



Sefton CVS
Supporting Local Communities



SECTOR MANIFESTO

**SEFTON'S VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY
AND FAITH SECTOR**



INTRODUCTION

The Voluntary, Community, and Faith (VCF) sector in Sefton

The Voluntary, Community, and Faith (VCF) sector in Sefton is made up over 2,000 local organisations working to support the communities and neighbourhoods within the borough.

Over half of those organisations are grassroots, below the radar organisations, who are vital contributors to underpinning communities. They add to the social and economic value of the borough, and in reducing the demand on public services, locally.

There is a VCF sector ***workforce of 3,950 employees** and ***39,506 volunteers**, with volunteers providing ***over 52,705 hours of volunteering** every week.

The VCF sector contributes ***£70.8 million GVA** to the Sefton economy each year.

**Statistics taken from Cheshire and Merseyside State of the Sector report 2023, VSNW*

Developing a Manifesto

Sefton CVS engaged with Sefton's Voluntary, Community, and Faith (VCF) sector, through an online survey, discussions in our thematic forums and workshops held at our Annual Conference in the Autumn of 2023.

The outcome of those consultations is summarised into 7 VCF sector priorities in this manifesto document. It sets out our ambitions as a sector to build on the strong foundations of partnership which has existed for many years in the borough and embodied in the Sefton New Realities document, formulated with Sefton Council and supported by other key partners.

We want to see:

1. Sustainable investment in the VCF sector through funding, contracting and commissioning with decision making made locally 'by default'
2. Recognition and increased collaboration and investment in the VCF sector as key providers of health and social care services
3. VCF sector leading the way in driving change to advance equality and diversity and tackling inequalities in Sefton.
4. Enable the VCF sector in Sefton to respond to the climate crisis as a key partner in local and regional net-zero ambitions
5. Recognition and celebration of the value of volunteering
6. Support VCF sector organisations to recruit, retain and develop their workforce
7. Local partners to support us as an engaged, independent resilient and sustainable VCF sector in Sefton

We have also studied the manifesto's produced by NCVO, Locality and VS6 in the Liverpool City Region, after their consultations with VCF sector organisations, nationally and regionally and cross referenced with the priorities identified locally.

Through the CVS and VCF Sector networks and forums and organisations, we will engage with our partner stakeholders in Sefton Council and NHS in Sefton and other key agencies, parliamentary candidates in our local constituencies, and where appropriate, national VCF sector and regional bodies, with the aim of realising our ambitions.

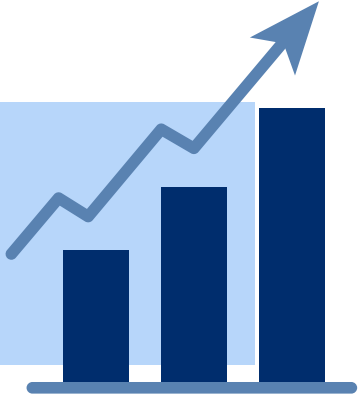
The Sefton (VCF) Manifesto demonstrates a collective aspiration to build equitable and sustainable development within Sefton in partnership with local key stakeholders, to address social, health and economic inequalities and for the VCF sector to be an active contributor in transformative change for the betterment of our local communities.

By fostering collaboration, sustained commitment and collective action it charts a course towards a more inclusive, resilient, and vibrant Sefton with the VCF sector as a cornerstone in partnership working to improve and create a brighter future for all Sefton residents.



OUR PRIORITIES

1. SUSTAINABLE INVESTMENT IN THE VCF SECTOR THROUGH FUNDING, CONTRACTING AND COMMISSIONING WITH DECISION MAKING MADE LOCALLY 'BY DEFAULT'



We want to see our partners lobby nationally, for long term rather than short term investment programmes, to be devolved nearest to local place. This approach provides stability, builds local resilience, working with local stakeholders and their communities in delivering collaborative and sustainable interventions.

We want to see the upscale of 'intelligent commissioning' models working closely with local organisations and experts by experience; to encourage pilot initiatives and support innovation and enterprise, enabling the VCF sector to 'take the lead' in key thematic areas.

We want bureaucratic processes reduced that hinder and deter VCF sector organisations delivering responsive interventions. Valuable lessons and practice developed during the pandemic, saw commissioners and funders respond proactively to requests emerging from the community e.g. flow through funding, rapid decision-making and turn around regarding funding and flexibility on spend and monitoring; contract variance on existing contracts to turn to meet new needs. We want this approach to be built upon on and adopt the best practice emerging from these processes.

We want commissioning and procurement processes that are 'fit for purpose' and proportionate to the resources available, so that smaller and new organisations are not excluded or discouraged.

We want the continuation of local grant making, as well as commissioning and procurement around themes such as Winter Pressures, Warm Spaces, Mental Health and Wellbeing and Ageing Well. Grants and small grants, in particular, act as catalysts in developing new services and thematic responses, which are high in impact and low in cost. They also enable small groups to develop initiatives, where they are ideally placed to reach into localities and neighbourhoods and encourage local participation. e.g. Warm Spaces.

Working with Sefton CVS, as the strategic conduit to the VCF sector and sector insights, we want more groups to become "commission ready" in terms of applying for procurement opportunities and delivering quality outcomes.

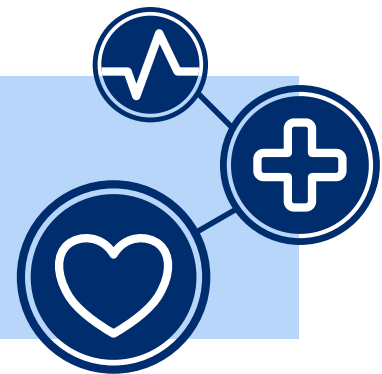
We want funders and commissioners to embed best practice as standard across the local system to engage with the VCF sector groups equitably and proportionally in terms of:

- Funding and contracts consider cost of living increases, inflation, staffing requirements and wherever possible, full-cost recovery
- At least three months' notice of renewal or termination of funding to allow VCF sector organisations to plan accordingly, which is part of the New Realities expectations and be universally applied by departments and commissioners for consistency
- Adopt more joined-up and aligned funding approaches between commissioners for efficient and imaginative use of resources and to reduce pressure on VCF sector organisations in terms of multiple reporting

- Co-production of strategy and services with the sector from inception with opportunities to collaborate and innovate and improve service outcomes

This is a key priority area for our national and regional VCF partners. NCVO have emphasised the importance around ensuring that commissioning and procurement are fit for purpose and accessible for **all** types of charities including built in flexibility for charities to be able to **innovate and adapt** to public need with a focus on **purpose and outcomes** rather than process. They also emphasise the need to build upon **community wealth approaches**, ensuring that **spend is directed locally** with services co-produced by communities. Similarly, Localities have a strong focus on **community led economic development** with collaboration not competition being the guiding principle of all public services. They are asking that Councils take an asset-based approach to working with the VCF sector, recognising their ability to harness their local knowledge and trusted relationships to build services, with **long-term** funding that prioritises early intervention and prevention.

2. RECOGNITION AND INCREASED COLLABORATION AND INVESTMENT IN THE VCF SECTOR AS KEY PROVIDERS OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE SERVICES



We want to see increased collaboration between health and social care partners with the VCF sector embedded, whilst ensuring that integration with public sector services does not weigh down the sector with bureaucracy that could create barriers to the sector's agility and independence.

We want to see partners invest in children, families and adult early intervention and prevention interventions provided by the VCF sector, to enable the sector to support residents before they reach an escalating need or risk or of critical intervention.

Increased recognition and resourcing of asset-based community development activities within localities and its power to lever strengths and resilience within people and communities. Examples include sector based social prescribing, working with local organisations, providing knowledge-based signposting to local assets, whilst identifying gaps and using system investment to develop new services.

CVS to act as a co-ordinator to bring networks and diverse organisations together for collectivism, influence, challenging inequalities, and promoting solutions to long term problems on to address inequalities.

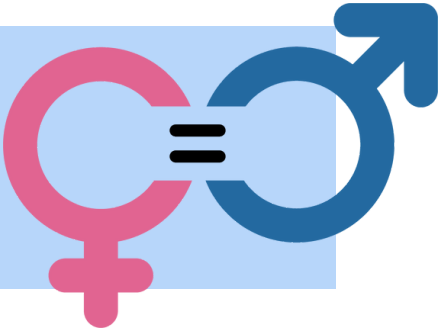
Support the VCF sector to evidence and report its impact to commissioners and funders – celebrate its success, reach and value – through wide scale adoption of and commitment to use the newly established Sefton Social Value Tool, which aligns to the priorities and outcomes of the Sefton Place Plan.

Encourage local VCF sector collaboratives to design and deliver services and keep investment local through lead provider models, where applicable, such as Living Well Sefton, SEAS (Sefton Emotional Achievement Service), Food Banks and Community Pantries, as examples.

In addition to commissioning, procurement and grants, create a new community levy for funding the VCF sector in Sefton, whereby at least 1% of the cost of large NHS and LA procured contracts are diverted as investment to the VCF sector to test and pilot new services, engage in service innovation and transformation.

NCVO are keen for the government to recognise the integral role that the VCF sector play in delivering services that address wider health inequalities, with the preventative services that community organisations provide being key to **ensuring people can lead good lives**. Health and care is a key focus of Locality's manifesto, with key points around ensuring that the **VCF sector is resourced** to deliver activities that prioritise community development for **long-term health creation**. They recognise the importance of the sector providing high quality health and care provision, both statutory and non-statutory, with their ability to provide services to those "at the edge" of requiring social care **preventing people from needing acute services** for years to come. Locality specifically ask for a commitment to increase the share of the NHS budget going towards prevention by at least 5% over the next 5 years with a **focus on community-led services**. This matches with our desire for a community levy approach to VCF investment.

3. WE WANT TO SEE THE VCF SECTOR LEADING THE WAY IN DRIVING CHANGE TO ADVANCE EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY AND TACKLING INEQUALITIES IN SEFTON.



For partners to prioritise their public consultation, engagement, service design and delivery processes, in collaboration with the sector to advance equality and social inclusion in the borough by:

- Actively engaging with the equality networks, facilitated by Sefton CVS, communities of practice and newly emerging organisations, to ensure diverse and underrepresented voices are at the heart of local decision making.
- Build 'Expert by Experience' proofing into service shaping and design, by engaging with Sefton CVS, networks and forums, Healthwatch and VCF sector organisations, their service users and beneficiaries, e.g. Recent examples have included: Complex Lives, developing the Child Poverty Strategy, Health Watch reports and youth proofing local strategy documents undertaken by Sefton Young Advisers
- Partners strategically and jointly investing in the reach of local community organisations, both geographically and thematically, to underrepresented individuals and communities.

This enables the development of culturally appropriate and inclusive solutions and responses, through e.g. food security initiatives, digital inclusion, cost of living crisis interventions and longer-term projects that empowers, strengthens and sustains individual and community resilience.

- Increased investment in programmes such as Living Well Sefton, a VCF sector led collaborative, commissioned by Public Health in Sefton, to address health inequalities, which also utilises VCF sector small grants to expand reach into neighbourhoods and individuals, who otherwise maybe be disengaged.

Locality frame the VCF sector as a means for **minoritised communities** to build a **tangible stake in the local economy** and develop meaningful power and independence. As community organisations have trusted relationships with communities, they are able to **get to the heart of challenges** that people face and develop **culturally sensitive services** that address community need. The LCR VCFSE manifesto encourages public sector colleagues to collaborate with equalities organisations with **dedicated resource** for this work. There are emerging examples of the mobilisation of VCF equalities support networks, such as the newly established **Phoenix Way Cheshire & Merseyside** providing dedicated to supporting black and racially minoritised communities and VCFSE organisations across the region to **have their voices heard**.



4. BUILD THE CAPACITY OF THE VCF SECTOR IN SEFTON TO RESPOND TO THE CLIMATE CRISIS AS A KEY PARTNER IN LOCAL AND REGIONAL NET-ZERO AMBITIONS.



In 2019 Sefton Council declared a Climate Emergency and committed to reducing carbon emissions and make the Council’s activities net zero carbon by 2030.

Work in partnership with public sector partners and skill share on green initiative schemes such as green transport, solar energy, waste reduction and recycling, sustainable food programmes, environmental projects and community wellbeing programmes, such as green social prescribing, volunteering programmes with Green Sefton, Canals Trust, Friends of Parks Groups, etc.

We want to see commitment to engaging VCF sector organisations as local (short) supply chains, generating local enterprise and employment, with environmental and social impact.

Leverage funding for the VCF sector in Sefton to undertake energy efficiency audits on buildings and apply for capital funding to make efficiency changes.

We want national and local grant makers to increase access to environment and climate change funds to enable VCF sector groups to transition buildings in line with energy efficiency audits and adopt climate change and green strategies into their operations.

Support the development of a VCF sector green portal on a Liverpool City Region wide footprint such as that in the North East and Cumbria, Going Green Together, connected to the CVS’s, to provide workshops, resources, guides to promote climate literacy, to enable the VCF sector to transition and embed climate change actions in their work and reduce their carbon emissions.

Seek increased funding and bursaries for community green initiatives, that enable groups to make small scale changes within communities which have multiplier effects.

Climate change is a key priority of NCVO’s manifesto, which encourages the government to recognise the **impact of climate change on charities** and to provide support for VCF organisations to **prepare for the climate transition**. Particularly, local authorities are encouraged to provide planning **advice and guidance for community projects**. Locality emphasises that the VCF are critical partners in leading the way to net zero, highlighting their **short supply chains**, creation of **local employment opportunities**, and **their circular, regenerative activities**. At a regional level, the LCR manifesto asks for resource for community organisations to undertake energy efficiency audits and carbon reduction interventions, as well as an information portal that translates climate policy into actionable steps for the VCF sector, supported by a climate change champion role.

5. RECOGNITION AND CELEBRATION OF THE VALUE OF VOLUNTEERING IN SEFTON



We want to encourage all organisations in Sefton to use the Volunteering Hub through the Volunteer Centre, Sefton, for promoting and recruiting volunteers, which is linked into the Liverpool City Region Volunteer Portal.

Engage more volunteers in registering for the local Sefton Volunteer Certificate scheme to recognise and reward volunteering action and quantify the socio-economic value to the community and economy of Sefton.

For regional skills, employment and learning programmes, to incorporate non-mandatory volunteering opportunities as a recognised progression pathway to promoting confidence, wellbeing and building skills towards employment.

For public sector organisations to commit to a Sefton Employee Volunteering Programme, and pre-retirement modules, including volunteering, working with Volunteer Centre Sefton, Sefton4Good and the VCF Sector.

NCVO's manifesto wants to see more people **encouraged to volunteer** and take part in social action. Particularly for those from **lower social-economic backgrounds** who are significantly less likely to volunteer and have a good experience. They want targeted funding to **remove socio-economic barriers** to ensure **everyone can benefit** from the skills and wellbeing gained through volunteering. For Liverpool City Region, the recently launched "**LCR Volunteer Portal**" provides a central point for people to become involved in volunteering, as well as for organisations to manage their volunteers.

6. SUPPORT VCF SECTOR ORGANISATIONS TO RECRUIT, RETAIN AND DEVELOP THEIR WORKFORCE



We want local partners to recognise the significant contribution of the Sefton VCF sector and its workforce as not for profit enterprises to the social and economic value of Sefton and see this reflected in the Sefton's Council's published economic and regeneration strategies and statements.

Encourage local government and public sector colleagues to review funding and contracts to be inclusive of rises in cost of living and to match local public sector pay awards to support VCF sector organisations in Sefton to retain staff.

We want to work with public sector partners to identify opportunities for developing the VCF sector workforce and opening up and extending the apprenticeship levy.

We want to engage in a Team Sefton work force approach through initiatives such as Team 100, System Leadership, to extend access to training, learning and progression opportunities to the VCF sector work force, whilst improving service outcomes through connected and multi-agency working.

Identify opportunities to develop VCF sector career pathways, placements and apprenticeships for labour market entrants working in partnership with higher education, universities and economic regeneration partners locally and in the Liverpool City Region.

Sefton has just under **4,000 employees working in the VCF sector**. Involving the VCF sector in workforce planning is a key ask of the NCVO manifesto, which marries well with our Sefton ask for local government to recognise and celebrate the contribution of the Sefton VCF workforce to the social and economic fabric of the borough. We cannot expect the VCF sector to be an equal partner within early intervention and prevention if the needs of the sectors workforce are not addressed. **Appropriate funding of the VCF sector** with grants and contracts that reflect the cost of living and inflation to allow organisations to financially support their staff is essential. The LCR manifesto emphasises this importance, demanding that all contracts factor these costs in to **build the resilience and sustainability of the sector**.

7. WE WANT OUR LOCAL PARTNERS TO SUPPORT US TO BUILD AN ENGAGED, RESILIENT AND SUSTAINABLE VCF SECTOR IN SEFTON



We want to ensure there is accountable and embedded representation within all partnerships utilising the VCF sector architecture of networks and forums, facilitated by Sefton CVS.

Encourage local leaders to recognise and understand the importance of adequately funded VCF sector infrastructure. For partners to recognise and engage with VCF sector colleagues.

Utilise sector leadership expertise in areas of work within partnerships e.g. sustainable and affordable food, VCF sector collaborations such as VOLA and their supply chain model for their Shared Prosperity Digital Inclusion Programme, with funds that come directly to the VCF sector.

Encourage public sector leaders to understand the scale and benefits of using VCF community assets in delivering services and programme (e.g. buildings and community spaces) and encourage commitment to utilising these spaces as accessible venues for residents.

Further develop community asset transfer models of buildings and land, to revitalise and reimagine their use for community benefit and release the potential to draw in additional investment.

VCF sector resilience is an important priority across all national and regional manifestos. NCVO want to see **funding for organisations** to provide services that **build community resilience**, particularly in terms of responding to crises. They also recognise the role of **VCF infrastructure** and want to see government fund this crucial element of the VCF ecosystem. Locality want governments to recognise the ability of community organisations to **build on people's potential**, rather than exclusively focus on their needs, to help build community resilience. They want an active commitment to **use local supply chains** to **create neighbourhood level economic opportunities**, alongside a strategic commitment to prioritise the long-term social, economic and environmental value that can be realised through **community ownership** through a **Community Asset Transfer policy**. More regionally, the LCR manifesto highlights the importance of **community consultation and empowerment**, with **appropriate resource** for community engagement.

Key strengths of the VCF sector in Sefton:



Key message to the Government regarding the VCF sector in Sefton:



Sefton VCF Manifesto report 2024

This manifesto report has been compiled by Sefton Council for Voluntary Service in partnership with Sefton's VCF sector and Voluntary Sector North West.

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