



VCSE
EAST SUSSEX ALLIANCE



The East Sussex Voluntary, Community & Social Enterprise Alliance: *Our Journey So Far*

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VCSE
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Introduction

Our East Sussex VCSE Alliance (the Alliance) was founded to change and improve things:

- **Change and improve** the way those of us in the VCSE sector work together.
- **Change and improve** the way those who fund or partner with the VCSE sector relate to it.
- **Change and improve** the lives of people and communities locally.

It's been two years since we launched in 2021 and this is **'Our Journey So Far'**.

We believe there is something special about the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector. The vision and mission that drives our work. The closeness we have to the communities and people we serve. The many thousands of local people who volunteer and work in the local charities and groups that we reflect and represent, making a difference in the county's neighbourhoods and communities. The value for money and extraordinary social value we bring to local services and support.

This document provides an introduction to the Alliance: who we are, our purpose, vision and mission. It highlights the principles of **collaboration, accountability and generous leadership** which our members are committed to.

Our journey in making the Alliance a reality has involved changing our thinking and our behaviour. We have lived by the mantra **'be the change you want to see'** and by doing so have helped change and improve life in East Sussex. We are working together and with our partners in ways that were inconceivable just a few short years ago. We're collaborating to tackle issues such as loneliness, the cost-of-living crisis and health inequalities and, we believe, are changing lives because of this.

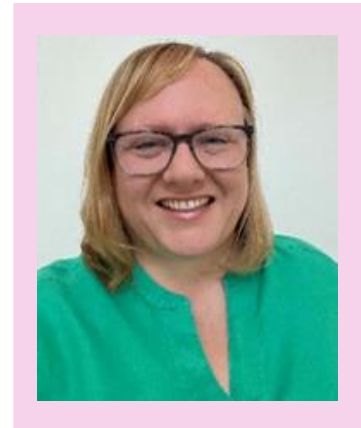
We describe this work here and introduce our priorities for 2024 onwards. We've made some changes to better deliver on this work and to reflect the growth and diversification of our membership and have set these out. Finally, this document demonstrates how we intend to continue to tackle inequality and injustice by developing trusting and strategic relationships.

The Alliance is the VCSE sector **coming together with a commitment to speak as one voice**. We are committed to promoting the importance of our sector, the unique reach and experience we bring, and the vital role and potential that exists locally. We do this because we believe it and evidence the truth of it. We do this because **with the VCSE at the heart of life in East Sussex our citizens have better lives**.

A message from our chair

Jennifer Twist, Chief Executive of Care for the Carers, was elected as Chair of the Alliance in 2023. Bringing over 15 years of experience of speaking up with and for carers to achieve strategic change.

Jennifer has over a decade of experience as a VCSE representative on many strategic Boards with the NHS, local authorities and cross sector partnerships.



Jennifer says

“I’m very proud that my organisation has been a member of the Alliance from the start and of the distance that we as Alliance members have travelled together. It is a significant achievement that the sector voice is now much more recognised by our statutory partners and that we are moving more to setting the agenda in our strategic dialogues with decision makers. I’m committed to this way of working and I firmly believe that it enables us to better represent the communities we each serve and to find strategic and practical solutions that make a real difference to peoples’ lives locally.

It is testament to the commitment of its members that the Alliance is always pushing forward for our communities. I also believe there remain significant opportunities to maximise our collective potential and share the extensive expertise within the Alliance. It is a privilege to follow in the footsteps of John Routledge, the Alliance's first Chair. His expertise and insight have been instrumental in the Alliance's development and we thank him for his leadership.”

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jennifer". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned to the left of the printed name.

Jennifer Twist, Chair, East Sussex VCSE Alliance
Chief Executive, Care for the Carers

About us

All members are active participants and commit to operate according to the following three principles:

Collaboration

Accountability

Generous Leadership



Our Purpose

We have come together with a commitment to speak as one voice, to influence and promote the importance of the VCSE sector, to increase our influence and trust amongst partners.



Our Vision

To have created an ecosystem where services are designed, commissioned and delivered in true collaboration between the VCSE and statutory partners for the benefit of our communities and wider voluntary sector.



Our Mission

We will tackle inequality and injustice in society by developing our strategic relationships and working with statutory partners to empower people and communities to have control of their own lives and ensure equality of access to our services for everyone.

Our members as of October 2023

The Alliance is made up of twenty of the county's VCSE organisations, working together with a commitment to speak as one voice. Members have agreed a framework to work collaboratively together and with other partners.



Our journey so far: 2021-2023

1. 2021

- Grant agreement with East Sussex County Council (ESCC) to fund the Alliance for 3 years. 15 founder organisations represent the sector across East Sussex

January 2022

- **East Sussex Vision Support** join the Alliance

March 2022

- First East Sussex Commissioning Workshop - held in partnership with VCSE and ESCC leaders

3. July 2022

- Members agree six key priorities to progress the Alliance Development Programme
- **Diversity Resource International** join the Alliance

August 2022

- **Brighton Women's Centre** join the Alliance

5. January 2023

- Alliance bids farewell to existing Chair and welcomes Jennifer Twist, CEO of Care for the Carers as Chair
- Alliance partners in multi-agency Loneliness & Social Isolation Stewardship Steering Group to tackle loneliness across East Sussex

February 2023

- **Wave Active** join the Alliance
- An Alliance collaborative partnership bid wins funding for a social prescribing service to support young Ukrainians

April 2023

- Members workshop focusses on enhancing Alliance governance, membership and external relationships

2. April 2022

- Alliance Development Officer starts
- *Maps and Dreams: Preparing for Tomorrow:* Alliance annual conference takes place
- Alliance members collaborate in a funded NHS/VCSE Pilot Programme, supporting vulnerable people at risk of hospital admission

May 2022

- Members participate in IVAR's Connecting Health Communities Programme tackling health inequalities
- **Warming up the Homeless** join the Alliance

4. November 2022

- Second Commissioning Workshop
- First edition of the Alliance newsletter published

December 2022

- **Little Gate** join the Alliance

6. July 2023

- Updated Alliance Membership Structure - 'Alliance Associate' level introduced, to increase wider participation in Alliance
- Workshop 1 of the two-year ESCC/VCSE Alliance co-chaired 'Commissioning Excellence Programme' takes place

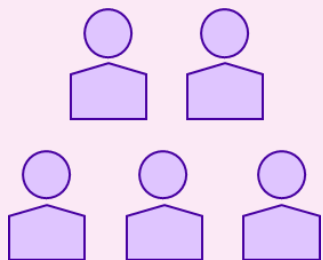
September 2023

- Working groups formed to develop 3 key Alliance priorities and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion governance workstream

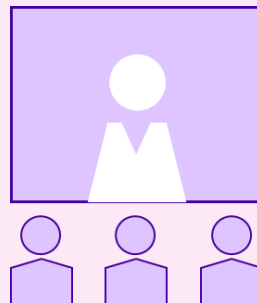
October 2023

- 2nd Commissioning Excellence Programme workshop takes place

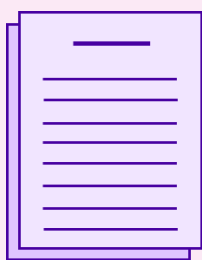
Our journey so far: in numbers



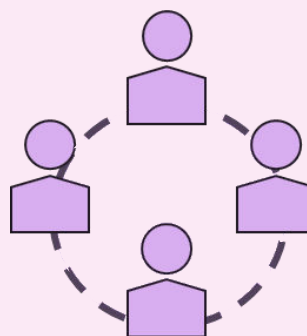
20 Alliance members



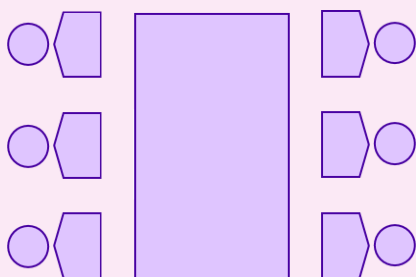
20 Alliance member meetings



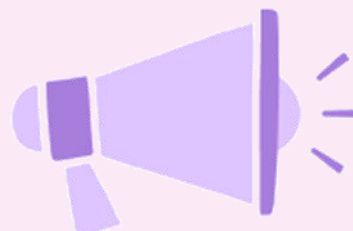
7 position papers published, including 45 recommendations



10 active task and finish groups






19 multi-agency meetings co-chaired by the Alliance



Alliance representation on over 60 Boards, Partnerships, Programmes and Steering Groups across East Sussex.

Our priorities for 2024

The Alliance agreed the following key priorities in 2023:

	Financial Inclusion and Cost of Living
	Social Prescribing
	Sector Resilience

Alliance members have formed working groups to lead on and progress activity on the following three areas of work:

Financial Inclusion and Cost of Living: strategic focus, considering steps to address the causes of financial exclusion, adopting a collaborative approach to commissioning money advice services and reviewing training and information available to staff and members of the public on the range of welfare information, support and benefits available.

Social Prescribing: ensuring social prescribing services are accessible to all, consistent and recognised within the healthcare system as proactive and preventative services, with a recognised and valued workforce and ecosystem. Services will have a positive and lasting impact on peoples' lives, health and wellbeing and help tackle health inequalities through empowering and enabling individuals and communities.

Sector Resilience: understanding East Sussex's resilience position, reviewing commissioning, asset transfer and external funding and investment opportunities, our place within local VCSE networks and programmes and developing our strategic position with our statutory partners.

In addition, the following functions and associated work streams are the golden threads, running through all Alliance activity:

Governance, Influencing and Best Practice

- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion - to include young people
- Climate Change and Sustainability
- The pan-Sussex VCSE Leaders Alliance
- Associate Networks - engaging with the wider sector

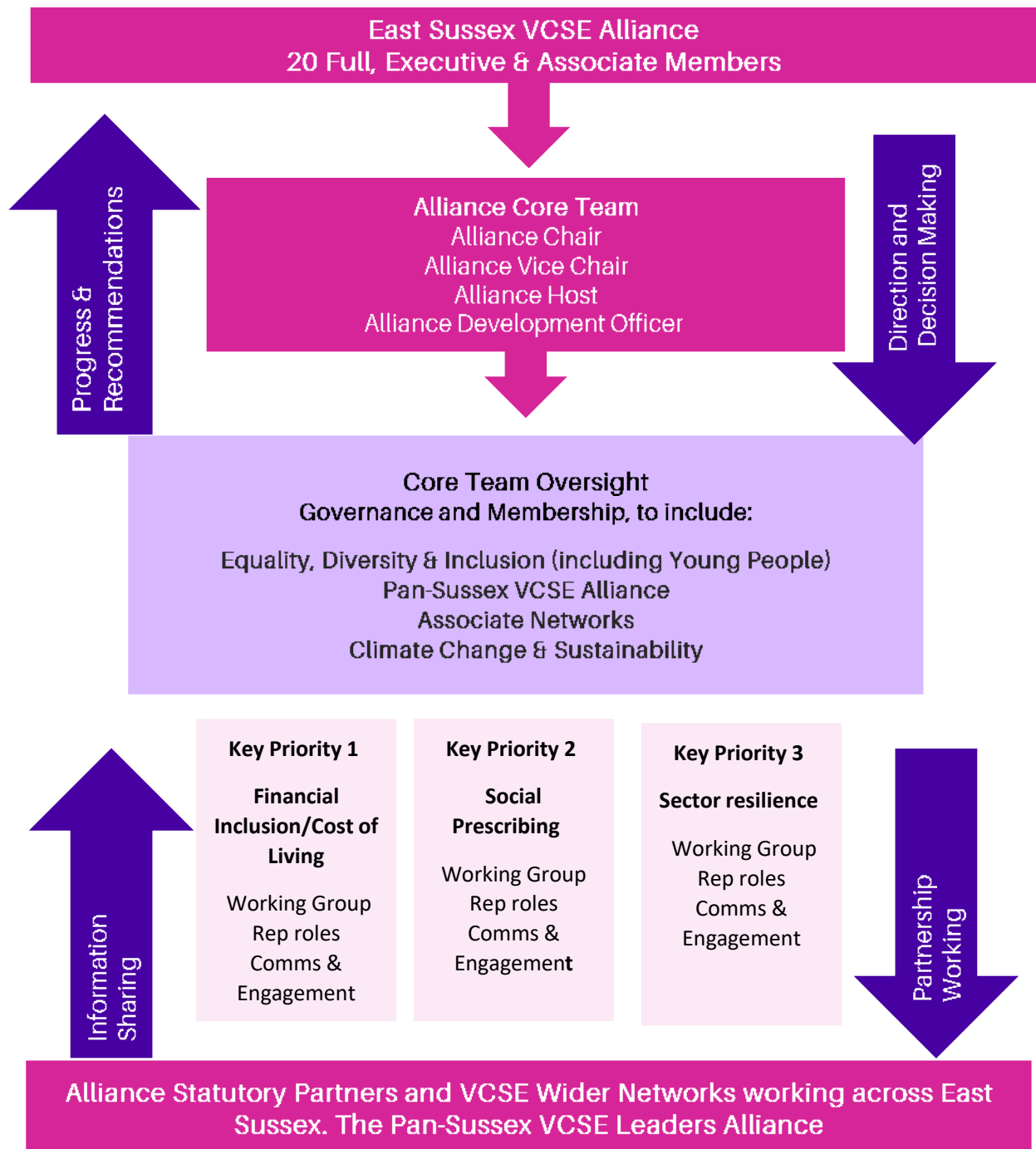
Alliance: roles and relationships

The Alliance has updated its membership structure to now include three levels of membership:

Full Member, Executive Member and Alliance Associate - more information about each of these can be found on the next page.

These levels of membership provide expertise and strategic direction, support collaboration across members and enable wider VCSE participation across East Sussex.

The diagram below reflects the Alliance structure, demonstrating how the Alliance provides a mechanism to develop each priority, collaborate and information share with the wider VCSE sector and external partners.



Membership structure

The following three levels of membership define the commitment, expertise and capacity needed to deliver on our three key priorities and governance work strands.

Alliance members have formed working groups, as shown below, to deliver on our programmes of work in 2024.

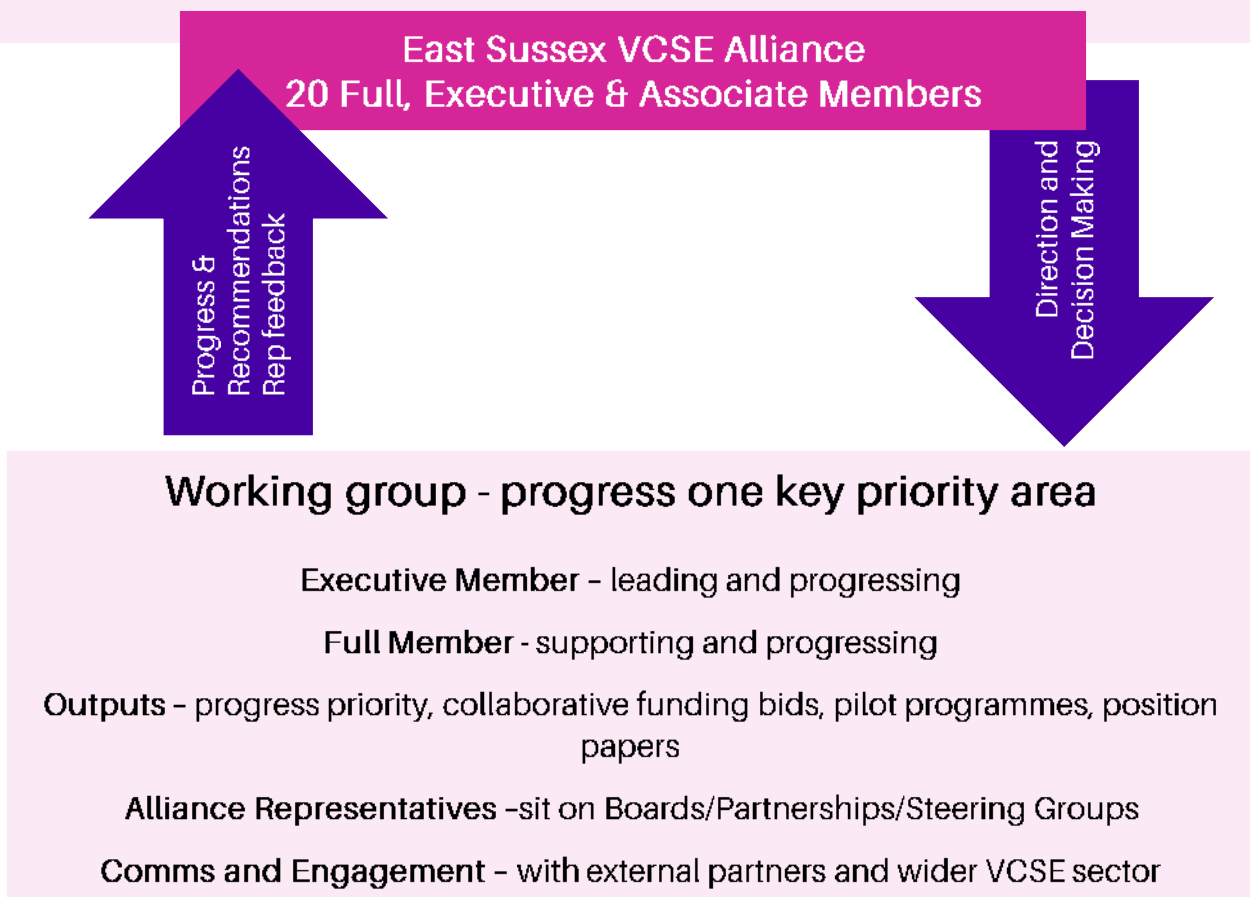
Full Membership - operational delivery: drive forward key priorities through strategic relationships, collaboration and participation in partnership working to provide insight, concerns and opportunities to enable positive change and support a priority area.

Sitting under Full membership, is an executive group, who will lead on key programmes of work:

Executive Membership - strategic delivery and oversight: drive systems change, influence, lead on one key priority area and coordinate partnership working between VCSE leaders, statutory partners, VAs and wider VCSE sector.

Alliance Associate Network - relationship building and the wider VCSE: Members commit to its principle of 'Generous Leadership', by driving effective links to share expertise, opportunities and learning. Strengthen the VCSE voice by linking to the wider sector, expanding local networks and increasing partnerships, collaboration, diversity and inclusion.

Any VCSE organisation working in East Sussex can apply to be an Alliance Associate.



Alliance activity: Collaboration

Population Health Management Development Pilot

The Alliance works on Population Health Management (PHM) in partnership with the NHS, public services and the VCSE sector. It's a collaborative way of working to provide better care and support for individuals, by designing more joined-up and sustainable health and care services. It identifies the crucial role of communities, local people and the voluntary sector to meet the support needs of communities.

Population Health Management aims to:

- Improve physical and mental health outcomes
- Promote wellbeing and reduce health inequalities across the local community
- Bring a specific focus on the wider determinants of health
- Strengthen collaboration and multi-disciplinary working
- Build relationships with local networks of support to deliver personalised care

As part of our work on this, Alliance members collaborated in a 20-week PHM learning programme alongside partners from the NHS, ESCC and the Foundry (a GP practice based in Lewes) to identify how to meet PHM aims. Working in partnership, partners analysed patient data and VCSE Alliance members provided insight and expertise in relation to providing non-clinical support to people within the GP area.

From the analysis, partners agreed a cohort of patients for a pilot PHM project, due to start in 2024. 300+ elderly, frail people, registered at the Foundry GP practice, were identified as being at risk of emergency hospital admission due to falls and other non-clinical needs such as social isolation and loneliness.

Next steps

As a result of the 20-week study, the Alliance developed a pilot proposal, with VCSE members collaborating with a wide range of partners across the NHS, ESCC and GP network.

The pilot proposal will fund a new, community-based role, which will coordinate the network of organisations and work with local groups and the Foundry GP Practice to focus on the needs of 300 patients.

The role will improve and facilitate partnership working with long-established voluntary and local groups, as well as community organisations who have existing relationships with The Foundry.

Alliance organisations and their networks will provide social and non-medical support needs, with the aim of reducing social isolation, the risk of falls and emergency admissions.

The pilot aims to improve access to local, non-clinical care for the patient cohort, with the focus on better outcomes for patients such as reduced hospital admissions and reduced loneliness.

What difference will this make?

The pilot will test the best way to meet the clinical, non-clinical and social support needs of 300+ Foundry patients.

It will pilot approaches, such as developing non-clinical meetings which could feed into Foundry appointments or clinical meetings, or vice versa, according to the patient's clinical and/or social needs.

Ways of capturing and measuring improved quality of life for the cohort in the short and long term will also be explored as part of the pilot.

Alliance activity: Accountability

Commissioning Excellence Programme

The two-year 'Commissioning Excellence Programme', hosted by the Alliance, aims to:

- Improve communication between statutory commissioners and VCSE organisations
- Build trusting relationships as peers, sharing skills and expertise from different perspectives
- Explore different approaches to funding, contract and delivery models
- Acknowledge and take accountability for addressing the 'culture shift' needed to achieve change

East Sussex County Council (ESCC) and the NHS both commission, or buy, public services from organisations within our Alliance and across the VCSE sector in East Sussex. Alliance members deliver key services to the people of East Sussex on behalf of our statutory partners. Our services support the health and wellbeing of communities across East Sussex, and we also contribute vital insight and intelligence on the needs of local people.

The Alliance's 2021 position paper 'Commissioning Principles', identified a set of commissioning principles which we wanted to address with our partners. In response, commissioners and leaders from ESCC and the NHS agreed that there was a need to engage with the Alliance around commissioning VCSE services, and the Alliance jointly hosted two workshops in 2022 with ESCC. The overriding consensus from all parties was that there was a need for more joint work, joint accountability and a joint approach to VCSE commissioning. This led to us, in partnership with ESCC, setting up a two year 'Commissioning Excellence Programme' in 2023. We are hosting the ESCC-funded programme, with leaders from across ESCC, the NHS and the VCSE sector taking part.

The aim of the programme is to develop East Sussex as a centre of excellence for VCSE commissioning, through VCSE-led cross-sector collaboration and accountability. So far, participants have discussed their experiences of VCSE commissioning, including any issues with the current process that need to be resolved, identified opportunities and questioned what 'being brave' could look like for all partners working together in East Sussex.

Next steps

Further workshops are planned over the next 18 months. Partners across the commissioning landscape will explore themes such as:

- 'Transparent Bravery' - exploring examples of good practice and what we can learn to become braver
- Bravery in service specifications - how services are developed, incorporating provider and client coproduction and codesign
- How can we apply the concept of Transparent Bravery moving forwards

What difference will this make?

- VCSE will be a strategic partner, not just a 'consultation' partner, accountable for helping to agree issues at system level
- VCSE organisations will have a central role in shaping, producing and delivering future innovative models
- More opportunities will be provided across the broad spectrum of the VCSE sector in delivering public services to the communities of East Sussex
- The work will deliver contract and funding certainty, addressing the short-term nature of funding to the VCSE sector

Alliance activity: Generous Leadership

Connected People and Places - Stewardship approach to tackling loneliness

Tackling loneliness requires collective action. No single organisation, sector or segment of society has all of the solutions to this complex societal and individual problem. As part of Partnership Plus, the VCSE Alliance is central to the crucial collective action required to deliver change.

Partnership Plus brings together senior management from ESCC, the NHS, District and Borough Councils and the VCSE Alliance and is co-chaired by the Chair of the Alliance and the ESCC Director of Adult Social Care & Health.

The group has identified the reduction of loneliness and social isolation as a key issue to tackle. With funding secured by ESCC for two years, Partnership Plus is overseeing the development of a stewardship approach to tackling loneliness in East Sussex. Recommendations from the previous 'Connected People and Places' project will be progressed as part of this work.

Following the principles of generous leadership, the Partnership Plus group agreed that an Alliance organisation would be the host to lead on the stewardship approach. A key function of the stewardship host is to guide and facilitate system approaches which contribute to the overall intended aim of tackling loneliness and enabling the connectedness of people and places to flourish.

This work ensures the assets and insights of multiple specialist VCSE advice providers across East Sussex contribute to improved access to services for residents of East Sussex, by:

- The selection of partner organisations for **wider evidence gathering** throughout the project
- Provision for **delivery at a neighbourhood level by local and micro-organisations**
- **Specialist delivery** to ensure people specifically at risk of loneliness and social isolation are supported through trusted and knowledgeable partners

Next steps

A VCSE Alliance member is hosting the stewardship role and is in the process of recruiting staff to progress the programme.

The host will lead on the coordination and collaboration of multiple agencies and organisations working across East Sussex.

They will ensure the talents and capacity of partners are harnessed through generous leadership, collaborative approaches and strengths-based working.

What difference will this make?

- The ultimate aim is to reduce loneliness and improve the connectedness of people in East Sussex
- The host will identify organisations working with those most affected by social isolation
- It will reach out and engage with people to understand their experiences and what community and connection looks like to them
- The expectation is that by creating the right conditions and a better-connected system, it will lead to the change needed to reduce loneliness and isolation for residents of East Sussex

Alliance Position Papers and influencing

Alliance Position Papers

Since it began the Alliance has published seven Position Papers, that have been circulated to external partners and stakeholders across the public and VCSE sectors. These papers crystallise the Alliance's position, provide a set of recommendations to partners and outline the process by which the Alliance thinks they should happen. All Position Papers can be found on our website.

- Community Hubs
- Commissioning Principles
- Commissioning Principles - update
- Anchor Institutions
- Perspectives on locality and neighbourhood working
- Cost of Living Crisis and Financial Exclusion
- VCSE Perspectives on Social Prescribing

Alliance influencing

Below are two examples of how the Alliance has influenced changed through its representation on cross-sector steering groups.

A sample of other Boards, groups and partnerships represented by Alliance members can be found overleaf.

Multi-agency Financial Inclusion Steering Group

Following on from the publication of the 'Cost of Living and Financial Inclusion Position Paper', an Alliance member co-hosts the multi-agency Financial Inclusion Steering Group.

The group was established in 2022 to share cross-sector knowledge and develop collaborative approaches to service delivery to mitigate the impact of the cost-of-living crisis.

The group review and respond to national and local policy, undertake short-term projects to address the immediate impact of the crisis and implement longer term strategic development and planning.

Sussex Social Prescribing Strategy Steering Group

Social prescribing is a way for NHS professionals to refer people to local, non-clinical services to support their health and wellbeing.

The Alliance's Position Paper 'VCSE Perspectives on Social Prescribing' was shared with the Sussex Social Prescribing Strategic Steering Group. As a result, an Alliance member now sits on this group to represent and influence.

The group aims to develop a shared understanding of current social prescribing provision outcomes and impact and to develop a vision for Social Prescribing in Sussex.

Boards and partnerships

Alliance members represent the wider VCSE sector at numerous boards, partnerships and steering groups across East Sussex, in partnership with public sector leaders.

They provide significant, constructive and independent input and provide a diverse VCSE voice to demonstrate the role and value of the VCSE sector as an equal, experienced and quality partner in commissioning, designing and delivering services for communities across the county.

Multi-agency Partnership Plus (Alliance Chair co-chairs)
Multi-agency Financial Inclusion Steering Group (Alliance member co-chairs)
Integrated Care System Health and Care Assembly
Integrated Care System Children and Young Person's Health Oversight Board
Early Intervention Partnership Board
Sussex Community Transformation Governance Board
Safeguarding Community Network
Sussex Health and Care Partnership - Population Involvement Panel
Connecting Health Communities Steering Group
East Sussex Health & Care Partnership
Youth Infrastructure Forum
East Sussex Welfare Benefits & Debt Advice Steering Group
Working with People and Communities Panel
Loneliness, Social Isolation and Stewardship Group
Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Pan-Sussex Social Prescribing Strategy Steering Group
East Sussex Energy Partnership
Sussex VCSE Leaders Alliance
Mental Health Network
Pan-Sussex Strategy Steering Group
East Sussex Energy Partnership
Spaces Programme Board
East Sussex SEND Strategy Governance Chairperson
ESCC Public Health - Health Determinants Research Steering Group
NHS Occupational Therapy Workforce project
East Sussex Community Oversight Board
East Sussex Migration Partnership
Community Networks Strategic Partners

Feedback from our partners

“At East Sussex County Council, we hugely value our work with VCSE Alliance. The Alliance’s open and honest engagement has built trust between organisations and with our communities and has improved the way we all collaborate and co-produce across sectors. We see it making a real difference in both our partnership meetings and in the wide range of projects and programmes that are changing how we collaborate, commission and deliver services against our shared priorities. From supporting residents with the cost of living, addressing loneliness and isolation, tackling health inequalities, and striving towards greater inclusivity, diversity and sustainability, we are really proud of the progress we are making with the VCSE Alliance and we look forward to strengthening our partnership to face future challenges and opportunities together.”

Becky Shaw, Chief Executive East Sussex County Council

Feedback from our members

“Age UK East Sussex is one of the East Sussex VCSE Alliance's founding members and we are wholeheartedly committed to the values and principles that bring us together to make a positive difference to the lives of everyone in the county. Collaborating with our Alliance partners to highlight the needs of people locally, address shared concerns and co-design solutions just simply makes sense and demonstrates the sector at its best. For us, it's the most effective way we can achieve our Mission to make East Sussex a great place to grow older.”

Steve Hare, Chief Executive, Age UK East Sussex

“Sussex Community Development Association (SCDA) is one of the active early members of the East Sussex VCSE Alliance with a commitment to ensuring collaborative working to build on the strengths of the East Sussex VCSE sector and to get the best for local residents. We experience the value of that collaboration in understanding community needs, stewardship of actions to address need and genuine joint working to deliver contracts for services. All contributing to SCDA's aim of making a difference in our community.”

Penny Shimmin, Chief Executive, Sussex Community Development Association

“Hastings Voluntary Action (HVA) value being a member of the Alliance as we believe our connections at both a county and sub-regional level are and will become increasingly important. But on a personal note, the Alliance brings together sector leaders to support one another, share issues and trends during a particularly challenging period.”

Steve Manwaring, Director, Hastings Voluntary Action

Interested in joining the Alliance?

Additional organisations may join the Alliance at any time if they meet the following criteria:

- 1.They are independently constituted community, voluntary or social enterprise organisations;
- 2.They work to support beneficiaries and communities living across the county of East Sussex
- 3.They are willing to be an active participant in partnership activities of the Alliance and work with the Alliance agreed principles of Collaborative working, Accountability and Generous Leadership.

For more information or to request an Alliance Application form, please contact the Alliance at esvcsealliance@escv.org.uk

Contact the East Sussex VCSE Alliance:

For further information and general enquiries, please contact esvcsealliance@escv.org.uk

To contact the Chair, Vice-Chair or Alliance Development Officer please use the details below:

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