

DRAFT Liverpool City Region VCFSE Manifesto 2021 – 2024: Building a Compassionate, Caring and Successful City Region

Introduction

This manifesto is being developed by VS6¹ in consultation with the voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) sector in Liverpool City Region to highlight the aims and ambitions of the sector for the next three years and our key asks from the Combined Authority for the sector to build back better and support our communities to flourish.

Over the last 12 months, VS6 has held events with the sector both online and in person (prior to social distancing measures) including our VCFSE assemblies, roundtables and workshops that have included many representatives from hundreds of organisations across the City Region. We have developed this manifesto by pulling together the findings from these discussions and the recommendations from reports produced from our engagement with the sector including our 2017 VCFSE manifesto, Assembly Summary report, impact of COVID-19 survey report as well as external regional documents such as the Cheshire and Merseyside VCFSE Health and Care Reset paper.

We are now consulting the sector on this draft manifesto for 2021-2024 to ensure that it is a truly representative manifesto for the sector's vision for the Liverpool City Region. VS6 will be hosting two assembly events in March 2021 for the sector to discuss this draft manifesto in depth before producing a final draft. There will be a further chance for groups to endorse the final version before we ask LCR Metro Mayor candidates to commit to its implementation.

The VCFSE sector in Liverpool City Region

We are a city region with a strong history and commitment to fairness, social justice and philanthropy and our bustling and diverse VCFSE sector is a testament to these roots. We have over 8,600 VCFSE groups supporting communities across the region including 5,500 community groups and over 800 community businesses contributing over £918 million to our City Region's economic and social value. There are over 24,000 FTE employees working in the sector including 180,000 volunteers providing an incredible 500,000 hours per week of voluntary time to our communities. Additionally, throughout the COVID-19 pandemic over 6,000 volunteers came forward to support their local communities through the crisis between just March and July 2020, providing emergency support and frontline services with many more hours contributed since then.

Throughout the pandemic, our VCFSE organisations have truly gone above and beyond for our local communities and have innovated and adapted without question at a time when

¹ VS6 is a partnership of support organisations working with **the 8.600 voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) groups** operating across out Liverpool City Region.

demand has risen sharply and often outweighed resources and capacity. Fortunately, our local VCFSE leadership and infrastructure organisations have also worked closely in partnership with the Combined Authority, including VCFSE Mayoral Advisor Dr Rev Cannon Ellen Loudon, and have further developed positive working relationships with Metro Mayor Steve Rotheram and his staff.

We have VCFSE representation on many Combined Authority boards and working groups to raise the profile of the sector and promote the best interest of our communities. The development of the LCR Cares fund is a great example of how the Combined Authority can work effectively with the sector, providing much needed financial support for our VCFSE organisations to continue to operate throughout the crisis which was managed and distributed by the Community Foundation for Merseyside. We would like to extend our gratitude to the Combined Authority for the recognition and mobilisation of the LCR Cares fund, and we hope it is a model that is utilised in the future to support those most in need of VCFSE support.

VCFSE Vision for Liverpool City Region

We have a vision for our city region to be:

- 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, 'happening' 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 family friendly city region where people have 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.

Manifesto asks

Below are our key asks that we invite LCR Metro Mayor candidates to commit to as part of their campaign and planning for the City Region. There are 12 points in total that are split into three subheadings that summarise the overarching theme of the asks and the vision for the VCFSE sector in the development and recovery of the Liverpool City Region over the next three years. These themes are:

- 1.** A Healthy VCFSE Ecosystem
- 2.** Driving an Inclusive Economy
- 3.** Championing Our Communities

A Healthy VCFSE Ecosystem

The VCFSE sector has always been quick to adapt and mobilise to new challenges and the events of the COVID-19 pandemic have further highlighted just how fundamental the sector is in responding to the changing needs of our communities and working in partnership with the public sector. Whilst it is great to see the VCFSE sector celebrated for its achievements during the pandemic, the sector has done so with reduced capacity, depleted resources, and fatigue. We must work together now with our partners in the public and private sectors to develop a resilient and sustainable VCFSE sector that can continue to respond to need and be at the centre of a people-focused recovery. The asks below summarise what we want to see for the sector in order to build a healthy and sustainable VCFSE ecosystem.

1. Developing a sustainable and resilient VCFSE sector with strong leadership

- a. Support the business continuity and resilience of the VCFSE sector beyond funding, including support in areas such as strategic planning, providing digital infrastructure and VCFSE access to public sector training to really boost the potential of the sector.
- b. Maximise public sector generation of social value by working with the VCFSE sector and through the development of a LCR Social Value strategy that recognises the sectors fundamental role in generating social value for communities.
- c. Ensure the VCFSE sector has the capacity and resource to fully participate in policy, strategic decision making with continued representation on Combined Authority panels and boards.
- d. Enable the creative and innovative side of the VCFSE sector in developing meaningful and effective responses to the needs of our communities, building upon the success of the sector's ability to adapt services quickly to COVID-19 with value for money.

2. Investment into the VCFSE sector

- a. As per the Building Back Better recovery plan for LCR, we will work closely with the Combined Authority to secure the £25m VCFSE Sector Resilience and Capacity Fund to provide cross-sector investment to develop the sector's long-term capacity, resilience and to adapt to new ways of working, with funding distributed as per the successful LCR Cares model.
- b. Implement a 1% Community Investment Levy on all public sector contracts over £1m to be invested into VCFSE delivery, taking learning from other areas that have implemented similar policy.

3. Nurturing mature and collaborative working relationships across sectors

- a.** Work in collaboration with the VCFSE sector to secure national funding, utilising the sectors rich knowledge and expertise in developing proposals and designing programmes that work for communities, including evaluation.
 - Ensure that applications for the Levelling Up Fund and in particular the UK Shared Prosperity Fund are co-produced with the sector as key partners, building upon the sectors strong experience and involvement with European Funding structures.
- b.** Strengthen the role of VCFSE Mayoral Advisor to increase VCFSE connectivity within Combined Authority structures with an identified single point of contact for raising areas of interest and ideas.
- c.** Include VCFSE activities in public sector data collection to build an understanding of the sector's activities and better design services and policy to respond to the needs of our communities.
- d.** The sector will be a key partner in health and social care integration and transformation agendas with direct links into governance processes and service design, building upon the successes and existing relationships between VS6 and the Cheshire & Merseyside Health and Care Partnership.

Driving an Inclusive Economy

Inclusive Economy is a term that is widely used to describe a new type of economic model whereby economic growth is developed at a local level compared to more traditional economic models that do very little to address inequalities within communities and indeed, in most cases actually contribute to rising levels of inequalities. The core principles of Inclusive Economy, therefore, are to have an economy that benefits everyone, where no one is left behind and everyone is treated fairly with equal access to opportunities.

The VCFSE sector in our Liverpool City Region, being so rich and varied and providing support to some of our most vulnerable communities in truly innovative ways, is well positioned to drive forward and embed these Inclusive Economy principles by building upon the strengths and assets of the sector with growth coming from within our communities. We want to work closely with our public and private sector colleagues to develop the foundations for instilling Inclusive Economy principles across Liverpool City Region and solidify the role of the VCFSE sector as key drivers on this agenda.

4. The VCFSE sector as a key driver of Inclusive Economy Principles

- a. The VS6 Partnership will work with the sector to identify and unlock the potential of our community assets and develop a LCR VCFSE Inclusive Economy framework highlighting the strengths sector that can be built upon.
- b. The VS6 Partnership will act as a conduit to the Combined Authority to engage them with this Inclusive Economy work and help further strengthen our assets with the aim of giving communities more power to shape their own future.
- c. Continue to have VCFSE representatives as key members of the Local Enterprise Partnership and the Social and Solidarity Economy Reference Panel, acting as key drivers for Inclusive Economy principles.
- d. Where possible, prioritise purchasing from LCR social enterprises and charities, and identify market gaps for developing this part of the VCFSE sector to strengthen local spending and benefits to the economy.

5. Recognising the sectors fundamental role in building resilient communities with greater social and economic benefits

- a. The VCFSE provides so many person and community centred services that are key enablers in building up our communities producing positive outcomes and experiences including:
 - The sector's role within the Intermediate Labour Market as an employer, trainer and upskiller.
 - Reducing health and social inequalities.
 - Providing social value through procurement and commissioning

- The sector's role as businesses providing and supplying goods and services.
 - Reducing demand on statutory services and achieving savings
 - Bringing external funding into communities and across the region
- b.** We will continue to promote these benefits of working with the VCFSE sector alongside inclusive economy principles to drive and influence systematic change.

6. Community approaches to improving digital inclusion

- a.** The VCFSE sector to be identified as a key partner in the development and delivery of the Combined Authority LCR Digital Strategy 2021-2023 with continued funding for VCFSE led programmes to address financial and digital inclusion.

7. Building upon the legacy of volunteering

- a.** Recognise the economic and social value of the volunteer movement by supporting the development of a city region VCFSE Volunteer Management System to streamline the co-ordination of volunteering whilst maintaining strong links to national prescribed infrastructures, building upon the fantastic local infrastructure volunteer mobilisation and co-ordination.

8. The VCFSE at the centre of a green and inclusive recovery

- a.** Continue to recognise and fortify the VCFSE sectors role in achieving the City Region's target of net carbon neutrality by 2040, such as investing in skills and equipment, and aiding a green and inclusive recovery through VS6's representation on the LCR Climate Change Panel and reach into communities.

Championing Our Communities

Due to the nature of the VCFSE sector, our communities and beneficiaries are central to everything we do, and we know that in many settings we act as the voice of the communities we serve. The challenges that COVID-19 has presented are not really new, but instead it has exacerbated existing inequalities and issues that exist throughout the City Region already and the impact of pandemic is likely to continue to have an impact on our communities for the long term. There are, however, some positives to come from the pandemic including the positive impact on the environment, community cohesion, kindness and generosity of family, friends, neighbours, and strangers which we want to build upon to create a city region where everyone feels safe, respected and at home.

9. An equal and diverse VCFSE city region

- a. VCFSE organisations to be good employers and sign up to the City Region Fair Employment Charter
- b. Further the work of the Fairness and Social Justice Advisory Board to ensure that decision making is underpinned by social justice and fairness, and that community voices and experiences are reflected in strategic conversations.
- c. To be a place where diversity, equality and being a place of welcome and opportunity underpins the social and economic fabric of our city region.

10. Equalities through a BAME lens

- a. Enable the voices of BAME communities and pro-actively outreach in order to ensure these groups are engaged and are active participants in decision making across sectors, including the VCFSE sector with dedicated funding and resources for BAME organisations to do this work on behalf of their communities.
- b. Work with the Combined Authority to review how we can address the gap in specialist BAME infrastructure network across LCR.

11. A sustainable and affordable food plan for the City Region

- a. There needs to be a whole system approach to addressing food poverty with the VCFSE as a lead partner on this work, building upon the recommendations from the VCFSE Food Affordability and Sustainability assembly to develop a food poverty strategy for the City Region.

12. A whole-system, city wide approach to mental health and emotional wellbeing

- a. Ensure there is a joined-up response to the mental health crisis working in partnership with the public, private and VCFSE sector

- b.** Co-ordinate pathways of emergency and ongoing support which reach into VCFSE services and commission local VCFSE organisations to provide additional formal and informal support for communities.
- c.** Supporting staff and volunteers across sectors and ensure that access to mental health training, such as mental health first aid and mental health resilience, is available for the wider workforce.

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VCFSE in Liverpool City Region

- Over 8,600 VCFSE groups supporting communities across the City Region including 5,500 community groups
- 24,000 plus FTE employees working in the sector
- £918m GVA contribution to the City Region
- 180,000 volunteers contributing over 500,000 hours per week²

What do we do?

VS6 work together to champion the vital role our sector does and could play in the future of the City Region, while seeking to shape local policy and implementation for the benefit of our communities.

How do we do this?

VCFSE support organisations have collectively engaged with public and private sector partners on a City Region level since 2004. In 2015, we formally launched the VS6 partnership in order to provide a voice, platform and action model for VCFSE participation.

We're focused on driving positive change by connecting the VCFSE sector with our developing city region. Together, we have links to 8,600 organisations across the six boroughs, and aim to support these groups – many integral to our communities - to collectively influence decision making:

- Offering solutions to some of the most challenging economic issues facing our City Region
- Driving community-centred approaches to transforming health and well-being
- Providing a single point of contact for the city's VCFSE sector

Contact

Karen Conway, Partnerships Manager, VSNW

E: karen.conway@vsnw.org.uk

W: www.vs6partnership.org.uk

T: [@vs6news](https://twitter.com/vs6news)

² **Source:** *Measuring the size and scope of the VCS in Liverpool City Region (Liverpool John Moores University: 2015)*

