

Our Kind of Stockport – A strategy for a thriving Voluntary Community Faith and Social Enterprise Sector in Stockport

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Foreword

This strategy sets out a collective commitment to our vibrant, local Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise Sector organisations, over the next 5 years. It is owned by the sector but with explicit commitment from key organisations and partners across health, social care, community safety, housing and the private sector.

Through this strategy, we will work together, to support the growth, sustainability and resilience of local VCFSE organisations, so that they, in turn can continue to support stronger, healthier and more resilient communities.

“The Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) Sector has always supported the most vulnerable members of society, and those most affected by complicated socioeconomic issues. The value of the sector and the need to invest in and support it, has never been more important

The organisations and groups who make up Stockport’s VCFSE sector have shown remarkable resilience in supporting our residents to manage the challenges arising from Covid-19, by providing invaluable, and in some cases lifesaving support, to communities throughout the Borough. The sector is now rising to the challenge of mobilising support for some of our most vulnerable residents through the cost-of-living crisis”.

Jo McGrath CEO Sector 3

“Our Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) Sector in Stockport plays a vital role in supporting our most vulnerable members of society as well as creating vibrant social and cultural networks that are incredibly important to supporting our prosperity.

We only need to think about the role that the VCSFE sector played during the Covid 19 Pandemic and the remarkable resilience that was shown providing in some cases life-saving support to communities throughout the Borough. The sector is now rising to the challenge of mobilising support for some of our most vulnerable residents through the cost-of-living crisis.

The immense value of the sector and the need to invest in and support it, has never been more important.”

Cllr Mark Hunter Council Leader SMBC

Why do we need a VCFSE Strategy?

The importance of the VCFSE sector is reflected in the One Stockport Borough Plan. (The Stockport Borough Plan - One Stockport). The VCFSE sector play a key role across each of the borough plan priorities and in particular the strong and supportive priority, which seeks to facilitate confident and empowered communities working together to make a difference.



One Heart – At the heart of Stockport are its people and the communities in which they live.

- 1. A caring and growing Stockport** - Stockport is a great to grow where children have the best start in life.
- 2. A healthy and happy Stockport** - People live the best lives they can – happy healthy and independent.
- 3. A strong and supportive Stockport** - Confident and empowered communities working together to make a difference.

One Home- Stockport is a great place to live, where no one is left behind.

- 1. A fair and inclusive Stockport**- A borough for everyone – diversity and inclusion is celebrated, and everyone has equity of opportunity.
- 2. A flourishing and creative Stockport** - Stockport is an exciting place to live, where people are active and celebrate culture.
- 3. A climate friendly Stockport** – Stockport is a responsible and sustainable borough.

One Future – Growing, creating, and delivering a thriving future for Stockport.

- 1. An enterprising and thriving Stockport** – A thriving economy which works for everyone.
- 2. A skilled and confident Stockport** – Everyone has the opportunities and skills to successfully achieve their ambitions.
- 3. A radically digital Stockport** – A digitally inclusive and dynamic brough.

As stated in the borough plan 'confident and empowered communities do not happen in isolation, it requires the nurturing of relationships, investment in community innovation, opportunities for connecting across communities and redesigning how public services work to build much stronger neighbourhood connections' (Page 30, Stockport Borough Plan).

This strategy outlines the collective commitment between the VCFSE sector, Stockport Council plus health and private sector colleagues to continue to empower the sector to deliver their amazing work, to maximise investment in the sector and to create partnerships which ultimately improve the life chances and quality of life for Stockport's diverse communities.

Furthermore, this strategy outlines our collective plans to maximise and build on these strengths to create an even more vibrant and sustainable VCFSE sector, which stands as an equal strategic and delivery partner to our local public and private sectors.

The Local Context

Stockport is home to a diverse and vibrant VCFSE sector. There are a total of 1,672 voluntary organisations, community groups and social enterprises operating in Stockport. These VCFSE groups are supported by 57,488 volunteers, who collectively contribute 213,536 hours of their time each week. 11% of the VCFSE sector in Stockport identify as a Social Enterprise.

The sector supports public sector reform, and value for money priorities for the public and statutory sectors by bringing external income to Stockport, with 63% of VCFSE organisations generating at least one source of non-public sector funds to support our residents. Furthermore, 83% of VCFSE organisations in Stockport collaborate with other VCFSE organisations in the Borough, to avoid duplication and maximise the value the support they offer. 89% of VCFSE organisations in Stockport also have established relationships or have worked directly with Stockport Council, and 61% of VCFSE's have worked with private business in some capacity.

The Greater Manchester Context

Our local VCFSE Strategy is aligned with the priorities which are outlined the Greater Manchester VCFSE Accord ([11 Annex 1 – GM VCSE Accord.pdf \(greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk\)](#)). The Accord is a three-way collaboration agreement between the Greater Manchester Combined Authority and the Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership and the GM Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Sector, which outlines a commitment to a relationship of mutual trust, working together, and sharing responsibility.

Building on strong foundations

There is much to celebrate and be proud of in terms of the existing relationships between Stockport's public and VCFSE sectors. The VCFSE sector supports most of the Council's activities and priorities, from Active Communities, Start Well, Live Well and Age Well priorities, Financial and Digital Inclusion and Climate Action Now. The VCFSE sector also delivers a wide variety of commissioned services for both adults and children including health provision, mental health services and providing provision for special educational needs and disability (SEND)

Key to this partnership are organisations such as Sector 3, which serves as Stockport's VCFSE infrastructure organisation. Sector 3 facilitates peer-to-peer assistance, guidance, and education in order to expand and strengthen the combined impact of the sector across the borough. Sector 3's vision of a vibrant, healthy and inclusive community for everyone in Stockport will support resilience

for the sector so that it can continue to assist our local communities. All of this ensures that the VCFSE sector not only survives but thrives.

Volunteering programmes contribute to a sense of local pride in Stockport. From Stockport Community Champions, who continue to volunteer their time to help communities and residents improve their health and wellbeing to Digi know champions, friends and ambassadors, who help local people from all walks of life to access the internet and improve their digital skills and access affordable devices, there are many examples of amazing local work which is supported and led by volunteers.

Stockport Council has also supported opportunities for investment and innovation through One Stockport Local Fund. Since the formal launch of the fund in 2018 and at the time of writing this strategy, there have been 9 rounds of funding, with £1.2million of funding being distributed to more than 250 community projects, which benefit residents across Stockport

Facing challenges together

As well as maximising our successes and willingness to work together to find new solutions, we also need to collectively address the challenges we face. There has never been a higher demand for services or more pressure to achieve value for money and we need to ensure that data is both available and robust so that we can continue to develop evidence-based solutions which demonstrate quality and value for money.

We are also delivering support to local people in an environment where short term funding is the norm. A key priority is to develop more sustainable funding for our services. This in turn will help us to support workforce retention for the VCFSE Sector.

There is also a need to maximise opportunities for joined up approaches in order to support people with complex or multiple needs.

Our Vision

Our vision is for a strong, sustainable VCFSE sector, which is supported at all levels as an equal strategic and delivery partner, through collaborative relationships with Stockport Council, the Integrated Care System, Community Safety partners, housing providers, businesses and residents, to help local people to live well and achieve their full potential.

Our Strategic Priorities for the VCFSE Sector

This strategy champions a resilient, independent and influential VCFSE sector working in our community to benefit all.

This strategy outlines our collective commitment to Improving collaboration, by strengthening partnerships and joint working, to maximise the positive outcomes we achieve for local people and make the best use of local resources. We will:

- Ensure the VCFSE sector is represented at Greater Manchester Level
- Ensure the sector is represented locally through membership of strategic boards and by creating a Strategic VCFSE Alliance
- Support collaboration, including through partnership investment opportunities
- Continue to support local Equality Diversity and Inclusion Networks to ensure that all our local communities have the opportunity to influence and shape local services and strategies

- Ensure that the VCFSE sector are an integral part of the design and delivery of Stockport's emerging One Neighbourhood model

In order to achieve this, we will focus on 3 key priorities over the next 5 years:



Priority 1: Investment

The local VCFSE sector already deliver a range of services on behalf of statutory partners and through this strategy we make a collective commitment to transfer more existing funding to the sector, and to attract new sources of funding locally.

The sector already attracts significant income from a range of sources. This not only demonstrates the value of the sector to our communities but is also reflective of the fact that our VCFSE organisations are already seen as trusted partners in Stockport. In 2022-23 the local NHS invested £751,000 in health and wellbeing services which are delivered by local VCFSE organisations. In 2021-22 Big Lottery provided £2.2million of funding to local VCFSE organisations. This not only demonstrates the value of the sector to our communities but is also reflective of the fact that our VCFSE organisations are already seen as trusted partners in Stockport.

We will develop a local investment framework which includes income from a range of sources and activities, alongside more collaboration and cross-sector working. We will also make smarter investments and maximise value for money and social value.

Income diversification and sustainable funding solutions

63% of Stockport's VCFSE organisations have at least one source of non-public sector income and we want to collectively continue to generate more external income to support Stockport residents.

We will support partners to develop their service offer, for instance through the provision of room hire and training and we will increase the proportion of VCFSE organisations who make a successful application to the One Stockport Local Fund

Growing Social Enterprises

We will continue to grow more social enterprises, and support them to thrive, for instance through initiatives such as Proper Good ([Proper Good Business - Stockport — Sector 3 - Stockport in Synergy \(sector3sk.org\)](https://sector3sk.org))

Commissioned Services

The VCFSE sector is often closer to the issues and problems which affect our residents and is often able to work innovatively and flexibly to give people the help they need and want.

But sometimes organisations miss out on opportunities to deliver more formally commissioned services. We will increase the number of VCFSE organisations who deliver commissioned services on behalf of statutory partners, through the lifetime of this strategy in the following ways:

1. Supporting organisations to be commission ready
2. Creating more opportunities for VCFSE organisations to co-design and co-produce our local support offer
3. Supporting the VCFSE sector to evidence the impact of the work they do

Maximising opportunities through social value

We will help our partners to achieve their social value commitments in the most meaningful and impactful way, by developing a more co-ordinated approach to social value which maximises opportunities to support the VCFSE Sector and we will measure the impact of our social value activities

Collaboration and partnership working

We will develop collaborative funding opportunities across statutory sector partners and with external grant funders, whilst also supporting VCFSE partners to work more collaboratively. In doing so we will make it easier for the sector to access funding, reduce duplication and increase value for money.

We will also develop a more inclusive approach to allocating funding, which includes more representative decision making.

Priority 2: Capacity Building

We will support the infrastructure of individual VCFSE organisations and the sector as whole, by focussing on the following priorities:

Workforce development and skills

We will enable a highly skilled VCFSE which supports employees and volunteers to learn and develop their potential. This includes:

- Recruiting more apprentices and offer more traineeships for local people through VCFSE partners
- Ensure funding for commissioned services supports the Greater Manchester commitment to the Real Living Wage.

Volunteering

We will continue to value and develop the contribution made by our volunteers. This will include continued investment in Stockport's Volunteer Hub and our Digital and Community Champions, as well as strengthening collaboration with Healthwatch and supporting better data and intelligence gathering about our local volunteers and the contribution they make. We will work with partners to:

- Promote volunteering in all its forms, as a pathway to employment, mental and physical wellbeing, and social inclusion
- Increase opportunities for volunteering in a range of settings
- Celebrate our local volunteers

- Support best practice for recruiting, developing and supporting volunteers

Community Buildings and assets

Stockport's VCFSE sector have an important role to play in how we manage and utilise local spaces, buildings and land for the well-being or social interest of our residents. This includes local parks and open green spaces, libraries, cinemas and other cultural spaces, swimming pools and leisure facilities, community centres and youth centres.

We will:

- Develop a Community Buildings Strategy which opens more community spaces and buildings for use, management and even ownership by the VCFSE sector
- Improve the accessibility and digital capacity of community buildings
- Work with local businesses and corporate partners to offer space to the VCFSE sector
- Encourage more VCFSE stewardship of green spaces linked to Climate Action Now priorities
- Ensure the VCFSE Sector have a voice in future developments

Digital infrastructure

The VCFSE Sector are integral to the ambitions described in Stockport's Digital Strategy, [Radically Digital Stockport | Digital Stockport](#). We will ensure that the sector as whole, is supported to make the most of digital opportunities and that they have the infrastructure, skills and networks to be able to do this. This in turn will support climate action ambitions.

We will:

- Improve access to equipment and data
- Support the sector to develop their digital skills
- Improve local data and insight about digital inclusion

Priority 3: Community Power

All of our One Stockport partners recognise the enormous value of the VCFSE sector, and we want to do even more to ensure that the sector is an equal and trusted partner and that in turn, they can empower people to have a say about the places in which they live and the services they use.

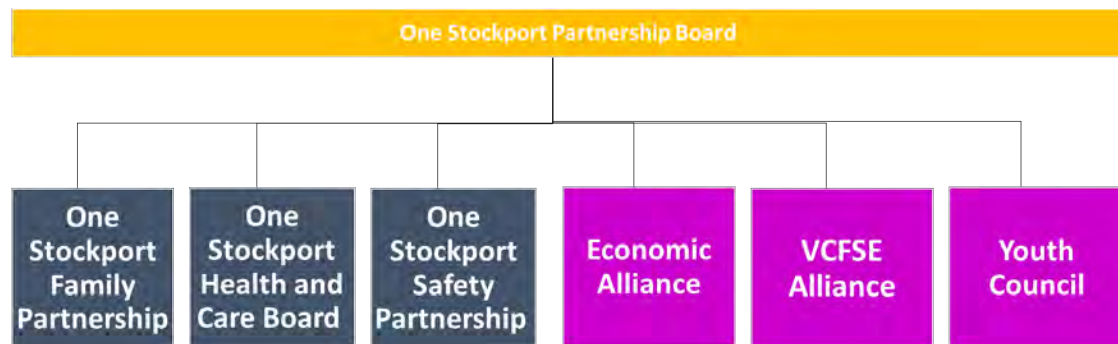
We will do this by ensuring:

- VCFSE representation at strategic board level across our partnership
- Developing a VCFSE Alliance with equal standing to existing strategic partnership boards
- Commitment to a VCFSE Compact, aligned with the Greater Manchester VCFSE Accord
- Continuing to support our Equity Networks

The VCFSE Sector are often closer to communities and residents. We will maximise opportunities to understand and listen to communities by ensuring that:

- VCFSE organisations are involved in the co-production and co-design of commissioned services
- VCFSE partners can contribute data and qualitative evidence of need and best practice to inform our collective priorities
- VCFSE organisations are involved in multi-agency approaches
- Measuring our progress

The strategy will be led through a local VCFSE Alliance reporting into our One Stockport Partnership Board.



The success of this strategy will also be evidenced through data, case studies and testimonials from a range of stakeholders. Year 1 will focus on establishing baseline information and we develop stretch targets during the subsequent years of the strategy. This will be collectively owned by members of the VCFSE Alliance.