordinated cross-sector workforce development approach with parity of access to training and development opportunities.
- b. Public sector partners to identify opportunities to open up opportunities for the VCFSE sector via the apprenticeship levy.
- c. LCR Volunteering Hub to be the single point of contact for promoting volunteering opportunities and volunteer recruitment. Public sector partners to utilise the hub.

6. Measuring impact

- a. Public sector partners to support VS6 to develop an economic model for the VCFSE sector in order to better evidence the sectors impact. This will support public sector partners to better

³ [State of the Sector 2024: Ready for a reset, 2024, NPC](#)

⁴ *ibid*

understand how VCFSE investment contributes to desired outcomes particularly with the sector ***propping up public services by £2.4bn each year.***

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