

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

between the Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin Integrated Care System (ICS) and
the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector
in Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin

Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	3
2. Parties to this Agreement	3
3. Commencement Date and Term.....	3
4. Scope of the Agreement	3
5. Values and Principles	4
6. Current Opportunity	5
7. Leadership and Enabling Structures.....	7
7.1 STW VCSE Alliance	8
7.2 Established communications channels.....	9
7.3 Funding.....	9
8. Joint Commitments.....	11
9. Key Risks	12
10. Working Relationships	12
11. Wider Opportunities	13
12. Signatories	14

1. Introduction

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) sets out why the Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin (STW) Integrated Care System (ICS) values the role of the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector in improving health, social care and wellbeing in this area, and explains why we wish to work in partnership on shared ambitions.

In signing this MOU, each party will commit to building on the strength of existing relationships and work within a set of agreed principles.

2. Parties to this Agreement

This MOU has been drafted between the Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin ICS and the VCSE sector in Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin. This comprises independent charity organisations, community groups, service providers as well as infrastructure organisations.

It has been negotiated and is signed by the Chairs of the Shropshire Voluntary and Community Sector Assembly (VCSEA) and the VCSE Chief Officers Group (COG) in Telford and Wrekin, acting on behalf of the sector.

3. Commencement Date and Term

The parties will work collaboratively and respectively as part of an ongoing arrangement. The partnership will be reviewed annually; commencing 12 months after the agreement is signed, and will identify any changes to the landscape, confirm continuation and update shared objectives.

4. Scope of the Agreement

This MOU is based on a number of shared ambitions to which the parties commit as the outcomes of the partnership.

An important element in the following factors is the role of VCSE organisations. Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin ICS is fortunate in having a very active and diverse VCSE sector and this MOU sets out the value placed on the contribution of these organisations to the county's healthcare and how it intends to work with the sector.

These factors are:

- Improving health outcomes and reducing health inequalities for the people of Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin (STW);
- Maximising value from our financial resources and focusing on interventions that will make a major difference;
- Building successful partnerships to enable health improvements and create healthier communities;
- Effectively engaging and involving people and communities in the transformation of health and social care in STW;
- Increasing mutual learning and continuous professional development between the public and VCSE sectors;
- Effectively working across sectors to achieve a mutual vision of creating better services and providing greater support for the population of STW.

5. Values and Principles

In setting up an effective relationship, the following values will be honoured by both parties and mirror those set out in the NHS Constitution:

Patient focused and outcome-led

We will empower patients to engage in improving their overall quality of life and to ensure that no decisions will be made without fully involving them.

Locally focused

We will work through locality and neighbourhood groups to implement and deliver services that meet the needs of our communities.

Progressiveness

We will encourage innovation and continuous improvement, targeting our resources in the most effective way to ensure we offer value for money and equity for patients.

Accountability

We accept responsibility for our actions. We make and support business decisions through experience and good judgement and we will deliver against our promises.

Integrity and respect

We will act with honesty and transparency in all our actions. Effective partnerships are built on mutual understanding and an appreciation of the differences between partners.

Independence

We will act to ensure that the independence of VCSE organisations is recognised and supported. This includes its right to campaign against, comment and challenge the policies of public sector organisations regardless of any funding/other relationship which may exist.

Diversity and equality

We value a thriving civil society, bringing innovation and choice through a multitude of voices. We want to work together to achieve equality, respecting diversity and fairness for everyone.

Citizen empowerment

We will work together to deliver change that is built around communities and people, meeting their needs and reflecting their choices.

6. Current Opportunity

This MOU represents an opportunity for the statutory and VCSE sectors to implement new, innovative ways of working together to increase the health and wellbeing of the people who live and work in Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin.

By April 2022, when the ICS becomes a statutory organisation (the ICS NHS body), it is expected that Integrated Care Partnerships and the ICS NHS body will develop a formal agreement for engaging and embedding the VCSE sector in system level governance and decision-making arrangements, ideally by working through a VCSE alliance to reflect the diversity of the sector. These arrangements should build on the involvement of VCSE partners in relevant forums at place and neighbourhood level.

Each ICS will have a partnership at system level established by the NHS and local government as equal partners. The partnership will operate as a forum to bring partners – local government, NHS and others – together across the ICS area to align purpose and ambitions with plans to integrate care and improve health and wellbeing outcomes for their population. There is an expectation that representation from the VCSE sector will be members of the STW Partnership.

Although this thinking is not unique and applies across the whole of the health and social care system in England, it is still vital to start off on the right foot and to work together in the spirit of co-production from the offset.

Both sectors involved in this agreement share a mutual ambition to find new ways to collaborate and learn from each other, in order to improve outcomes and the quality of care. It also represents a commitment to reduce inequalities by engaging with harder to reach groups, mobilising communities to engage more and to positively impact behaviours.

There is widespread acknowledgement that the VCSE sector is already a major contributor to the current system and is delivering great work. It brings considerable resource as well as influence and is the best way of getting breadth of view for the county. There is an opportunity here to expand this influence, generate more innovation, and build on the sector's already extensive body of knowledge.

There are over 2,000 registered VCSE organisations in Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin and over 1,800 small, unregistered community groups and organisations. The sector is a significant part of the local economy, employing approximately 3% of the workforce, with between 21% and 30% of the VCSE providing health and wellbeing services.

Each of these organisations clearly have their own agendas, however many have health and wellbeing as a core element to their purpose. This may involve working to improve the social determinants of health in their community and/or working directly in providing health and social care services.

The sector has particular expertise in working with communities facing inequalities of all kinds. It is recognised in government and NHS strategy that links between the public and VCSE sectors are of considerable benefit in terms of social and financial effectiveness.

The VCSE sector is well-connected, organised and eager to become more involved. It has repeatedly evidenced its ability to work strategically, at pace and at scale and deliver to a high quality.

The VCSE sector in Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin is in prime position to act as an indicator to proposals not yet put into practice and to help inform decision-making via the data it has already collected. It can help to improve commissioning and contracting and implement social value and innovation.

The knowledge and experience of people from VCSE organisations has been repeatedly demonstrated in meetings with statutory sector professionals and involvement in locality planning. It is also acknowledged that the VCSE sector is the 'best first responder', particularly evident during the COVID-19 crisis.

The emerging data regarding the impact of covid suggests fragility within the system which will make the health and care response even more important. Two in five voluntary or community organisations say they are financially worse off after the pandemic. Health inequalities are widening and the demand on NHS services is increasing. Much of this extra demand is for treatment of conditions which are preventable.

As stated by Professor Donna Hall, CBE Chair New Local Government Network and Bolton NHS Foundation Trust, in a recent paper from NHS England and NHS Improvement:

“It is important to understand that many VCSE organisations are struggling financially because fundraising has been adversely affected by the pandemic, at a time when demand for their services and support has never been greater. Positive engagement with the VCSE sector now can ensure that their knowledge, expertise and networks are protected, for the benefit of the whole community.

“Frontline workers in VCSE sector organisations, together with their public sector colleagues, want to help people and improve their lives. We need to tap into their creativity and resilience and set them free to cut across the artificial organisational barriers of health, care, housing and criminal justice. If we do, the future is much more exciting!” (*Building strong integrated care systems everywhere, NHSE/I, September 2021*)

Although there have been significant strides taken by the NHS in focusing on early intervention and prevention, it remains by and large, a treatment service for people when they become ill. It is acknowledged that more should and could be done to reverse this.

For Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin ICS, different types of VCSE organisations have different roles to play in health terms; from the contact they have with their community to providing citizens with opportunities and support to participate in community life, decision-making and in improving their own and their families' health.

It is in these areas of common interest where STW ICS and VCSE organisations can come together effectively to support each other. Where VCSE goals are in line with STW ICS goals, we will seek to understand and maximise the mutual advantage of working together to improve health in Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin communities.

7. Leadership and Enabling Structures

The ability to engage in this MOU is possible because we are building on a large, well-networked VCSE sector with strong, collaborative leadership across the county. It is recognised that the sector is intrinsic to a progressive health and care system for Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin and to the success of the strategic objectives set out in this agreement.

Therefore, new leadership and enabling structures need to be created across the ICS in order to provide a strategic voice for the VCSE and for objectives to be realised. It will be this ICS governance that will ensure support for closer working with the VCSE as a strategic partner and in working to shape, improve and deliver services to tackle wider health determinants.

Platforms for engagement are already in place within the sector and provide an excellent starting point for further collaboration. These include the Shropshire Voluntary and

Community Sector Assembly (VCSA), the VCSE Chief Officers Group (COG) in Telford and Wrekin as well as forums of interest and informal groups. These platforms then feed into numerous boards across the county, providing points of contact and coordination and have a strong focus on respective geographical areas.

The VCSE is currently represented on the Partnership Board, giving the sector some oversight and contribution to the whole ICS strategy, but in terms of delivery this will be needed at 'Place'. There are two place-based footprints within the ICS; the Shropshire Integrated Place Partnership (SHIPP) and the Telford and Wrekin Integrated Place Partnership (TWIPP). These partnership boards involve equal contribution for both footprints from commissioners, providers, Healthwatches and representatives from the voluntary sector. The boards, coterminous to the local authorities, develop key objectives for the delivery of health, social care services and community services in an integrated way.

7.1 STW VCSE Alliance

For the purposes of this agreement, the establishment of a system-level VCSE Alliance plugged into the ICS Board will be needed to ensure inclusivity and closer working with the VCSE sector as a strategic partner.

It will embed the sector as an essential part of how the system operates at all levels and establish active links between VCSE representatives on the ICS Board, relevant work streams and/or strategy groups and place based or neighbourhood-level groups (see Figure 1: Model for VCSE strategic engagement, page 11).

The overall objectives for the VCSE Alliance will be to:

- Encourage and enable the sector to work in a coordinated way and ensure a robust mechanism for representation and feedback;
- Provide the ICS with a single route of contact and engagement with the sector and links to communities;
- Better position the VCSE sector in the ICS and enable it to contribute to the design and delivery of integrated care and have a positive influence on health priorities, support population groups or reduce health inequalities;
- Develop and support active two-way communication and feedback mechanisms between the NHS and VCSE sector at system, place and neighbourhood-levels, ensuring that the influence of the VCSE sector is amplified;
- Ensure the VCSE Alliance is inclusive i.e., representing organisations of all sizes and diverse communities, including those with protected characteristics or that

experience health inequalities. The Alliance will be responsible for scrutinising strategies/plans and avoiding unintentionally disadvantaging or discriminating.

7.2 Established communications channels

To facilitate the VCSE Alliance it will be important that we increase communication and mutual support. The VCSE sector has established communication channels to reach and engage with Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin's VCSE organisations and communities. These will be facilitated by collaborative structures and supported by the ICS communications team. The Alliance will assess if the current communication mechanisms and channels in place are suitable to facilitate robust two-way communication, or if an additional mechanism / channel should be established.

7.3 Funding

The NHS England and NHS Improvement (NHSE/I) ICS VCSE system leadership programme has allocated £10,000 of funding to support the VCSE sector to develop alliances or leadership groups in ICSs. The ICS has also allocated an additional £18,000 from the Integrated Approaches to Volunteering workstream, therefore there is a total funding allocation of £28k to support the delivery of this MOU.

Funding to create the VCSE Alliance is essential at place-base level in order to support VCSE representatives at the SHIPP and TWIPP boards, to bring their experience and skillset and to also provide the sector with strategic voice and influence.

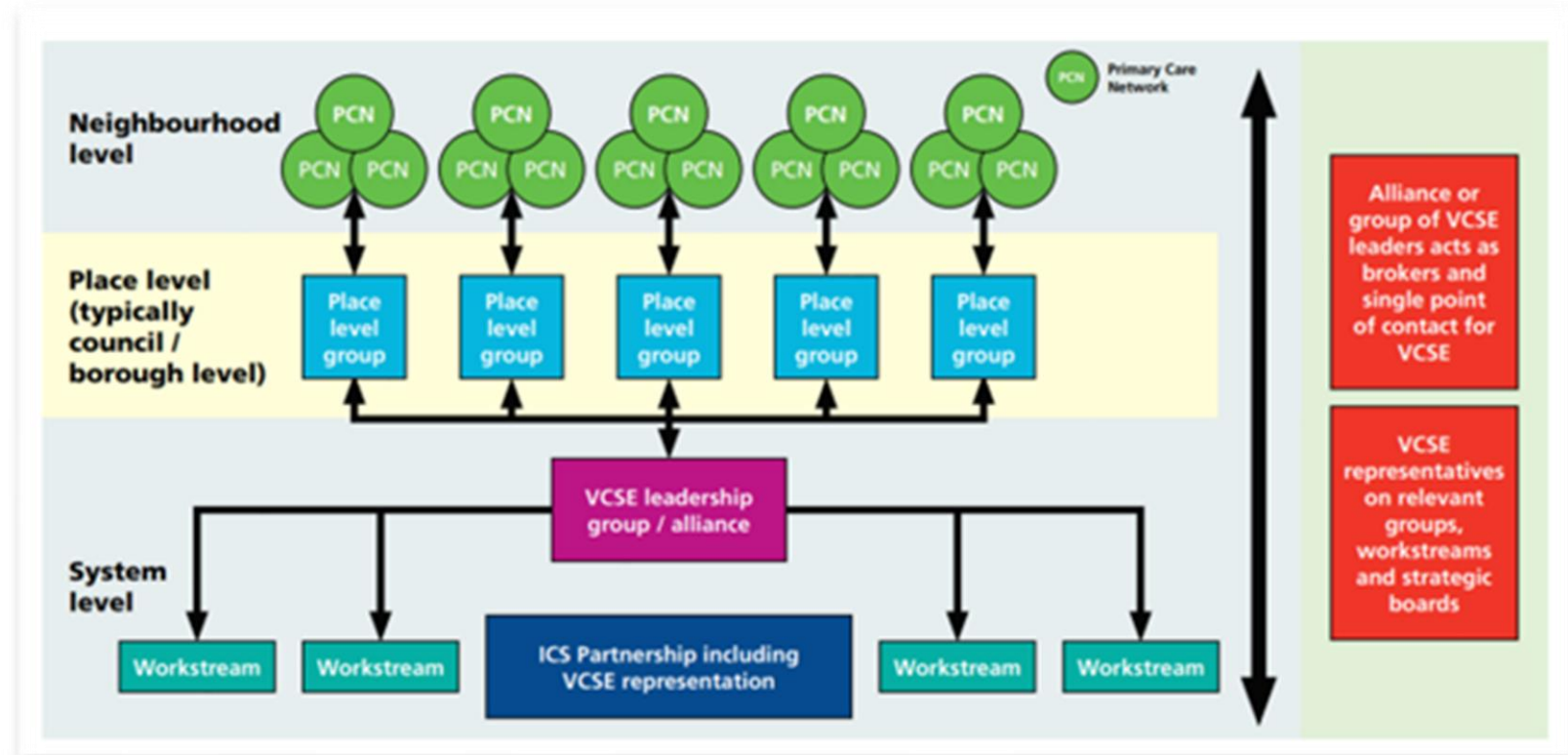
The funding will enable the VCSE to work together to inform the ICS boards of population needs, to support and develop the decisions around the place-based strategy, but also to 'scale up'/respond to these needs and be commissioned to deliver. It will also help to increase the knowledge and expertise of VCSE representatives in understanding the work of the ICS.

This arrangement will require a sessional commitment from those individuals representing the VCSE sector at partnership boards but also consensus from the rest of the sector on their chosen representation. This will be a two-way process whereby the VCSE will identify the right person to represent the sector, but also that statutory organisations will understand these processes for nomination. The funding will be overseen and managed by the ICS Director of Communications.

Representation within the VCSE Alliance will also be responsible for respecting the Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin 'Compact' documents which set out the government's commitment to building positive relationships between the VCSE and public sector.

Figure 1 – Model for VCSE strategic engagement

The model below, based on emerging work in ICSs, shows a potential approach to VCSE partnerships across the ICS that will support relationships to deliver better health and care for local people. NHS England and NHS Improvement are working with national VCSE partners on a development programme that supports systematic partnership with the VCSE sector in ICSs through an alliance model. *(Building strong integrated care systems everywhere, NHSE/I, September 2021)*



8. Joint Commitments

Our joint commitments are to:

- Develop and maintain a Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin VCSE Alliance which can convene on both generic and specific issues and interact with statutory sector leaders through events, roundtables, meetings, forums etc.
- Enable co-production and two-way dialogue between the statutory and VCSE sectors when developing new plans and services. This will include working with the VCSE Alliance to gain comment on early plans and published works and through collaborative forums.
- Facilitate and provide consistent, up-to-date information and communication with the VCSE sector, making use of and building on established channels of communication and existing relationships.
- Support members of the VCSE Alliance, along with other appropriate VCSE leaders chosen by their peers, to represent them at a wide range of strategic and working groups.
- Review and share best practice within statutory and VCSE sectors in Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin, supporting a consistent and effective approach to engaging VCSE organisations and operating according to the principles set out in this MOU.
- Enable VCSE policy experts, when necessary, to spend time contributing and responding to the detail of strategic documents and policies, commissioning models, equality impact assessments, social value methodologies etc.
- Support the VCSE Alliance to act as 'first point of call' for engagement with the VCSE sector to facilitate the work outlined above. The group will be able to act as a sounding board for informal policy discussion.

9. Key Risks

Failure to implement the vision in this MOU brings a number of risks.

These include:

- Reduced ability to get the people of STW to buy into and feel confident in the vision of the ICS;
- Outdated transactional relationships across the sectors;
- Lack of trust and a failure to be open and transparent;
- Missing key enablers that connect and mobilise communities; and
- Misunderstanding the real demand and supply issues across the system.

10. Working Relationships

The following key principles will be adopted by both parties in realising the ambitions of this MOU:

- Both parties recognise that this is an evolving situation, and priorities and details of specific activity will change over time. This Memorandum of Understanding will be reviewed and amended periodically by mutual agreement.
- Each party agrees to take a pragmatic approach and to respect the principles of the MOU as a framework for effective collaboration between statutory and VCSE sectors. This will include acknowledgement of practical and diverse difficulties, such as funding constraints.
- To achieve the outcomes outlined above, through increased collaboration and enabling the systematic and comprehensive involvement of the VCSE sector, there must be a variety of mechanisms to facilitate relationships. This could include VCSE sector secondments into statutory sector teams and from the statutory sector into key VCSE organisations.
- To encourage statutory sector representatives to attend VCSE sector events and standing meetings as regular members or guests; to participate in governance structures; to undertake visits and temporary placements across sectors and themes of work. This will assist in building mutual understanding and respect.

- Where specifications are developed for consultancies and engagement activity to be undertaken, due consideration will be given to commissioning VCSE organisations or partnerships as providers.
- Assumptions will not be made about the value of the assets, spaces and workforce of the respective sectors. Investments will be made based on relevance and merit.
- Where possible every effort will be made to adequately resource the sector. However, it must also be understood that Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin is a challenged health economy and the financial position is being monitored closely by NHSE/I. Therefore, no commitment can be made in relation to funding outside of the funding being provided by NHSE/I.
- That the above principles of collaborative working should be applied equally to the relationship between the statutory and VCSE sectors.

11. Wider Opportunities

Outside of the formal MOU there will be other opportunities to explore how best to collaborate and operate according to the same principles.

Events which bring statutory and VCSE sector colleagues together demonstrate the level of on-the-ground intelligence and knowledge within the sectors. They also hint at the range of good work already being done by VCSE organisations and evidence the interest they have in getting more involved in health and social care transformation.

The VCSE sector is already working across the length and breadth of Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin within skills, employment and enterprise; housing and transport; environment and carbon reduction; poverty reduction; inclusive economic growth and inclusive governance. In addition, many of them are already active in community development, social movements, and social innovation.

The sector boasts an impressive overview of how health and social care and other agendas are interconnected, allowing for wider opportunities to be explored beyond the realms of this agreement.

12. Signatories

Signed on behalf of the Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin Integrated Care System:

Name: **Sir Neil McKay**

Title: **Chair, Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin ICS**

Signed:



Date: 14 October 2021

Name: **Mark Brandreth**

Title: **Executive Lead, STW ICS**

Signed:



Date: 14 October 2021

Signed on behalf of the Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin VCSE sectors:

Name: **Heather Osborne**

Title: **Chair Shropshire VCSEA**

Signed:



Date: 14 October 2021

Name: **Terry Gee**

Title: **Chair Telford VCSEA COG**

Signed:



Date: 14 October 2021