



## **Stoke-on-Trent VCSE City Alliance Agreement**

This document is a written understanding between the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector in Stoke-on-Trent and Stoke-on-Trent City Council and sets out how they will co-operate to create resilient, thriving communities for the citizens of Stoke-on-Trent.

Ratification date:

Date of review:



## **Introduction**

As an alliance the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector in Stoke-on-Trent and Stoke-on-Trent City Council are committed to working together to create the conditions to build stronger, more resilient, and empowered communities within the City.

We believe that communities themselves can drive increased resilience by identifying and mobilising existing, but often unrecognised assets, responding to challenges and creating local social improvement.

We will use the principles of Asset-Based Community Development to create an environment where communities can thrive and work together.

Our joint endeavours will be:

- Citizen-led
- Relationship oriented
- Asset-Based
- Placed-Based and
- Inclusion focused.

To facilitate the most effective joint working possible, the following principles have been agreed to guide the working relationship between the VCSE sector and the local authority.



## **Partnership and Collaboration**

We will:

- Foster a culture of collaboration, recognising that both the VCSE sector and Stoke-on-Trent City Council bring unique strengths and perspectives to community development.
- Actively seek opportunities to work together on shared goals and initiatives.
- Work together to identify problems and barriers, and to co-develop and co-design solutions.

## **Open Communication**

We will:

- Establish open and transparent communication channels to facilitate the exchange of information, ideas, and feedback.
- Ensure that information is accessible to all stakeholders, fostering a culture of inclusivity and openness.

## **Mutual Respect**

We will:

- Recognise and value the expertise, knowledge, and experience that both the VCSE sector and Stoke-on-Trent City Council bring to the table.
- Treat each other with respect and appreciate the diversity of perspectives within the alliance.



## **Empowerment**

We will:

- Ensure that VCSE sector organisations are empowered to play a meaningful role in decision making processes.
- Work together to ensure that there is support for capacity-building within VCSE sector organisations of all sizes to enhance their effectiveness and sustainability.
- Minimise bureaucracy and ensure commissioning and processes are proportionate and accessible.

## **Flexible and Adaptive Approaches**

We will:

- Be willing to adapt and evolve approaches based on changing community needs, emerging issues, and the evolving landscape of the VCSE sector.
- Encourage innovation and experimentation in addressing community challenges.
- Utilise non-traditional and alternative ways of commissioning where appropriate.

## **Clear Roles and Responsibilities**

We will:

- Clearly define and communicate the roles and responsibilities of both the VCSE sector and Stoke-on-Trent City Council in various collaborative initiatives.
- Establish mechanisms for accountability to ensure that each party is fulfilling its commitments.



## **Equity and Inclusion**

We will:

- Prioritise equity and inclusivity in decision making processes to ensure that the diverse needs of the community are considered.
- Proactively address issues of inequality and work towards creating an inclusive and accessible environment for all.

## **Resource Sharing:**

We will:

- Explore opportunities for resource sharing, including funding, expertise, and infrastructure, to maximise the impact of community development efforts.
- Facilitate access to resources and support for smaller organisations within the VCSE sector.

## **Long-Term Planning**

We will:

- Take a long-term view in planning and implementing community development initiatives, recognising that sustained positive outcomes often require ongoing collaboration and commitment.
- Avoid short-term funding arrangements that put short term gains above longer-term impacts.



## **Evaluation and Learning**

We will:

- Establish mechanisms for continuous evaluation of collaborative initiatives to assess their impact and identify areas for improvement.
- Promote a culture of learning from successes and failures, adjusting strategies accordingly.

By adhering to these principles, the local VCSE sector and Stoke-on-Trent City Council can build strong, effective alliances that contribute to the overall well-being and development of our communities.

## **Priorities 2024–2029**

### **Commissioning & Procurement**

We will seek to embed sustainable and proportionate commissioning and procurement processes, building social value in the city through ongoing dialogue and a commitment to ensuring VCSE organisations are included in the co-production of solutions.

We commit to ensuring VCSE organisations are not excluded by overly complex processes and requirements.

### **Communications and Engagement**

We will ensure that all communication and engagement is clear, concise, open and honest, and resonates with our local communities.

We will engage at the earliest opportunity and will listen to the feedback given.



### **Prevention**

We will champion the role of community-based prevention support and work together to ensure communities have the resources and capacity they need and can access services easily and locally.

### **Volunteering**

We will champion locally led, empowering volunteering processes and opportunities and ensure that volunteering in the city is inclusive.

### **Term**

The VCSE sector and Stoke-on-Trent City Council will work collaboratively as part of an ongoing arrangement. The alliance will be reviewed annually, starting 12 months after the agreement is signed. This review will identify any changes to the landscape in the city, confirm continuation, and update shared priorities.

### **Resolving Disputes**

The VCSE sector and Stoke-on-Trent City Council are committed to working together to solve difficulties positively through raising concerns early and in as amicable a way as possible. Both parties have the right to raise concerns and recognise there can be a perceived power imbalance between the VCSE and public sectors and that this should not prevent VCSE organisations from feeling able to raise concerns.



**We commit to adhere to these principles and priorities:**

---

**Chief Executive - VAST**

---

**Chief Executive**

---

**Trustee- VAST**

---

**Elected Member**

**On behalf of the Stoke-on-Trent  
VCSE Sector**

**On behalf of Stoke-on-Trent City  
Council**



**Date:**

**Date:**