

Integrated Care Board

Date of meeting	11 September 2024
Title of paper	A Review of Progress against the ICB/ VCFSE Alliance Partnership Agreement
Presented by	Professor Craig Harris, Chief Operating Officer
Author	Claire Roberts, Associate Director, Health & Care Integration Tracy Hopkins, Chair of the VCFSE Alliance
Agenda item	13
Confidential	No

Purpose of the paper

This report provides Board members with an update on progress made against the commitments included in the ICB/ VCFSE Alliance Partnership Agreement over the past 12 months and outlines several actions which Board members are asked to support.

Executive summary

In May 2023 Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB) and a representative from Voluntary, Community, Faith, and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) Alliance signed a Partnership Agreement. This reflects a more ambitious way of working between the ICB and the VCFSE sector and sets out the commitment to work together in partnership to meet the diverse needs of our population.

A high-level review of the Agreement was undertaken during July and August 2024. The purpose was to understand the progress being made against the commitments, highlight examples of good practice, and identify any challenges and opportunities that require focus over the next 12 months.

Recommendations

Members of the Board are requested to:

1. Confirm the on-going commitment to the Partnership Agreement and note the progress made over the past 12 months
2. Support the proposed actions to strengthen the partnership between the ICB and VCFSE Alliance.

The actions will be taken forward by members of the ICB's Partnerships & Collaboration Team in conjunction with the VCFSE Alliance.

Governance and reporting (list other forums that have discussed this paper)				
Meeting	Date			Outcomes
No applicable				
Conflicts of interest identified				
Not applicable				
Implications				
(If yes, please provide a brief risk description and reference number)	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
Quality impact assessment completed		X		
Equality impact assessment completed		X		
Data privacy impact assessment completed		X		
Financial impact assessment completed		X		
Associated risks		X		
Are associated risks detailed on the ICB Risk Register?				

Report authorised by:	Professor Craig Harris, Chief Operating Officer
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Integrated Care Board – 11 September 2024

Review of Progress made against the ICB/VCFSE Alliance Partnership Agreement

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In May 2023 Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB) and a representative from the Voluntary, Community, Faith, and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) Alliance signed a Partnership Agreement. The Partnership Agreement reflects a more ambitious way of working between the ICB and the VCFSE sector and sets out the commitment to work together in partnership and meet the diverse needs of our population.
- 1.2 This report provides Board members with an update on progress made against the commitments made in the agreement over the past 12 months and outlines several recommendations for future action which Board members are asked to support.

2. The Partnership Agreement and the Review Process

- 2.1 The Partnership Agreement was co-produced by the ICB and VCFSE organisations through a series of workshops in 2022-23. The Agreement sets out principles which underpin the ways of working between the ICB and the VCFSE sector and outlines a series of commitments from both partners.
- 2.2 The Partnership Agreement sets the conditions by which both parties want to work together and identifies opportunities to:
 - Embed the VCFSE sector into system working with meaningful representation on relevant Boards and committees
 - Review current commissioning and contracting arrangements to ensure that they are fit for purpose and support investment in the sector
 - Open up dialogue with the sector and create the conditions for the sector to become an equal strategic partner.
 - Supporting the engagement of local communities in the planning and delivery of services and making more effective use of data and intelligence from the VCFSE sector.
- 2.3 The full list of commitments is included as Appendix 1.
- 2.4 A high-level review of the Agreement was undertaken during July and August 2024. The purpose was to understand our progress against the commitments, highlight examples of good practice, and identify any challenges and opportunities that require focus over the next 12 months.

- 2.5 The review was undertaken through an online survey of Alliance members who had been involved in developing the agreement; exploratory conversations with a number of teams in the ICB; and reflective discussions between ICB and VCFSE Alliance leads.
- 2.6 The feedback and content generated through the review indicates that there are still some challenges to work through as we develop a stronger strategic partnership between the ICB and the VCFSE sector. However, the review has enabled us to capture examples and case studies where significant progress is being made against the commitments and highlights opportunities to focus on over the coming 12 months. The following sections explore these and present proposals for further action.

3. Voice and Leadership

- 3.1 Sector representatives are engaged in a wide range of system level boards and partnerships including the Integrated Care Partnership (ICP) and the ICB Board and its associated committees. VCFSE representatives are also engaged in a number of programme boards and thematic groups.
- 3.2 As part of the review, VCFSE sector representatives were asked if they felt that their involvement in boards and partnerships had made any difference. There was a sense that the sector now has recognised representation in many areas and is listened to more, especially where insights on health inequalities and community related issues are the focus or where lived experience could help to shape strategies or commissioning approaches. Some respondents felt that it was often difficult to navigate the system, find common work areas and make a difference. It was also noted that there were still some programmes where VCFSE participation was limited and could be strengthened further.
- 3.3 In the same way that VCFSE Alliance members fed back that it sometimes felt difficult to understand the ICB and NHS systems, staff within the ICB indicated that the VCFSE sector can sometimes be difficult to navigate. Over the past 12 months there have been steps taken to respond to these challenges including:
- Leadership Development sessions organised by the Alliance bringing together VCFSE representatives with ICB leadership.
 - Development of the VCFSE Alliance website and newsletter as mechanisms for sharing information and updates.
- 3.4 The review has pointed to the need for continued support in our VCFSE leadership and to develop individuals who take on a representative role. Development opportunities in line with the People Strategy, will be considered such as reciprocal mentoring and 'buddying' to develop a shared understanding of each other's cultural and organisational contexts.

4. Investment & Sustainability

- 4.1 The Partnership Agreement recognises the value of infrastructure for the VCFSE and makes a commitment to appropriate and proportionate commissioning and procurement processes for the sector.
- 4.2 Investment in the Alliance has provided much needed infrastructure at a system level which underpins the Partnership Agreement between the ICB and VCFSE sector. This has created leadership capacity and infrastructure to bring the sector together through the use of websites, newsletters and meetings.
- 4.3 Not surprisingly, the review has highlighted some concerns regarding investment in the delivery of services by the VCFSE sector. Current financial pressures are seen as impacting the commitment to fair funding and the prevention agenda. Some VCFSE organisations responding to the review felt that there are inconsistencies in the way that the sector is commissioned and there are still organisations having to manage short term contracts which leave them with significant challenges in respect of staff retention and sustainability. The feedback was, that there is still a long way to go to meet the ambition of 3-5 year contracts between the ICB and the VCFSE. It was felt that progressing towards this ambition should be a joint priority.
- 4.4 The review has also surfaced examples of good practice where ICB teams have worked closely with VCFSE sector colleagues to inform service commissioning. There have also been positive examples of VCFSE organisations working together to respond to commissions through collaborative partnerships, thus enabling investment to reach smaller groups which may not be in a position to tender for work individually. An example of this is the approach that has been taken within the community mental health programme.
- 4.5 The ICB's recent UEC Capacity Programme has been highlighted as providing a model of working that could be built on in the future. The model of working has involved ring-fencing a percentage of the budget for VCFSE investment; co-design of proposals with VCFSE partners and Place teams; and a single route for investment via a Managing Agent appointed through the Alliance. This work has highlighted a developing maturity in the relationship between the ICB and the VCFSE Alliance, where trust and a shared vision have been instrumental in targeting investment towards more preventative initiatives.
- 4.6 The review points to the need for consistent approaches in commissioning across the ICB and further joint exploration of frameworks such as the Provider Selection Regime and its implications for the VCFSE sector. In progressing the partnership further, VCFSE colleagues identified the need for a fairer funding system that operates on a full cost recovery basis. This will require a consistent approach to full cost recovery across the VCFSE itself, so work is planned to achieve this.
- 4.7 Investment in the sector is not only about financial investment, but also about the sharing of resources, skills and expertise which will contribute to a sustainable and viable VCFSE sector. Shared training and continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities, access to venues, recognising the value of volunteering and VCFSE infrastructure are all aspects that will be explored further through ICB leads and the VCFSE Alliance.

5. Equal Strategic Partner

- 5.1 The increased involvement of VCFSE representatives within ICB governance structures and key programmes and thematic groups has had a positive impact on perceptions of the sector and its ability to operate as a key strategic partner.
- 5.2 The review has indicated that while there is still much to do to create a more equal partnership between the VCFSE sector and ICB, the Alliance is providing an important mechanism for the ICB to connect with the sector and to create opportunities for joint working and collaboration on shared strategic priorities.
- 5.3 In creating a wider assembly and ensuring Alliance leaders have reach across the VCFSE sector into CVS/infrastructure, Hospices Together and the Faith Network as well as service providers, there is better organisation of the VCFSE across Lancashire and South Cumbria. However, the VCFSE is diverse and widespread, so it is recognised that this is on-going work and there will always be VCFSE outliers.
- 5.4 The 'State of the Sector' project, which is being led by the Alliance in partnership with local research institutions, will provide a firm basis for building a greater understanding of the sector. It will capture vital data on the variety of VCFSE organisations that exist in Lancashire and South Cumbria and their contributions to the health and care sector as well as to the wider economy.
- 5.5 A workshop facilitated by the Alliance in July brought together leaders from the ICB and VCFSE to explore the ways in which data and intelligence could be captured and shared more systematically across the ICB and VCFSE sector. The benefits of joint working on this agenda can be seen in the opportunities afforded by capturing data from the sector to create a deeper understanding of communities, their assets and needs, which could inform commissioning and planning decisions. The discussions also highlighted how integrated data systems could facilitate monitoring of the impacts and outcomes delivered by VCFSE services in a more systematic way. This is a long-term partnership aim that we are beginning to lay the foundations for.
- 5.6 The Community Transformation Programme provides the basis for a model of working with the sector that aligns with the principles of the Partnership Agreement and creates significant opportunities for strategic collaboration. The Alliance is starting to bring together organisations that will form a reference group for the programme to co-design a new model for community services. This is an intended focus for our shared work programme over the coming 12 months.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

- 6.1 It is recognised that the VCFSE Alliance works with anchor institutions beyond the ICB but the Partnership Agreement outlines an ambition for a level of engagement, collaboration and co-production that will pave the way to an equal partnership. This requires time and a shift in culture, power and resources. We are still in the early stages and whilst there is much more that needs to be done,

there are examples of positive change and strong foundations being laid that we can build upon.

6.2 The review has led us to define a series of recommended actions that will move us into a new stage of development including:

6.2.1 Continue to invest in VCFSE leadership and put in place mechanisms that will support and develop individuals who take on a representative role.

6.2.2 Develop consistent approaches across all ICB programmes and teams to commissioning VCFSE organisations in line with the principles outlined in the Partnership Agreement.

6.2.3 Identify non-financial areas of support that contribute to the viability and sustainability of the sector and find a way to embed and mobilise these over the next two years.

6.2.4 Use an action learning approach through schemes such as the UEC Capacity programme to continue to improve approaches to VCFSE/ ICB collaboration and investment.

6.2.5 Progress programmes of work that strengthen the position of the VCFSE sector as an equal strategic partner.

6.2.6 Continued development of the VCFSE Alliance to extend its reach and collaboration across the sector.

6.3 Members of the Board are requested to:

1. Confirm the on-going commitment to the Partnership Agreement and note the progress made over the past 12 months
2. Support the proposed actions to strengthen the partnership between the ICB and VCFSE sector.

Name of Author: Tracy Hopkins, Chair of the L&SC VCFSE Alliance
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Appendix 1: Commitments Made in the Partnership Agreement

VCFSE SECTOR COMMITMENTS	ICB COMMITMENTS
<p>We will prioritise areas of our strategic engagement with the ICB based on VCFSE capacity and a mutual agreement concerning where we add most value.</p>	<p>When a need for representation is identified by either party, we will recognise, respect, and work with the pathways established for engagement with the VCFSE. We will commit to ensure VCFSE representation is sought through these channels in a transparent way</p>
<p>We will appoint representatives who have a mandate to be a voice for the VCFSE sector. They will have regard to the Nolan Principles and commit to maintaining their impartiality, reflecting a diversity of perspectives, clearly articulating our collective messages and being transparent about the limitations of their reach. They will openly share information and opportunities with the VCFSE sector.</p>	<p>We recognise the difference between VCFSE representation and VCFSE participation by single organisations and will recruit to boards and working groups with this difference in mind supported by the Nolan Principles.</p>
<p>We will work collectively to take a strategic lead and define our priorities based on local intelligence.</p>	<p>We will welcome input from the VCFSE sector to ensure senior ICB system leaders are informed about what is important to the sector and communities. We are committed to an ongoing dialogue with the VCFSE sector and respect them as an equal strategic partner.</p>
<p>We will collaborate within the VCFSE sector to work strategically with the ICB; this includes building relationships and cohesion within the sector, exploring opportunities for joint working and sharing information and resources.</p>	<p>We value the infrastructure for the VCFSE sector and will support this where we can, including funding it where relevant and appropriate, with agreements that are meaningful to both sectors.</p>
<p>We will actively participate in service design, strategic planning and prioritisation including undertaking commissioned work to support the ICB to involve local communities and communities of interest in the planning and design of services.</p>	<p>We commit to appropriate and proportionate procurement processes for the VCFSE sector. This includes frameworks and grant funding and consideration for length of contracts/grants. We understand the need for timely payment of invoices. We also recognise the importance of full cost recovery and are committed to commission on this basis.</p> <p>We will explore the implications of the Provider Selection Regime with sector.</p>
<p>We will create volunteering opportunities, strengthening community cohesion and resilience by enabling local people to contribute their skills and time.</p>	<p>We will work to understand how we can better utilise the intelligence and data that the VCFSE sector holds to inform decision making and we will share data with the sector where we can.</p>
<p>We will create volunteering opportunities, strengthening community cohesion and resilience by enabling local people to contribute their skills and time.</p>	<p>We recognise that the VCFSE is an equal partner that sometimes has a different perspective. We respect the sector's right to challenge and campaign without this impacting on the funding relationship with the ICB.</p>