

Stoke Volunteer Managers Network

May 2025

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**Welcome to the latest edition of the
Stoke Volunteer Managers Network
Newsletter.**

The Volunteer Managers Network is a space for people working with volunteers in and around Stoke-on-Trent, an opportunity to share ideas, network and provide mutual support.

This newsletter enables us to reach those who haven't been able to attend our recent meetings, and to share any relevant information. Feel free to share amongst your networks with those you think may be interested.

If you're not already part of the network and you'd like to join, please email **volunteering@vast.org.uk**

Developing a Local Vision for Volunteering

Our **Vision for Volunteering** has been developed over the course of 18 months, starting with a world café to introduce the national Vision for Volunteering and how we can make it work in Stoke-on-Trent after several drafts being reviewed in recent Volunteer Manager Networks and Volunteer Forums. It was important to us that our Vision be as sector-led as possible.

Our Vision for Volunteering is supported by an overarching statement:

"Our Vision for Volunteering is to create a community where everyone comes together to make a positive impact. We believe that together we can create meaningful connections, foster empathy, and create a real sense of unity.

Putting the 'unity' in community, our mission is to inspire others to join in and help make the world a better place for all."

This Vision for Volunteering is further developed through four key themes which fit the ethos of volunteering in Stoke-on-Trent. Each theme then has 3 subthemes, and is supported by a range of suggested actions. The Vision has been designed to be flexible, so organisations can make it work for them.

Investing in Volunteers

Investing in Volunteers should take a strengths-based approach to ensure volunteers feel valued, **rewarded**, and **recognised** ultimately improving **retention** rates and community impact.

Community Connections

Volunteering should be all about positive community connections. Volunteers need the opportunity to discuss their **ideas**, **network** with other people and **share issues** to develop solutions.

Experimentation and Innovation

Communities should feel empowered to develop their own innovative solutions to engaging and supporting volunteers through strong **partnerships**, **mentoring** schemes and **sharing learning**.

Encouraging Individuality

Volunteers should be encouraged to express their individuality and feel valued for their unique contributions. This can be done through encouraging higher levels of **accessibility**, looking at **inclusion** through a holistic approach and **reducing barriers**.

Our plan is to launch our Vision for Volunteering in stages over a five-year window. We will have an initial launch in Volunteers Week and spend the first year focusing on getting buy-in and focusing on the theme "*Encouraging Individuality*." Then as each year progresses, we will focus on a different theme.

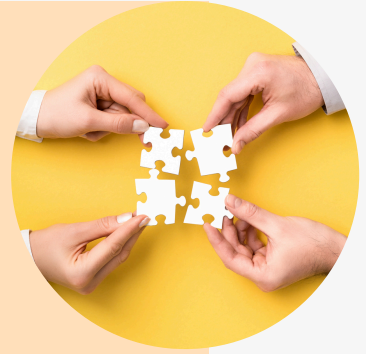
There will be an initial pledge for organisations, similar to the [VCSE City Alliance](#), and then six monthly 'reporting windows' to monitor the Vision to allow for better evaluation and measurement of its effectiveness and impact. We will aim for the 'reporting windows' to be minimal work/effort as we know how precious everyone's time is.

If you want to know more before the launch, please email volunteering@vast.org.uk



VCSE City Alliance

The VCSE City Alliance is a set of principles to define ways of working between Stoke-on-Trent's voluntary, community, and social enterprise (VCSE) sector and Stoke-on-Trent City Council. It sets out how the sector and City Council will co-operate and collaborate to create, support, and empower resilient, thriving communities across Stoke-on-Trent.



We believe that it's the communities themselves that can increase their resilience; finding and using the resources, support, and services that are already within them. By working together, communities can collectively overcome the challenges they face, break down barriers, and ultimately, create an environment where they can thrive.

Essentially, the alliance promises to make sure that there is a solid partnership between the VCSE sector and City Council that is transparent, open, honest, and crucially, equality. You can find out more by visiting our [website](#).



REN(Research Engagement Network)

It is part of the SSHERPa (Staffordshire, Stoke-on-Trent, Shropshire, Telford, and Wrekin Health and Care Research Partnership). REN is a collaborative network that includes members from the NHS, Local Authorities, VCSE sector, and Universities. The mission of REN is to increase health research engagement in the regions it serves by:

- Making health research accessible to everyone.
- Creating more opportunities for health-related research projects.
- Engaging a more diverse range of people and organisations in research efforts.

You can find out more about REN by emailing support@vast.org.uk

Friendly Reminder

If you have volunteer roles listed on the [VAST Volunteer Noticeboard](#), please check they are up-to-date and contact volunteering@vast.org.uk if anything needs changing.

We are always more than happy to offer advice on role descriptions to make them more attractive to potential volunteers.



Facebook Group

Have you joined our Facebook group? Request to join [here](#) and help to grow the group by posting, commenting, and sharing volunteer opportunities. You can also get news and updates via [VAST Volunteering](#) on Facebook.



We would love to hear more good news stories involving the power of volunteering. If you have any you'd like to share, please send them to volunteering@vast.org.uk



VAST Volunteering Quality Standards

Our free scheme provides a framework which organisations can work towards accreditation based on their volunteering policies and procedures, and the way they work with new and existing volunteers.

Our vision for the quality standards scheme is to instil consistent volunteer-related best practice across the whole of the local voluntary sector through structured and proactive support.

You can find the information [here](#).

Training and Events

VAST offers a wide range of training and events for VCSE organisations.

The majority of our training is free for VAST members.

You can see our training and events calendar [here](#) and you can book your places online.

2025	
VAST Training Programme	Getting Started in the VCSE Sector (2-day session) 26th & 27th February / 10th & 11th September
	Planning a Community Event 13th March
	Introduction to Volunteer Management 27th March / 6th November
	Monitoring and Evaluation / Tools and techniques E 10th April
	Procurement and Commissioning 1st May
	Beginners Guide to Fundraising E 15th May
	Introduction to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion 22nd May
	Governance and Best Practice for CICs 12th June
	Supporting and Managing Volunteers E 19th June
	Governance - The Basics / Trustee Essentials 26th June
	Engaging with your Community 17th July
	Introduction to Budgeting, Forecasting and Financial Reporting 25th September
	Funding Strategies E 9th October
Communications and Social Media / Introduction to Canva E 23rd October	
Partnerships and Collaboration 20th November	
Having Difficult Conversations 27th November	
Introduction to Safeguarding 11th December	

Scan the QR code to book your space.
 Training is available to VAST member organisations.

support@vast.org.uk
 vast.org.uk/calendar

Future Meetings

Our meetings rotate between face to face or virtual, with the confirmed details and agenda coming out two weeks before each meeting. You will now need to book your space at the meetings on our website. You can book August and November below.

- **5th August, 1pm - 3pm, over Zoom.**
- **5th November, 10am - 12pm, in person at The Bridge Centre.**

If you have any suggestions for the agenda, or can offer a free venue, please email volunteering@vast.org.uk.