



Bury Memorandum of Understanding

between the Bury
VCSE Sector and the
Bury Health & Public
Sector

2025 - 2028



Introduction

This is a multi-agency collaboration agreement between:

- The Bury Health & Public Sector* represented by the members of the Bury Integrated Delivery Collaborative.
- The Bury Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Sector** represented by the Bury VCSE Leaders Group,

Whilst this Memorandum of Understanding is not a legally non-binding document, it is based on a shared principle of mutual trust, working together, and sharing responsibility. This memorandum of understanding aims to develop further how we work together to improve outcomes for Burys' communities and citizens.

The commitments of this memorandum of understanding are co-dependent and we must address all commitments of this agreement to achieve our mutual aspirations.

* When we talk about the Health & Public Sector, this includes the members of the Bury Integrated Delivery Collaborative - Bury Council, NHS Greater Manchester, Northern Care Alliance NHS Foundation Trust, Pennine Care NHS Foundation Trust, Persona, Bury GP Federation, Persona and BARDOC.

**When we talk about the VCSE sector in Bury, we mean voluntary organisations, community groups, the community work of faith groups, and those social enterprises where profits will be reinvested in their social purpose.



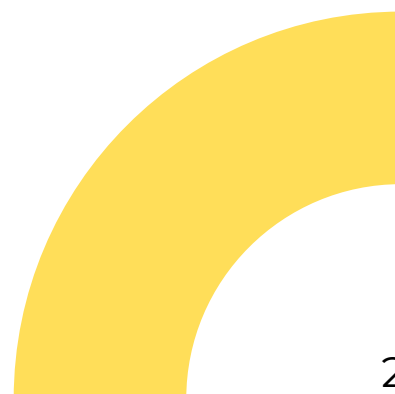
Background

Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise organisations (VCSE) have been integral to the communities of Bury for over 100 years. Over 1200 VCSE groups and organisations deliver a range of activities and services across the borough. The VCSE sector is embedded in Bury and has extensive reach into local communities, whether identified via place, identity, or interest.

VCSE sector services and support are co-dependent with 'public services' and should, therefore, be an integral part of the planning and resourcing of statutory and state-run services. To realise the benefits of collaboration with these VCSE organisations, they must be recognised as essential and equal partners and providers in strategic and delivery planning, including the commissioning process, instead of welcoming optional extras.

This Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) builds on existing commitments at a national level, including the Civil Society Covenant and updates to the Procurement Act. Statutory Integrated Care System (ICS) guidance also states that "All Integrated Care Boards (ICB) should have a formal agreement to work with the VCSE sector in governance and decision-making" (Working in Partnership with People and Communities: Statutory guidance, NHS, 2023)

Also, at a Greater Manchester level, both from the GM Accord, an agreement between the sector, the GMCA (and its local authorities), and the Greater Manchester Integrated Care Partnership, and subsequent work, including the GM Commissioning Framework and the Fair Funding Protocol.



Enablers and Partnership Working

For the MoU to be meaningful, there are several critical enabling areas that support broader partnership working and the practical delivery of the ambitions within this MoU.

These include:

- Acknowledgement that there are power imbalances within relationships between the sectors. Taking active and transparent steps to consider these to build trust and ensure progress as equal partners.
- Acknowledging that a single system approach to enabling the best outcomes for local people may need change in how services are delivered. Traditional organisational boundaries should not be a barrier to this process.
- Taking a Bury first approach. Utilising the skills, experience and expertise within the locality and broader VCSE sector before bringing in external agencies.
- Supporting spaces to deepen a shared understanding between the sectors by engaging in forums, networks, peer learning opportunities, shadowing and knowledge exchange schemes.
- When VCSE organisations are part of delivery, all partners should look at strengthening ways of working. Key to this includes:
 - communication and culture, ensuring all partners and their workforce feel valued and respected.
 - Improved data and intelligence sharing to improve planning, design and outcomes for residents.
- Skills development for all leaders in key areas, including, for example -
 - Health and public sector leaders gaining an understanding of the role and diversity of the VCSE sector.
 - VCSE leaders to understand and work through the commissioning process and systems.
- Recognising and capturing learning—ensuring time to reflect, recognise, and capture learning will be key to building best practices and strengthening the outcomes of this MoU system-wide.

Embed the importance of the VCSE sector to support co-design and co-production

At Greater Manchester and Bury levels, the sector is recognised as a core component of services and support to the public. A clear commitment to partnership is made with this MoU and via the Greater Manchester Accord, but it is not consistently reflected across the ICB in all areas or levels. In Bury, we have seen innovative and positive approaches to co-design and co-production. Nevertheless, to move forward, we need to ensure these principles are fully understood and recognised as distinct from consultation and engagement, and that they are consistently and fully implemented.

The key elements of the MoU to support this are:

- As partners, we acknowledge that not all services and activities can be genuinely co-designed or co-produced. However, where there is an opportunity to change or improve a service or influence policy, then it should be undertaken.
- Develop and implement a co-design/co-production charter for cross-sectoral working, outlining our commitment and providing guidance on our approach to service design and funding/commissioning.
- Ensure that the VCSE Sector leads or co-leads on agreed-upon workstreams where it has particular experience and knowledge, e.g., Social Prescribing, Long-Term Conditions, and end-of-life Care.
- The co-design and partnership delivery of programmes established to address key issues, which bring together partners to drive through collaboration and improve outcomes for residents.
- Ensure adequate timescales and resources are made available for creative and meaningful co-design with the sector and broader communities.
- Ensure the principles of any co-design/co-production charter are embedded into a service or commissioning lifecycle to support learning, evaluation, and ongoing constructive and transparent dialogue with providers.
- Include Bury system partners, infrastructure organisations and experts (both via position and lived experience) in co-leading the development and delivery of local training to the broader Workforce.

Ensuring that the voice of the VCSE sector and local communities is heard and valued in strategic governance

Appropriate voice and representation of the Sector and local communities enable many aspects of this MoU. Ultimately, ensuring this voice will support our partnership approach to tackling inequalities and inequities within the borough and addressing the social, environmental, and economic determinants of health and wellbeing.

This includes

- Ongoing involvement of the VCSE sector in the delivery, monitoring and future revisions of the Bury “Let's Do It Strategy” and the Bury Locality Plan.
- Ensure effective representation of the VCSE sector on relevant strategic and decision-making boards and groups in Bury.
- Ensure the VCSE Sector has the opportunity to lead / chair relevant boards and meetings where it has particularly relevant skills, knowledge and experience.
- Acknowledgement that for the VCSE sector to have the capacity to ensure their multi-agency partnership and network members are representative and accountable, there may be resource implications and a commitment to support this.

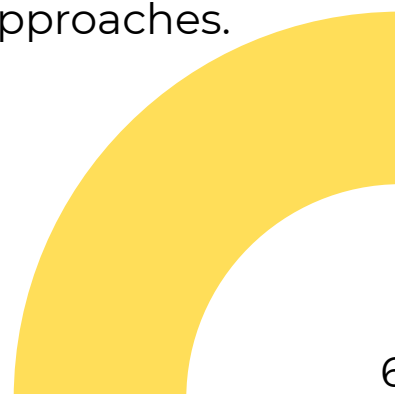


Ensuring a financially resilient VCSE Sector

Ensuring a financially resilient VCSE Sector with appropriate resources is a key enabler for the ambitions of this MoU and our broader challenges around addressing poverty, improving health and wellbeing, and tackling inequalities in Bury.

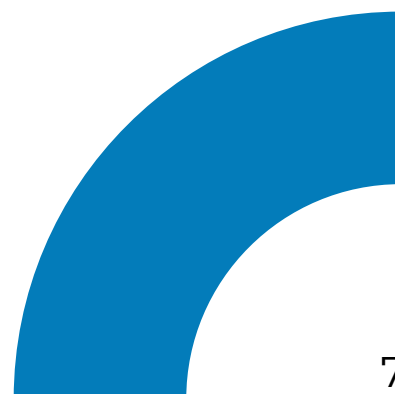
Key elements include:

- All partners seek to pooling budgets where available to enable the creation of a Bury Fund, which will utilise grants to support the VCSE sector and empower innovative delivery.
- Offering annual uplifts in contracts or grant payments in line with inflation / the real living wage (where it is financially viable).
- Enabling a minimum three-year term on contracts and grant funding, where financially viable.
- To ensure budget cuts are not passed disproportionately to the VCSE Sector.
- In line with the Procurement Act, ensuring prompt payment for delivery organisations and organisations in supply chains.
- Partners will aim to provide reasonable notice (ideally six months) in writing for all significant changes to contracts and grant funding agreements.
- Commissioners and public sector partners must be committed to considering the use of grant programmes in all cases, either alone or as one element within a more extensive programme.
- Where competitive tendering is the best methodology, commissioners should reflect the Procurement Act and systematically consider whether the size, timescales, requirements, or restrictions could unfairly disadvantage VCSE organisations capable of delivering the commission, reduce accessibility, or limit partnership, alliance, or consortium approaches.



Ensuring a financially resilient VCSE Sector

- Support Full Cost Recovery basis for new and existing funding agreements, contracts and grants to enable organisations to cover core costs.
- Explore what back-office support can be shared with VCSE organisations to improve delivery, e.g., software licensing to support enhanced reporting and data sharing.
- VCSE organisations recognise the need to be held accountable alongside other partners for their role in service delivery and the support that they offer residents. However, the reporting, monitoring and evaluation required from VCSE-held grants and contracts should be proportionate to the service delivered and the finances involved.



Our People

This element of the MoU supports a shared ambition for “One Workforce,” which meets the needs of Bury residents by ensuring high-quality services and support. This is enabled by a valued, recognised, supported, and empowered workforce.

Key elements include:

- In line with the Bury Volunteer Strategy, we will ensure the ‘freedom of choice’ principle is embedded into our volunteering practices. Volunteering must never exploit the volunteer or directly replace paid staff.
- As employers, we will support our employees' volunteering through Employee-Supported Volunteering schemes and flexible working practices.
- We will ensure that volunteers are supported and recognised as part of our workforce, e.g., by providing equal access to support, training, expenses, and reward and recognition celebrations.
- Build on existing programmes to support work experience, placement, and employment opportunities for the sector, as well as pathways for new and existing volunteers to enter employment (if they wish).
- System-wide workforce and organisational development support to provide human resources support and expertise to enable the actions of this MoU, e.g., where a service redesign may have TUPE considerations.
- Enable access and support to Workforce Wellbeing programmes—recognising the VCSE Sector Workforce, including volunteers, in our wellbeing provision, including mental health, and trauma response support.
- Strengthen the understanding of health and care leaders and the broader workforce on the voluntary sector's role, the motivations of volunteers, volunteering best practices, etc. and incorporate this into the development of the Bury One Workforce programme.

Embedding Social Value

Ensure social value is recognised alongside and as part of a mutually beneficial partnership beyond the current legislative framework and procurement instruments that currently dominate the conversations between commissioners and the VCSE sector. This will help facilitate the above activity while enabling VCSE organisations to express their intrinsic social value.

- Explore the potential development of a 1% Community Levy applied to all tenders exceeding £1m. The proceeds would be invested to support the sector's financial sustainability and ensure a broader social outcome objective.
- Social Value is an intrinsic part of the local VCSE sector and the activity it delivers. Ensure that any social value measurements put into place do not disproportionately impact the sector or its ability to tender.
- Recognising the “additionality” of the sector as part of service delivery. Consider the development of core cost grants/funding programmes to provide an opportunity to capture the “true” outcomes and social value of locally delivered VCSE services.
- All partnerships (VCSE and Public Sector) follow agreed-upon social value principles and lead by example where financially possible, e.g., local supply chains, good employment charters, paying a real living wage, etc.
- A consistent and proportionate approach to monitoring social value within delivery and commissioning.



The content of this Memorandum of Understanding has been developed following a series of structured conversations with key stakeholders during 2024-25, including VCSE organisations and representatives from the Bury Health and Social Care System and Bury Local Authority.

The final version of the Memorandum of Understanding has been shared for sign off by the Bury VCSE Leadership Group and Bury Locality Board and will be supported by an implementation plan co-designed with stakeholders across the System in Bury.

Memorandum of Understanding between the Bury VCSE Sector and the Bury Health and Public Sector.

Date:

Signatories:

Signed Name Position	Signed Name Position	Signed Name Position
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