



THE VS6 PARTNERSHIP

SUPPORTING THE

VOICE OF THE

VCFSE SECTOR IN

LIVERPOOL CITY

REGION

VS6 – Working together to build
a stronger Liverpool City Region



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INTRODUCTION

In this paper, we will share the ways in which the VS6 Partnership works closely with and supports the voice of the voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) sector in Liverpool City Region (LCR) via participatory models of sector engagement and representation.

THE VS6 PARTNERSHIP

The VS6 Partnership is an equal partnership of 10 infrastructure organisations working with and representing the 8,600 VCFSE groups operating across LCR. We are an unconstituted, local place-based partnership and are recognised as the primary voice and contact point for engaging with the sector in the City Region.

VS6 was launched in January 2015 in response to the formation of the LCR Combined Authority and the role of the Metro Mayor. We have excellent links into the Combined Authority and other organisations and groups to champion the role of the sector and our communities. VS6 Independent Chair, Rev Canon Dr Ellen Loudon, is also the VCFSE Mayoral Advisor to Metro Mayor Steve Rotheram, providing an invaluable link for the VCFSE sector into the Combined Authority Mayoral Office.

Our members include all place-based LCR Council for Voluntary Services (CVSs) as well as thematic infrastructure groups and faith groups:



CVSs in Liverpool City Region are founded upon being a “council” of their members; they are owned by VCFSE groups (as beneficiaries and owners), with this structure embedded within their articles of association as a coming together of local VCFSE action.



CVSs have a number of core functions including:

- Leadership and advocacy
- Community development and practical support
- Partnerships and collaboration
- Encouraging and nurturing volunteering

The local sector, as members, are tasked with holding CVS functions and their delivery to account through a number of ways including through Trustee Boards, AGMs, annual elections and through performance management systems where they agree strategies and membership reviews.

VS6 has networks into every VCFSE network across the City Region through our membership and are committed to strengthening this collective voice to ensure the role of the VCFSE sector is recognised and valued to influence policy decision making by:

- 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 VCFSE sector

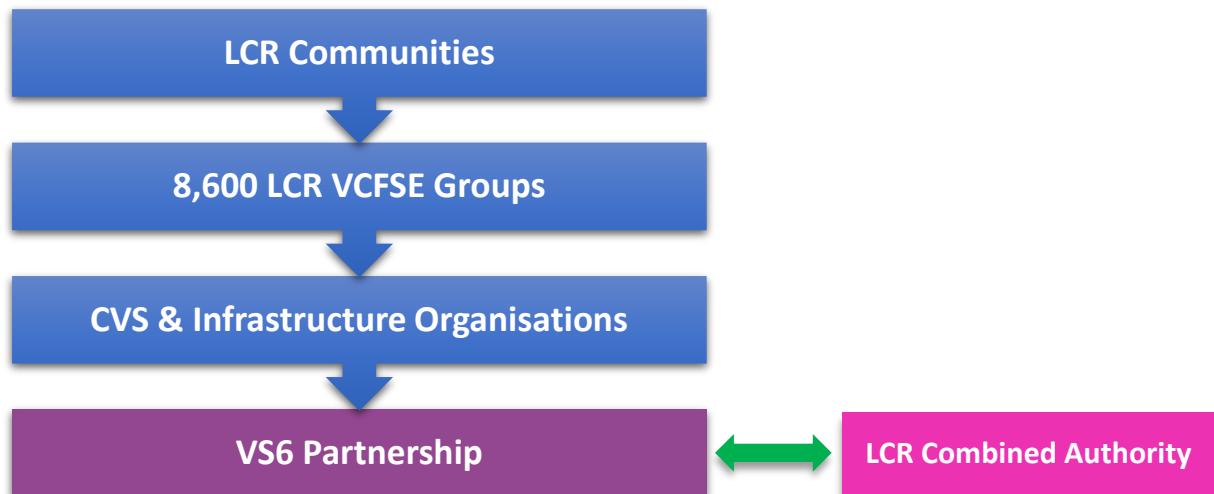


Figure 2. The flow of the VCFSE voice to VS6 & LCR CA

PARTICIPATORY MODELS OF VCFSE ENGAGEMENT

Crucial to the values and strategic work of VS6 is systematic engagement with the VCFSE sector and communities across the City Region in a variety of participatory methods in order to build the collective voice of the sector. We do this in order to:

- Bring VCFSE leaders together and build strong relationships in and across communities
- Influence regional agencies and investments in order to improve the places and spaces that matter to communities
- Lobby for VCFSE-led models of delivery that address our communities' social, economic and health inequalities.
- Create a wide, inclusive, coherent, and connected VCFSE sector that engages in City Region policy-making and delivery, and to ensure that policy and service design reflect the needs of places.
- Support communities to mobilise, building upon community assets and developing an LCR economy that works for all
- Develop VCFSE engagement and voice mechanisms

In order to develop this VCFSE sector voice for the City Region, VS6 undertake regular engagement activities to inform our work and translate what is happening on the ground to policy makers. Below are a number of examples of the methods VS6 utilise to do this, with the insights developed used to better influence City Region policy and strategy.

VS6 Assembly Model

A successful and established model of VCFSE group engagement in the form of regular Assembly events has allowed VS6 to gather crucial insights from VCFSE groups on a variety of pertinent topic areas raised by the sector. Our Assemblies are attended by hundreds of VCFSE groups and provide space for the sector to debate and have collective strategic planning and influence over key topic areas.

Our first collection of VS6 Assemblies in 2020 focused on understanding the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on specific community groups following local feedback from groups into our VS6 Partner organisations that these groups were facing particularly increasing risks and needs:



Figure 3. VS6 2020 Assemblies

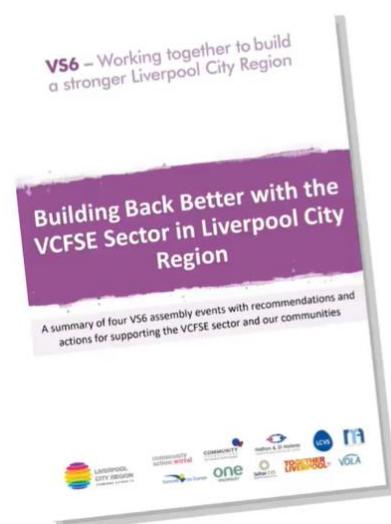


Figure 4. VS6 Assembly Report sign off process

These Assemblies were attended by guest speakers and representatives from the LCR Combined Authority, including Metro Mayor Steve Rotheram. Each Assembly was followed up with a written report with key recommendations, with these recommendations being ratified by the VCFSE sector via follow up surveys to event attendees for their approval.

A summary report was produced following the publication of the four individual assembly reports which summarised common themes and issues across all assemblies and provided overarching recommendations for achieving change.

The insights and findings developed through these events were essential to subsequent conversations VS6 had with the Combined Authority to inform and influence not just COVID-19 response and recovery strategies, but all future working.



Since our initial Assembly events in 2020, VS6 have hosted further Assemblies on a variety of different subject areas including Housing, UK-Shared Prosperity Fund and two Sustainable and Affordable Food Events. The insights we have and continue to generate directly inform the work that we carry out, allowing us to recommend innovative and place-based solutions to gaps and issues.

A video was produced by VS6 that showcases the Assembly events and how they are used to influence policy and strategy which can be found [here](#).

Liverpool City Region VCFSE Manifesto 2021-2024

As well as our successful VS6 Assembly Events, throughout 2020 and 2021 VS6 held several consultation events and surveys with the VCFSE sector to collaboratively develop the Liverpool City Region VCFSE Manifesto, ensuring the manifesto accurately represents the sector.

The manifesto showcases the collective aims and ambitions of the VCFSE sector over three years between 2021 and 2024, and how we want to work with the Combined Authority to develop a resilient and sustainable sector. It reflects on the events and challenges experienced throughout 2020 and how the sector has mobilised and transformed to make sure that our communities have the support required. It also looks at how we can harness the energy of the sector and the cross-sector collaborative relationships that have formed in order to build back an economy that works for everyone, and how we can work together to truly address inequalities throughout the City Region.

Crucially, the manifesto consultation events and surveys that VS6 facilitated ensures that the manifesto is a strategic product that has been **created** by the VCFSE sector, for the VCFSE sector.

During the recent 2021 LCR Metro Mayor elections, VS6 hosted a Hustings event with the VCFSE sector attended by Metro Mayor candidates. VCFSE attendees were able to ask questions to the candidates which explored how they planned to work with and support the sector over the next three years – including how they would work towards the ambitions of the VCFSE manifesto. All mayoral candidates committed to the LCR VCFSE Manifesto, and with the subsequent re-election of Metro Mayor Steve Rotheram VS6 have been able to work closely with his team at the Combined Authority to represent the VCFSE sector voice and press on manifesto delivery.



Figure 5. Liverpool City Region VCFSE Manifesto 2021-2024 front cover

Since the publication of the manifesto, VS6 have continued to work with the VCFSE sector to deliver the priorities and objectives identified via the [Year One Manifesto Delivery Plan](#). VS6 are currently working on developing the delivery plans for Years 2 and 3 and have been liaising with the Chief Executive of the Combined Authority, Katherine Fairclough, to discuss this work.

Sector-Wide Surveys

Alongside our regular VS6 Assembly engagement & consultation events, VS6 conduct sector wide surveys to gather data and insights into VCFSE activity. During COVID-19 VS6 distributed surveys across places via CVSs to understand the impact of COVID-19 on the sector in terms of funding, demand, activity, and sector needs. A Liverpool City Region wide summary report was produced from the data and insights collected from the VCFSE sector through the survey, which can be found [here](#). The report and associated findings were used to build up the evidence base for the VCFSE sector before, during and after the pandemic within briefings and letters to the Combined Authority, Metro Mayor, and central government.

LCR COMBINED AUTHORITY ENGAGEMENT

The role of the VS6 Partnership, as previously discussed, is to raise the profile and voice of the VCFSE sector at a Liverpool City Region level. To do this, we work closely with the LCR Combined Authority in our work to lobby for equitable representation and sustainability for the VCFSE sector with genuine collaboration.

COVID-19 VCFSE Funding

VS6 were central to ensuring that the VCFSE sector was recognised for its role in COVID-19 response and recovery by the LCR Combined Authority. Whilst packages of financial support for various sectors were being announced nationally, the VCFSE sector was somewhat overlooked despite the additional work the sector was undertaking to provide much needed support to those most impacted by the pandemic.

To address this gap more locally, VS6 worked with LCR Combined Authority to establish the [#LCRCares](#) COVID-19 Community Support Fund, managed by VS6 Partner Community Foundation for Merseyside. The aim was to support community and voluntary organisations on the frontline to cope with the impact of the pandemic, designed around local insights and reporting from the VCFSE on the ground to their CVSs. In total the fund raised over £2.5million which was distributed to hundreds of organisations across the region supporting more than 250,000 people.

“Building Back Better”

Building on the success of the #LCRCares fund, VS6 partners submitted recommendations for the VCFSE sector to the Combined Authority for inclusion within the Liverpool City Region Economic Recovery Plan “[Building Back Better](#)”. Subsequently, the VCFSE sector is mentioned throughout the 55 page document, with a specific request to Government for a £25million VCFSE Sector Resilience and Capacity fund to provide cross-sector investment and safeguard the significant levels of employment the sector has (24,000 FTE). Securing this funding for the sector remains a manifesto priority.

#LCRCares Grants

More recently, in 2021 VS6 have been successful in securing £480,000 in funding from the Combined Authority to continue the legacy of the #LCRCares, and to act as VCFSE catalyst grants to inform future investment. The grant fund, named #LCRCares Grants was shaped by the needs of the sector identified through our previous engagement work, priorities within the VCFSE manifesto and priorities within the Combined Authority Corporate Plan.

Outcomes from the evaluations of the successful projects awarded grants will influence Combined Authority VCFSE in the future and provide a great opportunity for the sector to showcase it's potential to address the wider determinants of health and inequalities.

UK-Shared Prosperity Fund

In May this year, the VS6 Partnership held an event with the VCFSE sector to explore and make the case for the sector in the UK-Shared Prosperity Fund planning for the Liverpool City Region. This event was attended by representatives from the Combined Authority who presented their initial plans for developing a Local Investment Plan for the City Region and answered questions from VCFSE attendees.

VS6 presented a [draft framework for VCFSE UK-SPF delivery](#), highlighting 10 priority VCFSE investment areas aligned with UK-SPF priorities and themes. The framework was developed through the cross-referencing of [the LCR VCFSE Manifesto](#) and the Combined Authority Corporate plan, in particular identifying key strategic priorities within both documents and the UK-SPF Prospectus to determine the possibilities for VCFSE delivery.

The draft framework was shared with our Combined Authority colleagues for inclusion within the drafting of the UK-SPF Local Investment Plan, showcasing the strong position of the VCFSE sector to deliver positive outcomes for the City Region and our communities.

LCR VCFSE Representative Roles & Working Groups

Our members represent VS6 and the wider VCFSE sector on a number of boards and groups across the region, covering a wide range of issues affecting our communities such as housing, employment, health, and transport. Our representatives feed important VCFSE knowledge and insights gathered through engagement and research into these groups, advocating for the sector on multiple levels. A full list of the representative roles that VS6 partners undertake can be found on our [website](#), with some examples below:

LCR Local Enterprise Partnership

- The Liverpool City Region LEP and Combined Authority work together to deliver the Growth Strategy for the City Region.

Social Solidarity Economy Reference Panel

- This group provides advice to Metro Mayor Steve Rotheram and Combined Authority policymakers on how to maximise the contribution of the social sector to the city region economy.

Cheshire and Merseyside Health and Care Partnership

- Brings together a wide range of partners to address the broader health, public health, and social care needs of the region.

In 2022 a new VS6+ Racial Equalities Reference Group was developed, operating across the City Region to bring together the VCFSE sector's Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups and to amplify the voices and needs of communities. There is equitable representation from across the City Region with one BAME VCFSE leader representing each borough. The group operates independently of VS6, with VS6 providing administrative support, and will feed into the VS6 Partnership to support our policy work.

SUMMARY

The VS6 Partnership utilises many methods and ways of to engage with the VCFSE sector in Liverpool City Region and develop the collective VCFSE sector voice. This engagement work is essential to gathering insights into the experiences and issues faced by the VCFSE sector, understanding the challenges facing our communities, and feeding these insights into the LCR Combined Authority and beyond to influence policy and decision making. There are many examples of this working in practice, and we will continue to work to ensure the sectors voice is heard and to build a Liverpool City Region for all.

CONTACT

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APPENDICES & USEFUL LINKS

LCR VCFSE Manifesto 2021-2024

- [Full manifesto](#)
- [Manifesto on a page](#)
- [Year 1 Delivery Plan](#)

VS6 Assembly Reports

- [Children and Young People](#)
- [Mental Health and Resilience](#)
- [Shielded, Vulnerable People and Carers](#)
- [Inequalities Through a BAME Lens](#)
- [COVID-19 Assemblies Summary](#)
- [Sustainable and Affordable Food Report](#)

VS6 LCR COVID-19 Survey

- [Survey report](#)

VCFSE Videos

- [Introduction to the LCR VCFSE Sector](#)
- [VS6 2020 Assemblies](#)