

# Liverpool City Region

## VCFSE Manifesto 2021 – 2024:

### Building a Compassionate, Caring and Successful City Region



**VS6** – Working together to build a stronger Liverpool City Region



## Introduction

This manifesto has been developed by VS6 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, including our key asks of the Combined Authority for the sector to build back better and support our communities to flourish.

Throughout 2020, VS6 held numerous events with the sector both online and in person (prior to social distancing measures) with representatives from hundreds of VCFSE organisations across the City Region.

We have developed this manifesto by pulling together the findings from these discussions and recommendations from the reports produced from our engagement with the sector, as well as external regional and national documents such as the Cheshire and Merseyside VCFSE Health and Care Reset paper.

We have made sure to consult with the sector every step of the way when developing this new manifesto for 2021-2024. VS6 held two consultation events in March 2021 for the sector to discuss the drafts of the manifesto in depth before producing this final version to ensure that it is a truly representative manifesto for the sector's vision for the Liverpool City Region.

## 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 City Region where everyone has access to opportunities with 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.

## 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.

Throughout the COVID-19 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 demand has risen sharply and often outweighed resources and capacity.

Our local VCFSE leadership and infrastructure organisations have also worked around the clock to ensure that the sector has the support it needs to mobilise and deliver much needed frontline services.

VS6 Partners have worked closely in partnership with the Combined Authority throughout the pandemic and have further embedded collaborative working relationships between the sector and Metro Mayor Steve Rotheram and his staff.

We also 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.



**8,600 VCFSE groups**



**5,500 community groups**



**Over 800 community businesses**



**£918 million GVA to LCR economy**



**24,000 FTE employees**



**180,000 volunteers**



**500,000 voluntary hours per week**

## Our Manifesto

This VCFSE manifesto outlines the vision for the sector including our asks that we invite LCR Metro Mayor candidates to commit to as part of their campaign and planning for the future of the Liverpool City Region and our communities that live here.

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:

**A Healthy VCFSE Ecosystem**

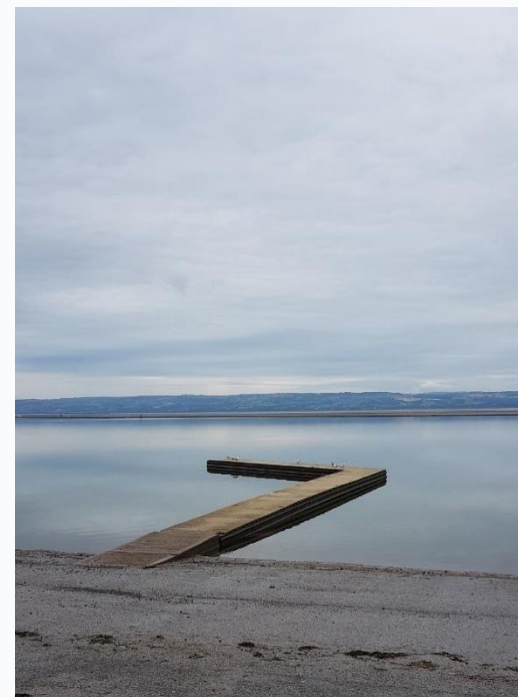
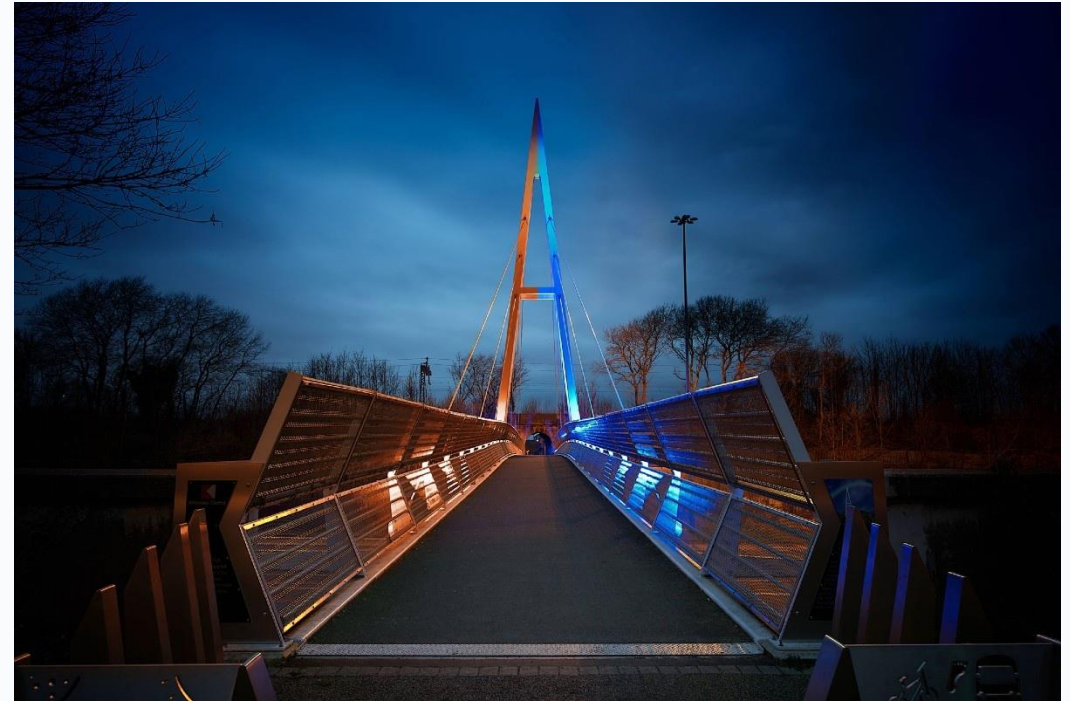
**An Economy That Works for All**

**Championing Our Communities**

## Next Steps

An accompanying manifesto delivery plan will be developed following this manifesto which will outline **how** the sector will aim to work with the Combined Authority and other public sector organisations to achieve our vision for the sector.

This will be essential for providing a coherent roadmap with some clear, smart actions to make sure that progress is being made against the manifesto, and ultimately providing genuine change to build a compassionate, caring, and successful City Region.





## 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 our public sector colleagues.

Whilst it is great to see that the VCFSE sector has been recognised and celebrated for its significant response during the pandemic, the sector has done so at a cost with reduced capacity, depleted resources, and increasing levels of workforce fatigue. Demand on the sector will rise as the aftermath of the pandemic becomes clearer with a mental health crisis that has been bubbling beneath the surface, an economic recession likely to impact most on our already vulnerable communities, and the impact of furlough coming to an end later this year.

A VCFSE ecosystem describes the complex web of relationships, networks and geographies that make up the sector and the way this structure enables organisations to mobilise, thrive, connect and work together to address need and support communities.

In order to have a successful recovery in which people and communities are supported and lifted upwards in light of these future challenges, we need a healthy and thriving VCFSE sector. Therefore, we must build upon the good practice we have witnessed throughout the past year to develop a sustainable and resilient VCFSE ecosystem that can continue to respond to need throughout



the challenges to come, working together with the public and private sector to drive forward a truly people-focused recovery.

The asks below summarise what we want to see for the sector in order to build a healthy, sustainable, and cutting-edge VCFSE ecosystem in the Liverpool City Region.

### 1. Investment into the VCFSE sector

**£25m VCFSE Sector Resilience and Capacity Fund:** 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 for cross-sector investment to develop the sector's long-term capacity, resilience and to adapt to new ways of working.

**An LCR Community Levy:** Scope out the feasibility of a 1% Community Levy that is applied to all £1m plus public sector tenders to invest into VCFSE delivery and the role of the sector as drivers of social value.

## 2. Developing a sustainable and resilient VCFSE sector

**LCR Social Value Alliance:** Maximise public sector generation of social value through collaboration with the VCFSE sector and develop an LCR Social Value strategy that recognises the fundamental role of the sector in generating social value for communities.

**Minimum three-year contracts and grant programmes:** Work closely with commissioners and funders to influence for sustainable, flexible and long-term investment with greater support for smaller and diverse VCFSE organisations to be more involved within tendering processes.

**Enhance the stability and viability of the sector:** Support the business continuity and resilience of the VCFSE sector beyond funding with support in areas such as strategic planning, measuring impact, workforce resilience and VCFSE access to public sector training.

**Investment in VCFSE strategic and equalities networks and roles across the City Region:** Ensure the VCFSE sector has the capacity and resource to fully participate in policy and strategic decision making with continued representation on Combined Authority panels and boards.

## 3. Nurturing mature and collaborative working relationships

**Genuine collaboration for funding with greater transparency:** The sector as an equitable partner in collaboration with the Combined Authority for securing national funding, such as the Shared Prosperity fund, utilising the sectors rich knowledge and expertise in developing proposals and designing programmes that really work for communities.

**Agreed working arrangements:** Support from the Combined Authority to lobby alongside the sector nationally and sideways to ensure the voice of the sector and the needs of our communities are heard.

**Strengthen the role of VCFSE Mayoral Advisor:** Increase VCFSE connectivity within Combined Authority structures with an identified single point of contact for raising areas of interest, concerns, and ideas.

**Utilise sector data and insights to collaboratively respond to need:** Develop and refine data sharing protocols with the sector to improve service design and policy making that responds to the needs of our communities and to build the understanding of the value of the sector.



# An Economy That Works For All

“Inclusive economy” is a widely used term that describes an economic model in which economic growth is developed at a local level rather than in traditional models where growth trickles down to communities from the top, in some cases barely reaching them at all. When growth is generated locally, communities receive the full benefit of economic growth through access to better opportunities, improved health and wellbeing and reduced inequalities.

We want to develop a Liverpool City Region economy that works for all of us, no matter who you are or where you are, therefore we want to be guided by these inclusive economy principles of local growth to build a region where no one is left behind and everyone is treated fairly with equal access to opportunities.

At the core of a fairer and more equitable city region, we need to start really investing in our local communities, our people and in our local community organisations to build local, resilient economies and places. When we invest in our communities and community organisations, particularly our grassroots organisations, we are investing in supporting residents to thrive and empowering communities to develop solutions that are meaningful to them.

The VCFSE sector in LCR is extremely rich and diverse and is therefore well positioned to drive forward and embed local community economy principles by helping to build upon the strengths and assets of the sector. The sector is an employer and trainer, a provider of goods and services, improves health outcomes,

and brings in investment into communities, and the more we strengthen this role the more our communities will benefit.

We want to work closely with our public and private sector colleagues to embed this way of local economy building across the Liverpool City Region and solidify the role of the VCFSE sector as key drivers on this agenda, and our key asks to do this are the following:

## 4. The VCFSE sector as a key driver for growing local economies

**Communities, communities, communities:** Identify and unlock the potential of our community assets through developing a LCR VCFSE Inclusive Economy framework showcasing how investment in our diverse people, organisations and communities will help grow our local economies.

**Build a ‘bottom-up’ economic model:** Harness the true innovation and entrepreneurial spirit of our small, grassroots VCFSE organisations and enable them to have their voices heard within recovery and economic conversations.

**Grow community-based supply chains:** Prioritise purchasing from LCR social enterprises and charities and identify market gaps for developing this part of the VCFSE sector to build a stronger local economy that reinvests in local communities.

**Build on LCR’s economic partnership with the sector:** 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 investing into places, community organisations and people.

**Connect the wider sector to LCR's economic thinking and work:** The VS6 Partnership will act as a conduit to the Combined Authority to engage them with this work and help further strengthen our assets with the aim of giving communities and organisations more power to shape their own future.

## 5. Providing opportunities for all to build resilient communities with greater social and economic benefits

**Support VCFSE sector jobs:** Strengthen the recognition of the sector as a large employer within the City Region and locally, providing social and economic value through investing in and nurturing the talents and potential of our communities

**Create jobs and opportunities within the sector:** Provide attractive opportunities for young people to get involved in working and training in the VCFSE sector through the likes of the Kickstart scheme and explore opportunities through the Apprenticeship Levy.

## 6. Community approaches to improving digital inclusion

**An inclusive and connected City Region:** The VCFSE sector as a key partner in the development and delivery of the Combined Authority LCR Digital Strategy 2021-2023.

**Address fundamental exclusion with community approaches:** Funding for VCFSE led programmes that address financial and digital exclusion, digital poverty and develop digital skills.

**Supported blended VCFSE service delivery models:** Investment for the sector that reflects the pace at which the use of digital is advancing, particularly following the mass switch to online service delivery during the pandemic, including digital infrastructure for the sector.

## 7. Building upon the legacy of volunteering

**A coherent City Region volunteering offer:** Recognise the economic and social value of the volunteer movement by supporting the development of a City Region VCFSE Volunteer Management System. The system will streamline the co-ordination of volunteering whilst maintaining strong links to national prescribed infrastructures, building upon the fantastic local infrastructure volunteer mobilisation response to COVID-19.

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

**Build our collective environmental ambitions:** Recognise and fortify the VCFSE sectors' role in achieving the City Region's green ambitions and aiding a green and inclusive recovery through VS6's representation on the LCR Climate Change Panel and reach into communities.

**Investment in Green Communities:** Develop a collaborative VCFSE narrative for this agenda linking into social value and planning how the sector can contribute and be supported to develop green communities, such as investing in skills, equipment, and accessible transport.





## 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 those we serve therefore we must use our collective voice to champion our communities.

The events and challenges over the past 12 months have exposed and exacerbated the existing inequalities and issues that exist throughout the country and the City Region. From movements highlighting gender inequalities to the worldwide exposure of structural racism and racial inequalities by Black Lives Matter, our sector plays a vital and central role in addressing the injustices our communities' experience.

COVID-19 has also revealed how those living with inequalities experience significantly disproportionate health outcomes. We know that those living in areas of high deprivation, those with multiple health conditions, learning disabilities, culturally diverse communities and people working in "lower-paid" occupations, amongst others, are more at risk of contracting and suffering the serious health consequences of COVID-19.

With the pandemic likely to have a long-term impact on our communities, now is the time to work collaboratively and inclusively to really tackle these long-standing inequalities, working in collaboration with the Combined Authority and linking in with work such as the Declaration of Intent on Race Equality, to champion and fight for our communities.

\*Protected characteristics include: Age, gender reassignment, being married or in a civil partnership, being pregnant or on maternity leave, disability, race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

There are, however, some positives to come from the pandemic, most significantly the increased sense of community cohesion, kindness and generosity of our family, friends, neighbours, and strangers all of which provide the perfect opportunity to harness and build upon to create a City Region where everyone feels safe, respected and at home.

### 9. An equal and diverse VCFSE city region for all

**Support an inclusive City Region:** 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, where all individuals with protected characteristics are able to thrive free from discrimination.\*

**The VCFSE sector as good employers:** VCFSE organisations to aspire to sign up to the City Region Fair Employment Charter, with a joint exercise with public sector partners to explore the barriers to voluntary sector implementation.

**Connect communities through VCFSE networks:** Genuine inclusivity, engagement and co-production with minoritized communities through collaboration with grass-roots organisations across the region, with dedicated resource for their work.

**Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic VCFSE infrastructure review:** Work with the Combined Authority to review how we can address the gap in specialist infrastructure networks across LCR to tackle racial inequalities across the region.

**Champion community voices:** Further the reach of the Fairness and Social Justice Advisory Board to ensure that all decision making is underpinned by social justice and fairness, and that community voices and experiences are reflected in all strategic conversations.

## 10. A sustainable, affordable and inclusive food plan for the City Region

**Tackle food and fuel inequalities:** A whole system approach to addressing food insecurity, including fuel and transport insecurity, with the VCFSE as a lead partner on this work building upon the recommendations from the VCFSE Food Affordability and Sustainability assembly.

## 11. The role of the sector in health system transformation and reducing health inequalities

**Defined and equitable role within health and care transformation:** A consistent approach to involvement of the sector in strategic and operational thinking, with an agreement about how the sector can support systems to create happy, healthy communities.

**Establish clear referral pathways:** 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.

## 12. A whole-system approach to mental health, emotional wellbeing and resilience

**Collaborative mental health response:** Ensure there is a joined-up response to the mental health crisis working in partnership with the public,

private and VCFSE sectors, involving people with lived experience with a focus on the immediate and long-term challenges.

**Mental health VCFSE investment:** The VCFSE sector must be part of any opportunities or planned investment into mental health and emotional wellbeing, recognising the sector's role and strengths in early intervention, mental health treatment and building healthy, resilient communities.

**Children and young people's resilience:** Close working and investment into the VCFSE sector to ensure that young people are supported to be mentally healthy and resilient.

**Workforce training and resilience:** 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.



# VS6 is a partnership of support organisations working with the 8,600 voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) groups operating across our Liverpool City Region

## 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 week<sup>1</sup>

## 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

W: [www.vs6partnership.org.uk](http://www.vs6partnership.org.uk)

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

<sup>1</sup> *Source: Measuring the size and scope of the VCS in Liverpool City Region (Liverpool John Moores University: 2015)*

**VS6** – Working together to build  
a stronger Liverpool City Region

