



# Worcestershire VCSE Alliance **Annual Report**

July 2023 - June 2024





## Message from **Pete Sugg**

*Alliance Chair  
(April 2023 to May 2024)*

Welcome to the Worcestershire Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Alliance Annual Report for July 2023 to June 2024.

I have been honoured to Chair the Alliance at such a pivotal time. One of the main aims this year has been in developing the VCSE sector to become a stronger partner within the new Integrated Care System (ICS). The introduction of the ICS has involved a large amount of change across the Public Sector and to some degree the VCSE sector. As with any change, it is taking time to embed and there have been many challenges, but we are already starting to see the benefits of working in a more integrated way.

At the inception of the Alliance in 2022, we started with a number of volunteers, the “coalition of the willing”. This year many of these people became Alliance Board members and have worked tirelessly to support, promote and strengthen the amazing work of the approximately 3000 VCSE sector organisations across Worcestershire.

I would like to thank all of these partners and the staff team, led by Esther Passingham, who have worked together to support the development of the Alliance throughout this second year. Their efforts have enabled a new Alliance operational model to be launched, with a decision making Board and VCSE Forum for the whole sector to get involved in. This model has created a strong foundation to build new ways of working. This report outlines how we have started to develop a stronger approach in embedding the VCSE sector into the ICS.

A key component of the new Alliance model was the recruitment of an Independent Chair. On 1st June 2024, I was delighted to hand over the baton to Amanda Kilroy. Amanda, who also works nationally, brings to Worcestershire a wealth of expertise, knowledge and skills in system leadership and change, VCSE infrastructure, health and wellbeing and a lot more. I’m pleased to report that significant progress is already being made in strengthening the governance and vision of the organisation.

The need for a strong Alliance is greater now than ever if we are to help the vital work of the VCSE sector to strengthen and grow, and ensure that it can participate fully as a partner within the ICS. With so much support and commitment from so many amazing people, I am confident the Alliance will go from strength to strength.

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# Vision



Working together to help make Worcestershire a better and healthier place to live and work

# Aim

To promote a strong and visible VCSE sector working collaboratively to deliver excellent services that are aligned to need



Message from

**Esther Passingham**

*VCSE Strategic Lead*

## A Year of Progress and Partnership!

As we reflect on this year, we are reminded of the powerful connections that unite Worcestershire's charities, social enterprises and community groups. It has been my pleasure to meet so many remarkable people from these organisations, each driven by a mission to help those in our communities who need support most. To every member of the VCSE sector—staff and volunteers alike—thank you for your hard work, resilience, and dedication.

This year, the Alliance has made significant strides in laying a strong strategic foundation. The Alliance team and inspiring VCSE leaders have built upon the groundwork of the 'forming' phase, setting the stage for meaningful, positive change. A special thanks to our Chair, Pete Sugg, and Vice Chair, Julia Neal, for their invaluable guidance and commitment. Their leadership has been instrumental in positioning the Alliance to honour the VCSE sector as a cornerstone of our community—both today and in the years ahead.

We are proud of the progress we have made, particularly in strengthening VCSE and Public Sector relations, mental health services and community based research to help tackle health inequalities. This has been challenging at times amid a period of change within the Public Sector. However, our team has worked diligently on projects that strengthen the VCSE sector integration within the broader Care System, showcasing their remarkable impact. As we welcome Amanda Kilroy, our new Independent Chair, we look forward to continuing our collaborative efforts, fostering partnerships, and expanding our reach.

Thank you for being part of the Alliance's journey. Together, we are building a stronger, more connected VCSE sector in Worcestershire.

*Esther Passingham*



# Achieving the VCSE Alliance Objectives

How has the VCSE Alliance been working to meet its objectives?

Here are some of the key achievements:

# 1.

**Facilitate effective countywide communication, engagement and understanding between the VCSE and statutory sector.**

The VCSE Alliance Assembly and Forums:

- Created opportunities for a unified and stronger voice for the sector
- Provided information about the Alliance's work, and heard from partners what needs to be prioritised
- Support and enable VCSE organisations to work more effectively as part of the Integrated Care System
- Promoted networking and relationship building
- Worked together to develop health and wellbeing services

Other communications and engagement activities:

- Website: provided a range of information and resources about the VCSE sector and Public Sector partners
- Newsletters: distributed every six weeks, providing up to date information about health and wellbeing news in Worcestershire
- Webinars: delivered on a range of topics such as Co-Production, Social Value and Theory of Change
- Briefings: highlighted ICS Place Development and activities from the Fuller Stocktake report

# 2.

**Encourage VCSE collaboration and facilitate co-development of services to strengthen services and support available to the population of Worcestershire.**

- Facilitation of the VCSE Mental Health Programme, working with a range of VCSE providers and the Health and Care NHS Trust to deliver services, develop research and collaborative working
- Development of Research and Engagement Community Health (REACH) programme to improve health and wellbeing outcomes and address health inequalities through cohesive, targeted and research-informed support for communities in Worcestershire

# 3.

**Develop knowledge and understanding of the VCSE sector to amplify activity and impact across the county.**

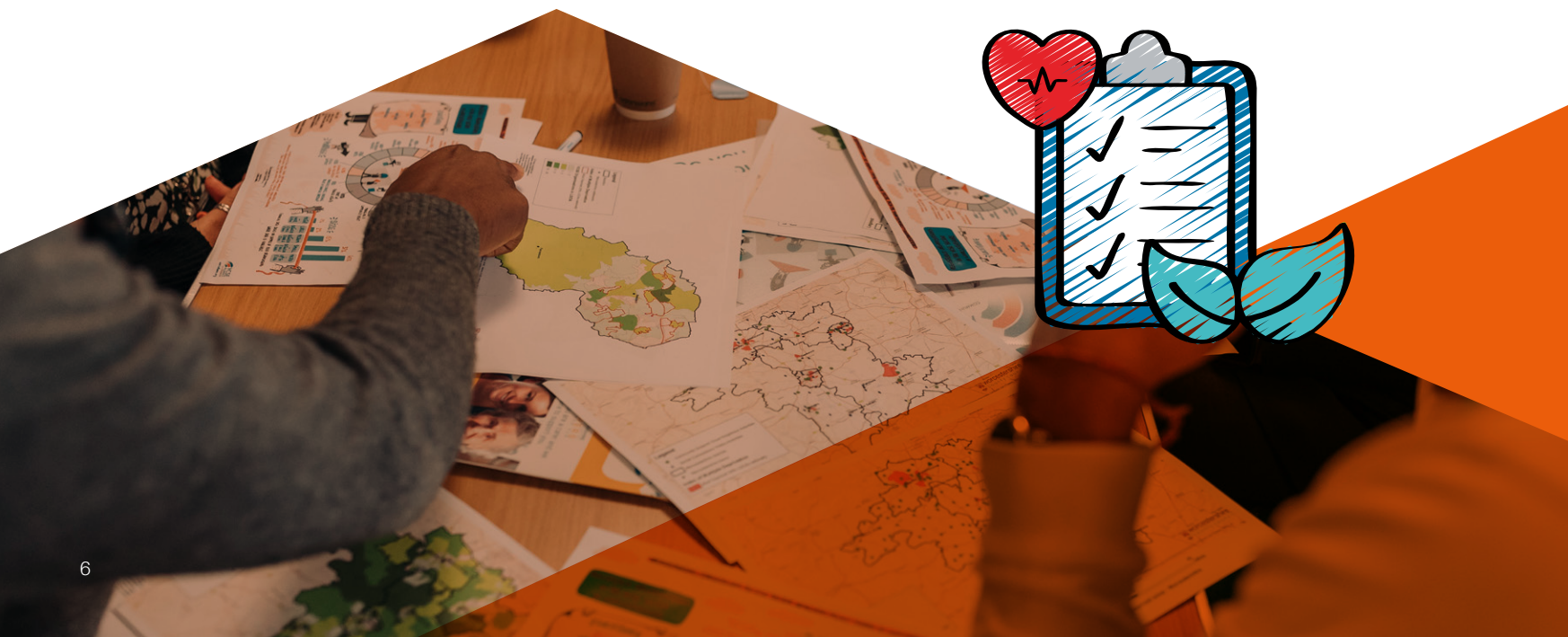
Established Understanding and Strengthening the VCSE sector in Worcestershire, a project with three initial phases:

- **Phase 1:** Scoped the number and type of VCSE organisations providing services in the county
- **Phase 2:** Carried out a countywide survey to VCSE organisations to collate a range of information about organisations and their opportunities and challenges
- **Phase 3:** Developing in depth qualitative information through focus groups and 1:1 interviews (starting November 2024)

# 4.

**Ensure the sustainability of the VCSE Alliance, enabling the sector to flourish as an active partner in the ICS**

- Development of a Memorandum of Association with support and agreement of the Worcestershire Place Partnership Board and the VCSE Alliance
- Improved processes for systematic VCSE representation, communication and feedback for the sector on Health Boards and Committees
- Carried out governance review and requirements including development of Alliance Board
- Ongoing funding: identifying and securing funding to develop and strengthen the VCSE sector and the Alliance





# Founder Members

A huge thank you to the following Founder Members, who worked together throughout 2023 and 2024 to shape the future Alliance model of working.

-  **Community First**  
Building better communities  
in Herefordshire & Worcestershire  
Roger Britton  
*Community First*
-  **WORCESTERSHIRE ASSOCIATION OF CARERS**  
Carole Cumino & Karen Edwards  
*Worcestershire Association of Carers*
-  **YOUNG SOLUTIONS**  
Pete Sugg  
*Young Solutions*
-  **Active**  
Herefordshire & Worcestershire  
Steve Brewster  
*Active Herefordshire and Worcestershire*
-  **WORCESTERSHIRE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION**  
MAKING A DIFFERENCE TO YOUR COMMUNITY  
Lucy Wells  
*Worcestershire Community Foundation*
-  **Act On Energy**  
Rachel Jones  
*Act on Energy*
-  **ageUK**  
Herefordshire & Worcestershire  
Julia Neal  
*Age UK Herefordshire and Worcestershire*
-  **Bromsgrove and Redditch Network**  
Supporting our communities for 25 years  
Gary Roskell  
*Bromsgrove and Redditch Network (BARN)*
-  **citizens advice**  
South Worcestershire  
Annie Robson  
*CA South Worcestershire*
-  **citizens advice**  
Bromsgrove & Redditch  
Chris Roberts  
*CA Bromsgrove and Redditch*
-  **Droitwich Spa CVS**  
Connecting Our Community  
Tonia Enderbury  
*Droitwich Spa CVS*
-  **Evesham Volunteer Centre**  
Helen Gray  
*Evesham Volunteer Centre*

-  **KEMP Hospice**  
Caroline Beech  
*KEMP Hospice*
-  **COMMUNITY ACTION**  
MALVERN & DISTRICT  
Kate Walton & Launa Brooks  
*Malvern Community Action*
-  **Mind**  
in South Warwickshire and Worcestershire  
Jan Dugdale  
*South Warwickshire & Worcestershire Mind*
-  **ONSIDE**  
PASSIONATE ABOUT EQUALITY  
Kate Harvey  
*ONSIDE Advocacy*
-  **Pershore Plus**  
Volunteer Centre  
Karon Swinburn  
*Pershore Plus Volunteer Centre*
-  **SANDYCROFT CENTRE**  
Lee McKenzie  
*Sandycroft Centre*
-  **Simply LIMITLESS**  
WELLBEING CENTRE  
Paul Raper  
*Simply Limitless*
-  **St. Richard's Hospice**  
CARING FOR LIFE  
Mike Wilkerson  
*St Richards Hospice*
-  **WORCESTER COMMUNITY TRUST**  
Jonathan Newey  
*Worcester Community Trust*
-  **WE CAN**  
WORCESTERSHIRE COMMUNITY ACTION NETWORK  
Sally Ellison  
*Worcester Community Action*
-  **[ST PAUL'S]**  
Jonathan Sutton  
*St Paul's Hostel*
-  **Herefordshire & Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce**  
Dawn Hardman  
*Chamber of Commerce*
-  **YSS**  
Making it happen!  
Deb Grantham  
*Youth Support Services (YSS)*

# Launch of the new model

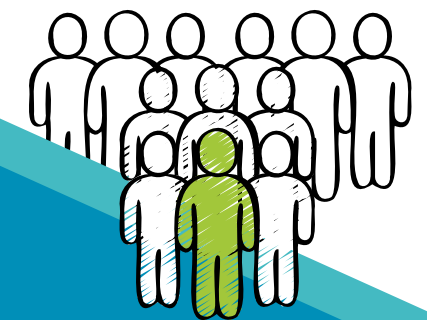
## Task & Finish Groups

**Alliance Strategic Board**  
with an Independent Chair

## Thematic Cluster Groups

**VCSE Alliance Forum**  
Membership open to  
Worcestershire VCSE organisations

In May 2024 the new Alliance model was launched, including a new board. Our 2023-2024 board **Alliance Board Members** are:



**Amanda Kilroy**  
*Independent Chair*

**Pete Sugg**  
*Young Solutions*

**Paul Raper**  
*Simply Limitless*

**Steve Brewster**  
*Active Herefordshire and Worcestershire*

**Chris Roberts**  
*Citizens Advice (Redditch and Bromsgrove)*

**Kate Harvey**  
*Onside*

**Deb Grantham**  
*Youth Support Services (YSS)*

**Lee McKenzie**  
*Sandycroft Centre*

**Rachel Jones**  
*Act on Energy*

**Julia Neal**  
*Age UK Herefordshire & Worcestershire*

**Gary Roskell**  
*Bromsgrove and Redditch Network (BARN)*

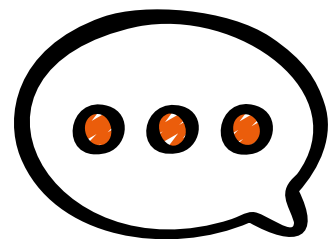
**Lucy Wells**  
*Worcestershire Community Foundation*

# Embedding the VCSE into the Integrated Care System

One of the key aims of VCSE Alliance across England is to embed the VCSE sector into the Integrated Care System. In Worcestershire, the Alliance has been working with VCSE partners as well as NHS England colleagues to explore how the sector can be further embedded into the Integrated Care System and to meet the ambition outlined in the Design Framework, which states:

*‘The VCSE sector is a vital cornerstone of a progressive health and care system. ICS should ensure their governance and decision-making arrangements support close working with the sector as a strategic partner in shaping, improving and delivering services and developing and delivering plans to tackle the wider determinants of health. We expect... 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.’*

To support this work, NHS England and VCSE partners have co-designed a ‘Quality Development Tool’ to increase collaborative working. This tool acts as a maturity matrix, with categories ‘not started, emerging, developing and maturing’ in the 6 areas shown opposite. In Worcestershire we have mapped the status of each area and collaborative working is ‘emerging’.



**Sarah Speck**

Director of Worcestershire Place Development for NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire

*The Worcestershire VCSE Alliance Review 2022-2024 demonstrates how effectively work has taken place across the VCSE sector to offer partnership opportunities in areas such as mental health, community connection, and improving participation in research and social value. Plans for 2025/6 focus on opportunities for positive collaboration, partnership and project working to support Worcestershire Place Partnership ambitions to improve outcomes through a whole system and ‘learn by doing’ approach.*

The Alliance is working with **ICS partners** through these 6 key development areas:



For more information, please visit:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/B0905-vcse-and-ics-partnerships.pdf>

# Messages from VCSE representatives

Representatives have a mandate to be a voice for the VCSE sector. They are appointed based on a commitment to maintain impartiality, reflecting diverse perspectives, clearly articulating VCSE collective messages and being transparent about the limitations of their reach. They openly share information and opportunities with the VCSE sector.

If you are interested in becoming a VCSE Representative please contact [comms@worcsalliance.org](mailto:comms@worcsalliance.org).

## Health and Wellbeing Board



**Chris Roberts**

*CEO Citizens Advice Bromsgrove & Redditch*

The VCSE Alliance seat on the Health and Wellbeing Board enables the alliance to stay abreast of current delivery, priorities and initiatives. These are cascaded across the sector increasing the opportunities of partnership working.

The representative role provides the voice and views of VCSE organisations to be heard and their work promoted. This raises awareness of work being undertaken as well as the range of skills and services that the VCSE can, and does, provide.

Going forward we will play a key role in building strategy, helping to mainstream collaborative work and co-design with the VCSE sector.



## Worcestershire Executive Committee



**Julia Neal**

*CEO of Herefordshire and Worcestershire Age UK*

The purpose of the Committee is to work in partnership with the Health and Wellbeing Board to provide leadership and delivery of the strategic outcomes framework for the Integrated Care System in Worcestershire. The committee is made up of senior primary and secondary health and social care leaders and meets on a monthly basis. The current Chair is Stephen Collman, MD for Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust.

My role has involved feeding in a VCSE perspective to support consideration of the future state of health and care in Worcestershire, and oversight of programme delivery, performance management, quality, safety and finance. VCSE input has particularly supported engagement and co-production between the Partners for the benefit of patients and citizens of Worcestershire, as well as ensuring that the potential role and contribution of the VCSE is understood by all partners.

## Health Inequality, Prevention and Personalised Care (HiPP) Board



**Mick Gillick**

*Head of Services at Onside*

The purpose of the HiPP board is to have strategic oversight of NHS delivery in addressing health inequalities, through prevention and personalisation. The Board meets bi-monthly and following each meeting, we highlight potential areas for opportunity and mutual interest for the VCSE sector.

The Integrated Care System has committed to reducing Healthcare Inequalities under the national 'Core 20 Plus 5' initiative.

The 'Core 20' refers to the most deprived 20% of the national population and the 'Plus 5' refers to the 5 key clinical areas of health inequalities. I.e. Maternity; Severe Mental Illness; Chronic Respiratory Disease; Early Cancer Diagnosis; and Hypertension.

As part of the ICS the VCSE sector has an important role to play in helping to achieve the Core 20 Plus 5 objectives.

## Adult Mental Health Inpatient & Rehabilitation Services Redesign Steering Group



**Jan Dugdale**

*CEO of South Warwickshire and Worcestershire MIND*

I have been part of this service redesign steering group for 18 months contributing the VCSE mental health perspective. The primary purpose of the group is overseeing the effective implementation and monitoring of this change programme, led by the NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care Trust.

We meet monthly with the aim of ensuring a cohesive and coordinated approach towards the recalibration of Acute Mental Health Adult Inpatient Services and the redevelopment of Adult Rehabilitation Mental Health Services. We are responsible for: Tactical Oversight, Coordination and Integration, Monitoring and Reporting, Stakeholder Engagement, Quality Assurance, Knowledge Sharing and Best Practice.

My role has involved feeding into this co-design and change process the key mental health needs from a patient and VCSE perspective. This has helped to ensure these services provide better care for patients and take into consideration how the VCSE sector can provide the additional support those people accessing these vital services. Being a part of this process has provided a great opportunity to make a difference to patients and hopefully increased support for the future of VCSE mental health services.



# VCSE Alliance Engagement – meetings & events

16 National Alliance  
and NHS England

Project  
developments 29

16 ICS meetings across  
Herefordshire and  
Worcestershire

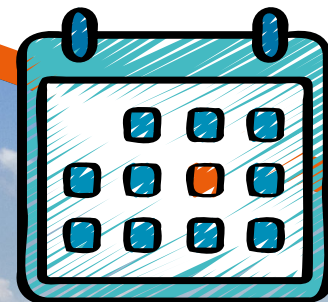
10

One-off events  
and conferences

5 Webinars  
and training  
sessions

38 Alliance  
developments  
meetings

24 VCSE  
organisations





# VCSE Alliance Assembly

The first VCSE Alliance Assembly welcomed over 120 people

In October 2023, the Alliance hosted a VCSE Alliance Assembly, a whole day event at St Peter's Church in Warndon. The Assembly welcomed over 120 people and was a great success, with a wide range of organisations who made the most of the opportunities to network and build relationships.

## There were a range of interesting and inspirational speeches...

### National organisations:

- Alex Boys, Deputy CEO of National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA) - *A national perspective on the vital part played by VCSE Alliances in Integrated Care Systems*
- Ed Mayo, CEO of Pilotlight - *Challenges and solutions for the VCSE*

### NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire ICB:

- Simon Trickett, CEO Herefordshire and Worcestershire ICB - *VCSE working together as an Integrated Care System*
- Kim Sales, ICS Academy Director – Aspirations for a VCSE Faculty as part of the Academy

### Why Worcestershire's VCSE sector is so important to the Integrated Care System:

- Ruth Lemiech, Director of Place Development, Integrated Care System
- Sue Harris, Director of Strategy and Business Development, H&W Health and Care Trust
- Mark Fitton, Strategic Director for People, Worcestershire County Council

### Worcestershire VCSE sector:

- Esther Passingham, Worcestershire VCSE Alliance - *The journey so far*
- Peter Rose, Tiller Research - *Understanding and Strengthening the VCSE sector in Worcestershire*

An important part of the Assembly was to hear views from participants. Everyone generously fed into what the needs of their organisations are to help shape the Alliance priorities as well as other infrastructure organisations in the county. There was also an opportunity to feed into shaping the 'Understanding and Strengthening the VCSE in Worcestershire' research and evaluation.

# VCSE Alliance Forum

The VCSE Alliance Forum met for the first time in May 2024 and is now a key part of how the Alliance works. We were delighted to listen and understand the views of so many VCSE colleagues. Many people shared how exciting it was to hear the Alliance progress and the difference it is starting to make!

The forum was attended by 73 people from 61 organisations

## The Forum is open all VCSE staff and volunteers working in Worcestershire, the benefits of attending the forum are:

- Collective strength to influence decision making, particularly with ICS Partners
- Collaboration and networking opportunities
- Unified voice to champion the value of services
- Access to resources – helping to build capacity and sustainability
- Working together to demonstrate impact and social value
- Hear how the Alliance work is developing, and embedding the VCSE into the ICS
- Explore opportunities to work and solve challenges together

In the coming year, there will be more opportunities for those people who want to get more involved.

Forums will be held three times a year. To hear when they are happening and keep up to date with developments, please go to: <https://worcsalliance.org/subscribe>

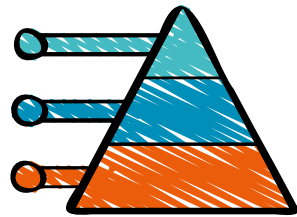


# Understanding & Strengthening the VCSE sector in Worcestershire



This year the Alliance has continued to lead this key area of work to understand and strengthen the VCSE sector in Worcestershire.

The first stage of this research and evaluation aims to better understand the VCSE sector in Worcestershire, providing an evidence base on a range of information relating to services, issues and opportunities. It also aims to identify gaps in services and areas that need developing, helping to shape the second strengthening stage of work.



## The first stage has 3 phases:

**Phase one:** Desk research to scope VCSE organisations in Worcestershire. To learn more see the infographic on the following pages. For more detailed information, go to [https://worcsalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/31/2024/03/TILL\\_2073\\_VCSEAlliance\\_US\\_FINALv1.1-1.pdf](https://worcsalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/31/2024/03/TILL_2073_VCSEAlliance_US_FINALv1.1-1.pdf)

**Phase two:** Online survey, with over 170 useable responses from VCSE organisations working in Worcestershire. To see the summary of the survey results, go to: <https://worcsalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/31/2024/10/U-and-S-Phase-2-update-1.pdf>

**Phase three:** Focus groups and 1:1 interviews to deepen the understanding of current issues facing the VCSE sector. This phase starts in November 2024 and is being delivered by University of Worcester.

A final report will be available in Spring 2025. This data will be used to shape the VCSE Alliance strategy.

The final report will combine survey data with qualitative data collected in Phase 3.

To learn more about the intended Research and Evaluation Key Outcomes, go to: <https://worcsalliance.org/understanding-and-strengthening-the-vcse>

Lisa Bedford (Service Development Manager for Strengthening Communities at Worcestershire County Council) said:

“The implementation of the Understanding and Strengthening the VCSE research led by the VCSE Alliance has been extremely positive and will be a very useful report once finalised, with multiple benefits across the health and social care system (including the VCSE). I am looking forward to being able to use the research throughout my day to day role in the council.”

## The Alliance is grateful to the following partners for their invaluable support with this work:



Worcestershire County Council for providing the funding and advocating the research to ensure its success.



Tiller Associates for working diligently and meticulously in producing this research.

The multi-agency steering group who advises, guides and monitors the research:

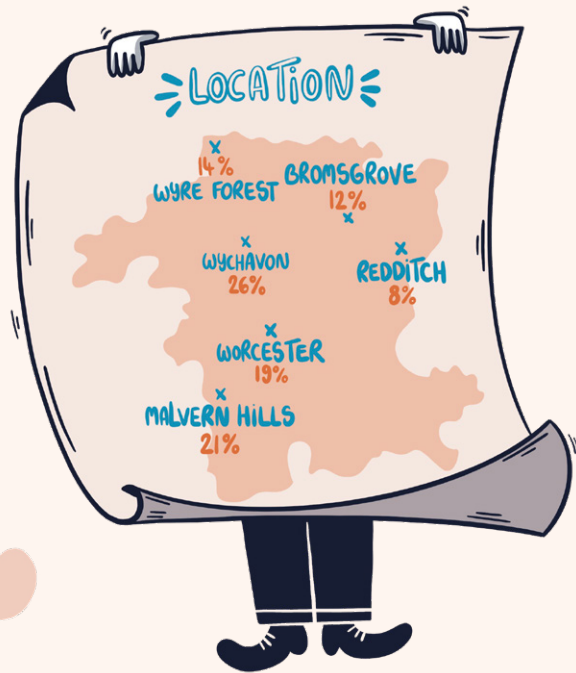
- Lisa Bedford - Strengthening Communities, Worcestershire County Council
- Julia Neal - Age UK Herefordshire and Worcestershire
- Caroline Kingston - Public Health
- Sam Topping - Health and Care Trust
- Selina Lavictoire - Integrated Care Board
- Pete Sugg - Young Solutions
- Catherine Kevis - Youth Support Services
- Eleanor Bradley - University of Worcester
- Karon Swinburne - Pershore Plus Volunteer Centre



# UNDERSTANDING & STRENGTHENING THE VCSE SECTOR

# AN ALLIANCE PROJECT FUNDED BY WORCESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

## REGISTERED ORGANISATIONS IN THE VCSE SECTOR IN WORCESTERSHIRE

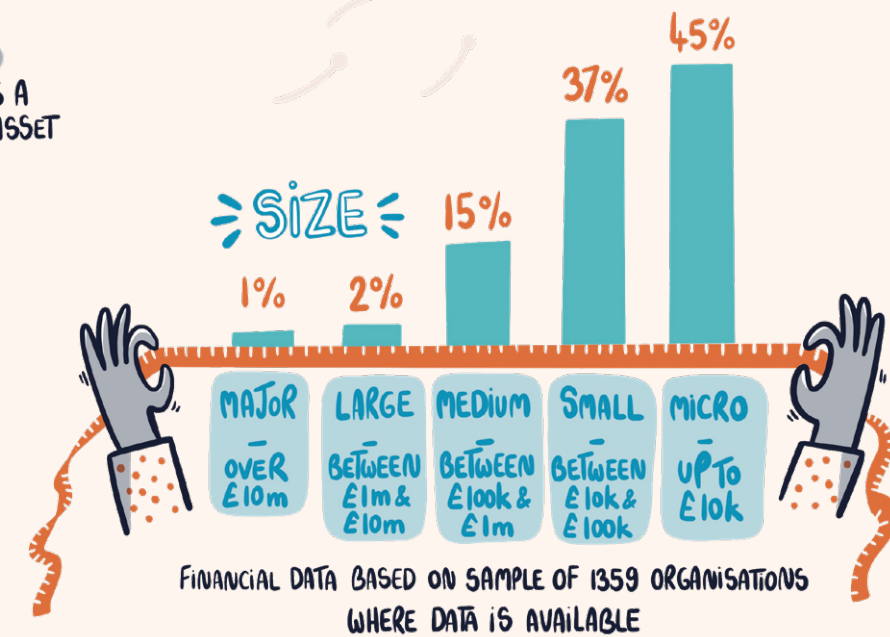
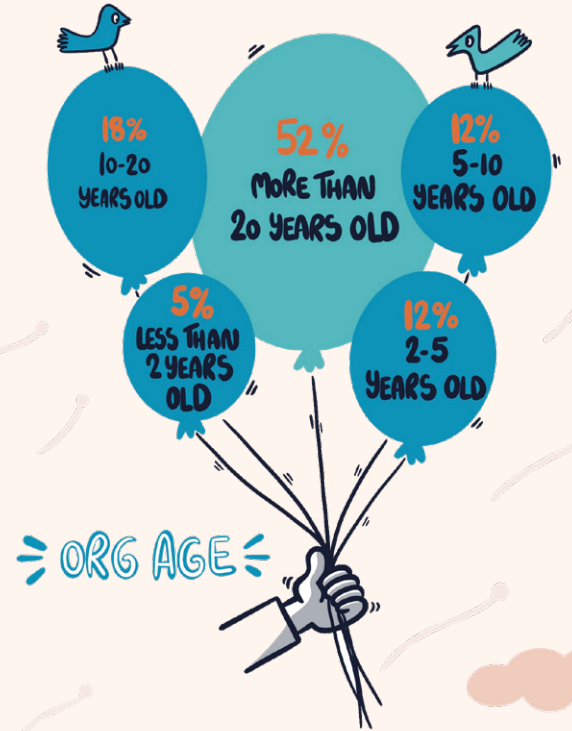
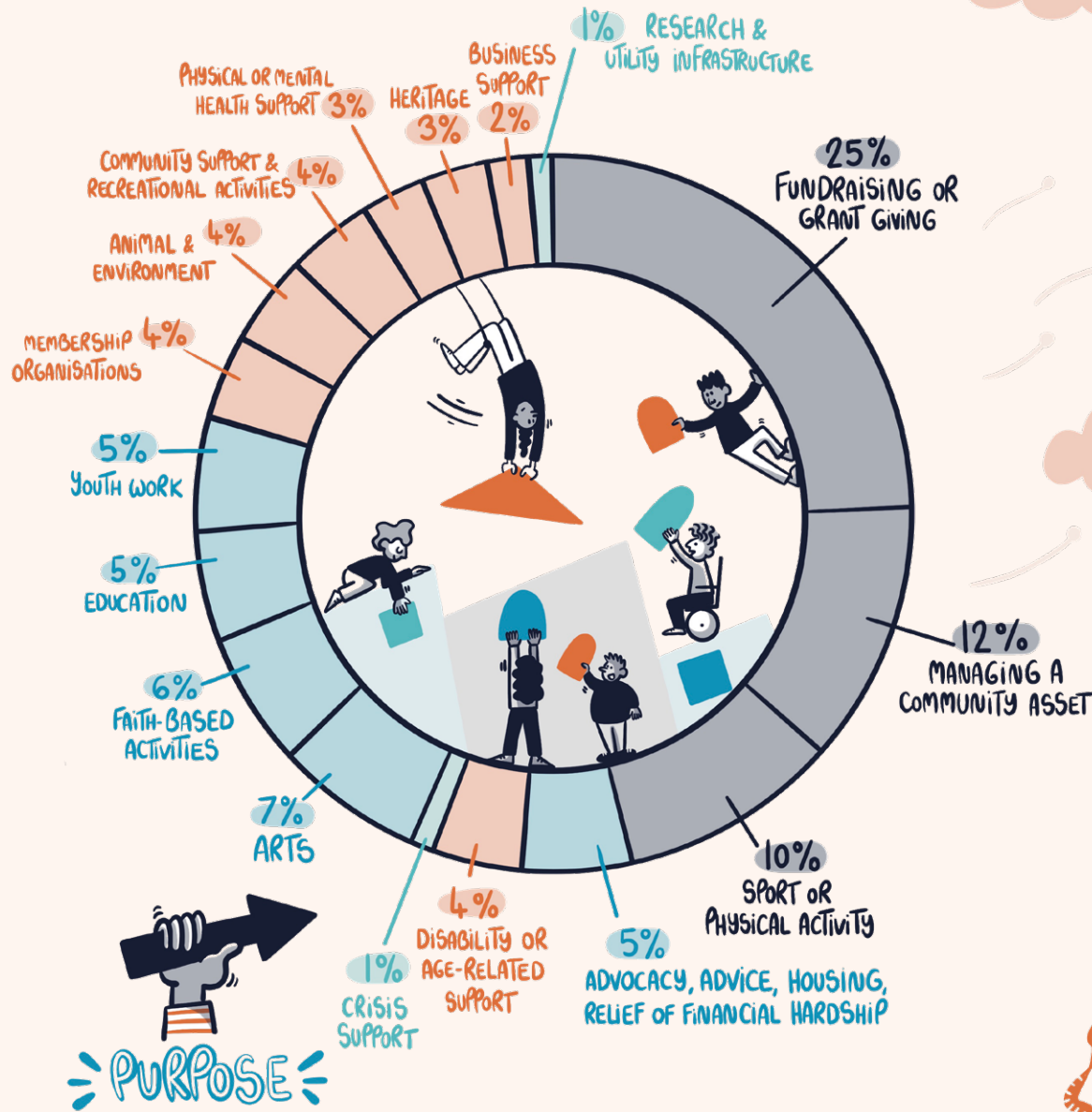


### SOURCE DATA:

- CHARITY COMMISSION
- COMPANIES HOUSE
- THE FINANCIAL CONDUCT AUTHORITY
- HMRC
- LOCAL AUTHORITIES & VCSE INFRASTRUCTURE ORGANISATIONS

INITIAL HITS: 3601

NUMBER OF VCSE ORGANISATIONS REGISTERED & OPERATING IN WORCESTERSHIRE (AFTER DATA CLEANSING): 1904



IN ADDITION TO THIS DATA, THERE ARE MANY HUNDREDS OF UNREGISTERED GRASSROOTS ORGANISATIONS PROVIDING VITAL SUPPORT & SERVICES ACROSS WORCESTERSHIRE. THEIR WORK WILL BE INCLUDED IN PHASE TWO OF THIS PROJECT.

This analysis has been produced by  
 TILLER RESEARCH Ltd  
 Illustrated by  
 CAMILLE AUBRY



# Mental Health Programme

The VCSE Mental Health Programme started in January 2023 and delivery finished in July 2024. The aim of the programme was to support people with mental health or wellbeing challenges and to reduce demand on primary mental health care. The programme was a collaboration between 12 VCSE mental health providers, all working together to support the improvement of services.

While the delivery of this programme has finished, the partners on the now well established VCSE Mental Health Steering Group continue to work together to develop new projects and apply for funding to continue this collaborative way of working.

## The programme consisted of 4 projects:

### Managing Emotions Groups

VCSE delivery partners supported the NHS Neighbourhood Mental Health Teams to reduce waiting lists. This focussed on the delivery of Managing Emotions Groups to people in Redditch (the area with the longest waiting lists for these groups). In 2024, this project expanded to other Worcestershire areas based on those with the longest waiting lists, using the model developed in Redditch.

### Mental Health Link Workers

An expansion of the Community Mental Health Transformation programme, additional Mental Health Link Workers were recruited to support more patients & carers with housing/benefits issues, community engagement and training opportunities.

### Peer Mentoring Programme

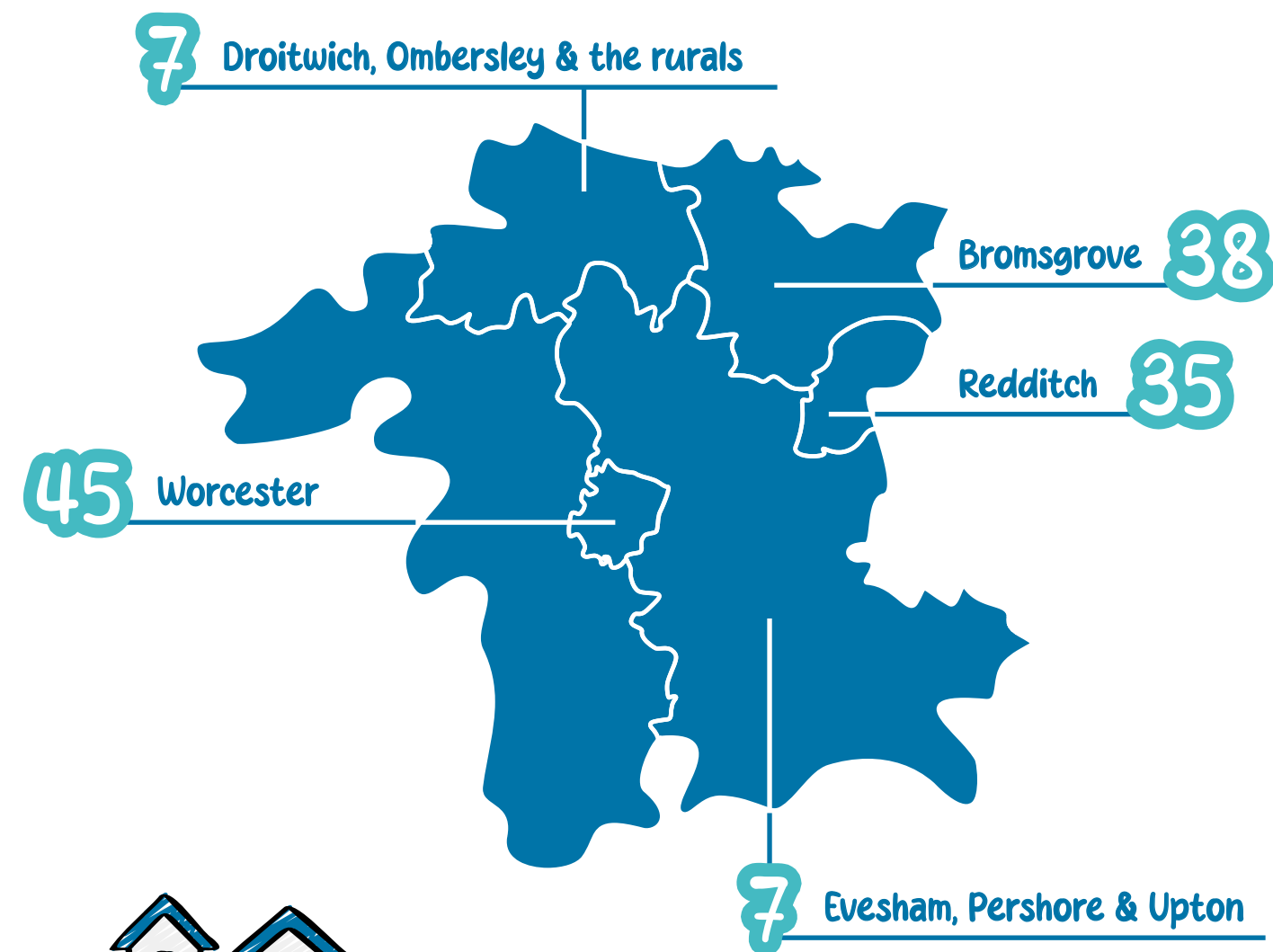
Development of a training programme and recruitment of volunteer peer mentors with lived experience to support others with mental health challenges

### VCSE Mental Health Research

Commissioned by the Alliance to Worcestershire Association of Carers. The aims of the research were to:

- Understand current VCSE Mental Health provision across Worcestershire and to identify organisations who work with high-risk groups and underserved communities, including young people and older adults; low, moderate, and severe mental illness and prevention.
- Identify the diversity and capability of local services currently meeting local need.
- Support commissioner's awareness of the range services available to meet national and local priorities.

# Managing Emotions Groups



Total referrals received from Neighbourhood Mental Health Team

# 149



# Sue Harris

Director of Strategy and Partnerships  
Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust

The partnership between the NHS and VCSE has really seen a step change over the last few years as part of the transformation of community mental health services and the increase in psychological services wrapped around Primary Care Networks, supported by the VCSE Alliance.

When the Trust was experiencing significant workforce challenges in 2022 the sector was able to scale up some of the support already provided, whether this was group work, peer support or expansion of mental health link workers to those areas most affected.

Feedback from all our teams is that relationships on the ground are really positive and genuinely collaborative; multi disciplinary teams are inclusive of VCSE workers and the focus is on working together in a geography (rather than within organisations) providing a much wider offer and greater signposting to other local support.

This method of working is a long way away from traditional concerns around who is qualified to do what and clinical accountability – to one, where the sector are valued partners with a skill set that is complementary to NHS core mental health services.

Given the changing needs of our communities, these agile partnerships are going to be critical to realising our system ambitions around increasing asset based approaches, moving to prevention and reducing health inequalities. Also, these developments with the Alliance and the VCSE sector as a whole provide a tangible roadmap for how to develop more of these models going forward to meet the needs of our communities.

*Sue Harris*

“

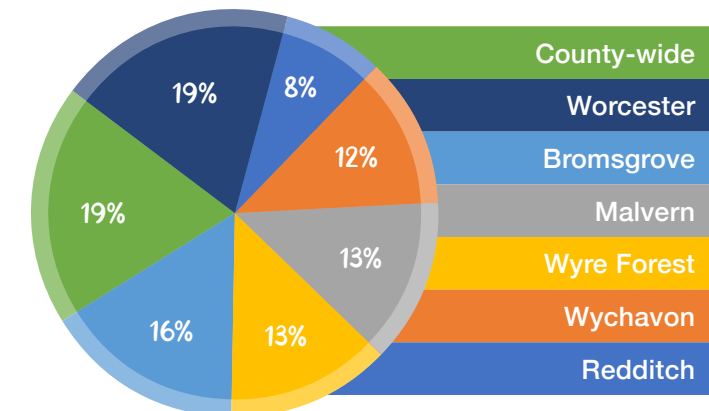
“I have become more positive with my attitude and although being faced with further mountains to climb since the course I have approached them with a better attitude. Yes, I have days where the old me still rules the roost, but those are far fewer.”

”

# Mental Health Research



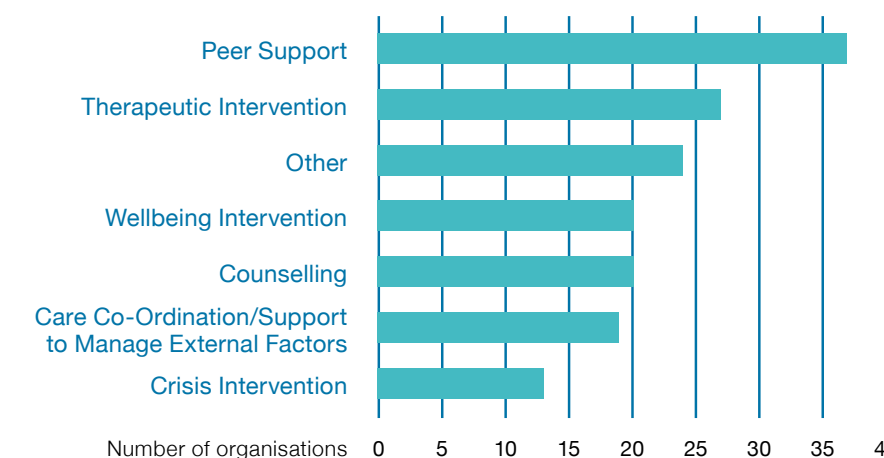
## Delivery of Services – Locations



Here is data from research carried out by Worcestershire Association of Carers highlighting VCSE Mental Health provision in Worcestershire.

Commissioned by the Alliance and funded through the Health and Care NHS Trust

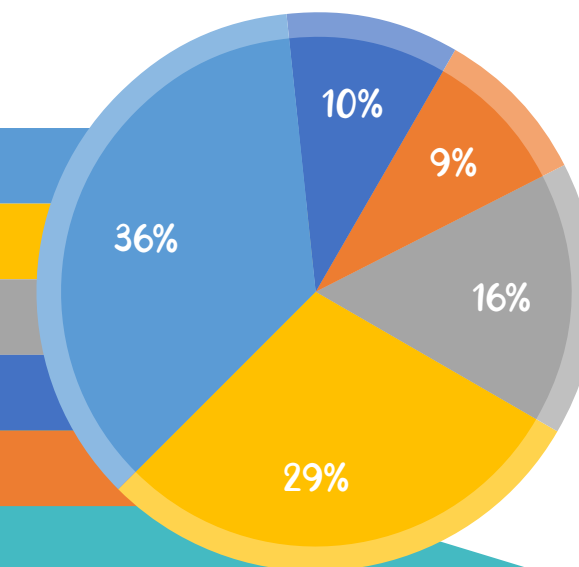
## Types of Intervention Offered



**103**  
organisations  
took part in  
the research

## Types of Delivery Model

- One to One - Face to Face
- One to One - Online/Telephone
- Groups/Peer Support - Face to Face
- Groups/Peer Support - Online
- Other



For the full report please visit:

<https://worcsalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/31/2024/09/Phase-Two-Intelligence-Gathering.pdf>



# Mental Health Programme

## Programme Steering Group

Thanks to the following steering group members who worked collaboratively throughout 2023 and 2024 to develop the programme and explore how further funding can be sought to support local organisations in the provision of mental health prevention services.

- Worcestershire Association of Carers
- Worcester Community Action
- The Sandycroft Centre
- Active Herefordshire and Worcestershire
- Behind the Smile
- Citizens Advice South Worcestershire
- Simply Limitless
- Droitwich Wellbeing Hub
- Worcestershire and South Warwickshire MIND
- ONSIDE
- Community First
- The Old Needle Works Foundation



**Steve Brewster**

*Chair of the Programme Steering Group  
CEO of Active Herefordshire & Worcestershire*



**Sophie Wheeley**

*Mental Health Programme Manager -  
VCSE Alliance*

“My Peer Supporter was a godsend, I wouldn't have been able to go in the library and use the computers without them going with me. This has changed my life“

”

### Delivery organisations:



**108**  
referrals

### Reasons for referral:

- Finance and benefits
- Housing
- Community engagement
- Self help tools and techniques
- Learning & Training opportunities

**11**

Successful Peer Support matches

Referrals made to Peer Support service **15**

**18**

Peer Support mentors recruited & trained

**27**

People supported by Floating Link Workers

**60%**

Of programme participants improved their mental health



# Community Wellbeing Roles Network

This network was established following the Public Health 'Being Well in Worcestershire' event in November 2022. Participants fed back the need for those in community wellbeing roles to meet online, support each other and hear from speakers about key topics that could help them individually and within their organisations.

The network is a safe space for people to share their experiences of working in the community and hopes for future support. Making time to step back, slow down and off-load with peers is important to maintain personal wellbeing, professional development and enhance job satisfaction.

For more information, please visit:

<https://worcsalliance.org/community-wellbeing-roles-network>



“

Working together to help make Worcestershire a better and healthier place to live and work.

”

In 2023-2024 the Network met 3 times with over 50 people attending. In addition, 8 Peer Support sessions were held with over 30 people attending.

## Key speakers included:

- Kim Sales, Director of ICS Academy, who talked about learning opportunities through the VCSE Academy.
- Amber Marquand from Natural England talked about Green Social Prescribing and Nature Connection.
- Victoria King, Social Prescriber from Droitwich, Ombersley & the Rurals PCN talked about the bereavement journey with the local community, and the support that she has developed.

**Community Wellbeing Roles** include, but are not limited to: Community Builder, Community Catalyst, Community Connector – Social Prescribing, Community Development Officer, Community Health Connector, Community Mental Health Link Worker, Disability Employment Advisor, Health and Wellbeing Coach, Neighbourhood Social Prescriber, Social Prescriber, Social Prescribing Link Workers.

The Alliance has developed a useful **guide of community wellbeing roles** and links to other resources which are available on the Alliance website:

<https://worcsalliance.org/a-guide-to-community-wellbeing-roles-in-worcestershire>

128

total meeting attendees



# Research Engagement and Community Health

## What is REACH?

**Research Engagement and Community Health:** Working together for better health through effective research.

**Mission:** To improve health and wellbeing outcomes and address health inequalities through cohesive, targeted and research-informed support for communities in Worcestershire.

**We aim to:**

- (Re) build trust in health and care services across the county
- Increase participation in community health research by diverse and seldom heard groups
- Encourage more consistent use of research evidence around what works in health and social care by the VCSE sector

REACH Worcestershire was the result of collaboration and co-production between self-selecting organisations from the VCSE sector. The original projects that underpin this work were funded by the ICS Research Engagement Network (REN) development programme and Clinical Research Network West Midlands (CRN WM), part of the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR).

The funding aim was to maximise opportunities for people to participate in health and social care research through collaboration with VCSE partners. REACH provides training and development opportunities to become Local Research Leads (LRL), primarily to create a research-positive culture and bring research to underserved communities, increasing local engagement, equality, diversity, and inclusion. In time, this will be used to inform researchers as to the most needed studies in the region and advise how best to engage with local communities as part of a collaborative approach to embedding and sustaining a culture for research across the ICS.

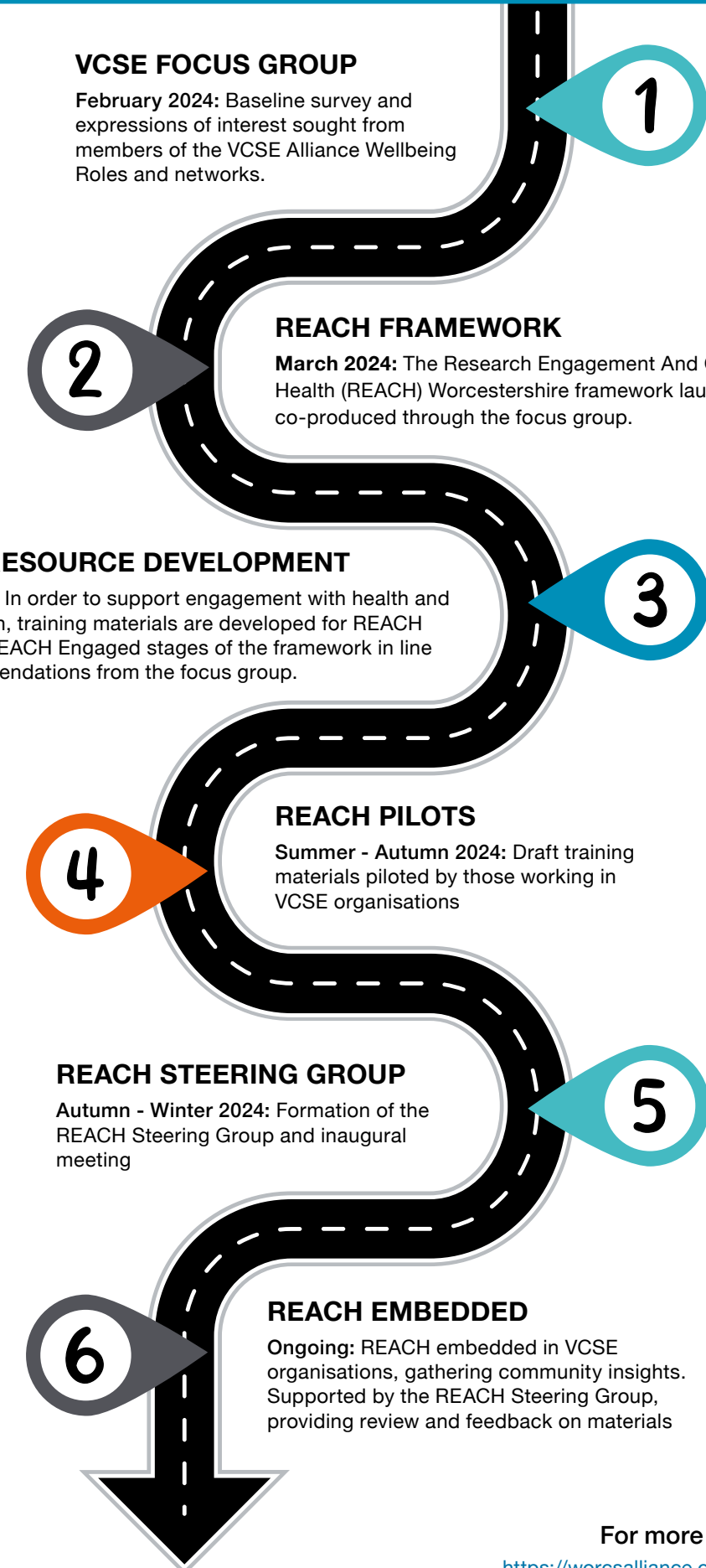
**Sarah Wilkinson**  
Community Health – Research Engagement Lead



**Branwen Bingle**  
Community Health – Research Training Lead



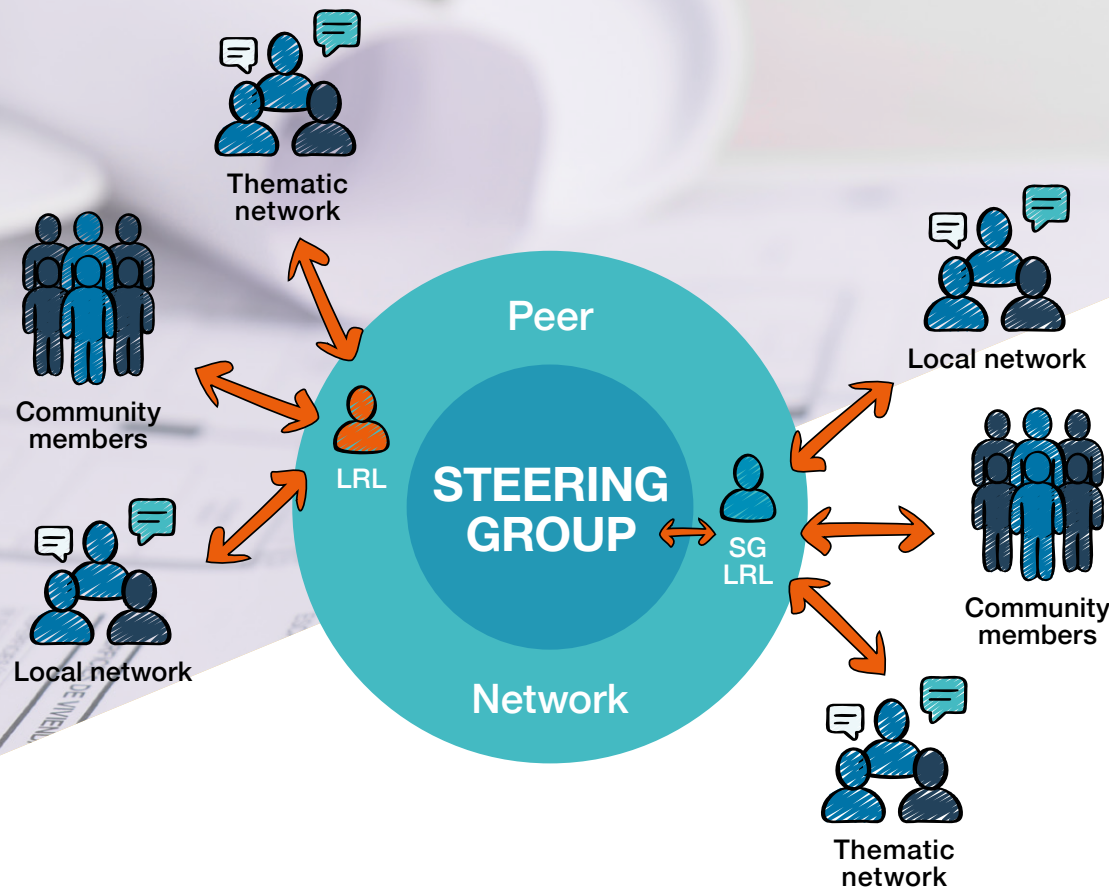
## REACH in Worcestershire



For more information, please visit:  
<https://worcsalliance.org/community-health-research>



# REACH Phases

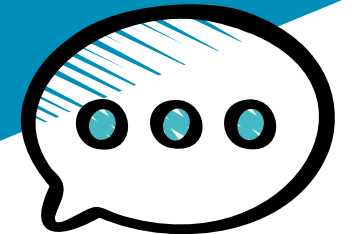


“

“Any organisation that promotes education within the community to develop transparent and honest practices, that will be used by a large network of people across different platforms is an excellent thing in my opinion.”

*(Volunteer Steering Group Member)*

”



## Sam Topping

*Operational Lead for Research and Development  
Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health & Care NHS Trust*

### Phase 1 – Initial Insights, Engagement and consultation (focus group)

- 38 interactions with community groups across the county, with 28 agreeing to follow-up interviews
- 66 Members of the Wellbeing Roles Network and management group surveyed
- 12 members of focus group identified from responses, with additional members joining as a result of dissemination activity
- 5 focus group meetings conducted online
- REACH Worcestershire framework developed with a self-selected focus group representing 16 different VCSE and statutory health and care organisations working in Worcestershire

During co-production, the development group identified that an evidence-based research training programme needed a clear framework to ensure influence at a systemic level. The group also identified the importance of designing training and roles in line with VCSE organisations needs to avoid any unsustainable burden being applied.

### Phase 2 - Community Health Research and Development (ongoing)

- Website repository of open-access resources linked to stages of the framework developed
- Video resource and training guide produced
- Piloting of materials by members of the focus group: case study project identified
- Online version for visually impaired people
  - » print version for visually impaired people
  - » quick start guide for visually impaired people
- Established a Local Research Peer Network

The Research and Development Team at Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust has had the enormous pleasure and privilege of working with the Worcestershire VCSE Alliance over the last year and a half, and together we have delivered two substantial research engagement projects.

The first project was the ‘ICS Community-led Engagement and Research Prioritisation Project’, funded by the National Institute for Health and Social Care Research, Regional Research Delivery Network West Midlands Improvement, and Innovation Strategic Funding. The project aimed to maximise opportunities for people to participate in health and social care research through collaboration with VCSE partners. Through the partnership with Worcestershire Alliance, we explored barriers faced by communities not just when engaging in research but more fundamentally, when accessing services. This was a co-produced activity, reflecting the lived experiences and health agendas of communities.

Dovetailing with this project, we successfully secured funding from NHS England’s Research Engagement Network (REN) to develop a model of research engagement. A county-wide approach resulted in the development of the ‘REACH Worcestershire Framework’ (Research Engagement And Community Health), and additional funding has been secured to move this work through to the next phase of implementation.

Worcestershire VCSE Alliance has been and continues to be crucial in developing and supporting community-led research and engagement in Worcestershire. Outputs from this engagement will contribute towards answering important local research questions, and shape future services.

# Financial Summary

## Purpose of Alliance funding:

- Support those on mental health waiting lists
- Develop new collaborative ways of working with the NHS and VCSE Providers
- Establish community research and engagement projects
- Assess the maturity of how the VCSE is being embedded into the Integrated Care System
- Deliver a VCSE Alliance Assembly and regular Forums
- Support the hosting arrangements for the Alliance and existing posts
- Identify development areas and facilitate partnerships to strengthen services

The VCSE Alliance is not a legal entity. It is currently formed as a collaboration of VCSE organisations. For operational purposes, the Alliance has used host organisations, as follows:

- Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce: Employment of the VCSE Strategic Lead
- Young Solutions: Employment of Alliance staff (other than the VCSE Strategic Lead), financial administration / management and general support
- Worcestershire Community Foundation: Financial administration and management of the VCSE Mental Health Programme

A huge thanks to the Alliance funders



FUNDER	PROJECT/SERVICE	INCOME	EXPENDITURE	DURATION	CARRY FORWARD
Worcestershire County Council	VCSE staff post	£57,000	£57,000	1 Year	£0
Health & Care Trust	VCSE staff post hosting fee	£6,000	£6,000	1 Year	£0
Health & Care Trust	Mental Health Programme	£ 30,774	£26,118	1 Year	£4,656
Health & Care Trust - Direct to VCSE providers	Mental Health Programme	£198,226	£198,226	1 Year	£0
NIHR - Research Engagement & Community Health (REACH)	Research Engagement Project	£42,579	£18,486	Sept to June	£24,093
NHS Research Engagement Network - REACH	Research Training Project	£63,000	£37,911	November to June	£25,089
NHS Research Engagement Network - REACH	Research extension	£19,350	£0	July to March	£19,350
Worcestershire County Council	Chair honorarium and Comms Lead	£8,000	£8,000	1 Year	£0
NHS England	Collaborative Development with the VCSE	£7,500	£0	1 Year	£7,500
<b>Total</b>		<b>£432,429</b>	<b>£351,741</b>		<b>£80,688</b>

A huge thank you to the Alliance's host organisations for their ongoing support.



## Summary of Year 1:

- Total income **£432,429**
- Total expenditure **£351,741**
- Total carry forward of **£80,688**
- New investment secured **£369,429**
- An increase in funding of **49%** from year 1
- Mental health funding of **£198,226** funding directly invested into VCSE providers
- Research investment of **£124,929**





## Contact Us

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 @vcse-worcs-alliance

 @WorcsAll

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