

VSNW
Strategic Plan
2022 – 2025



Who is Voluntary Sector North West (VSNW)?

As England’s first regional Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) infrastructure organisation, we pride ourselves on our unique role as a voice of and support for the full range of voluntary, community and social enterprise activity across the North West.

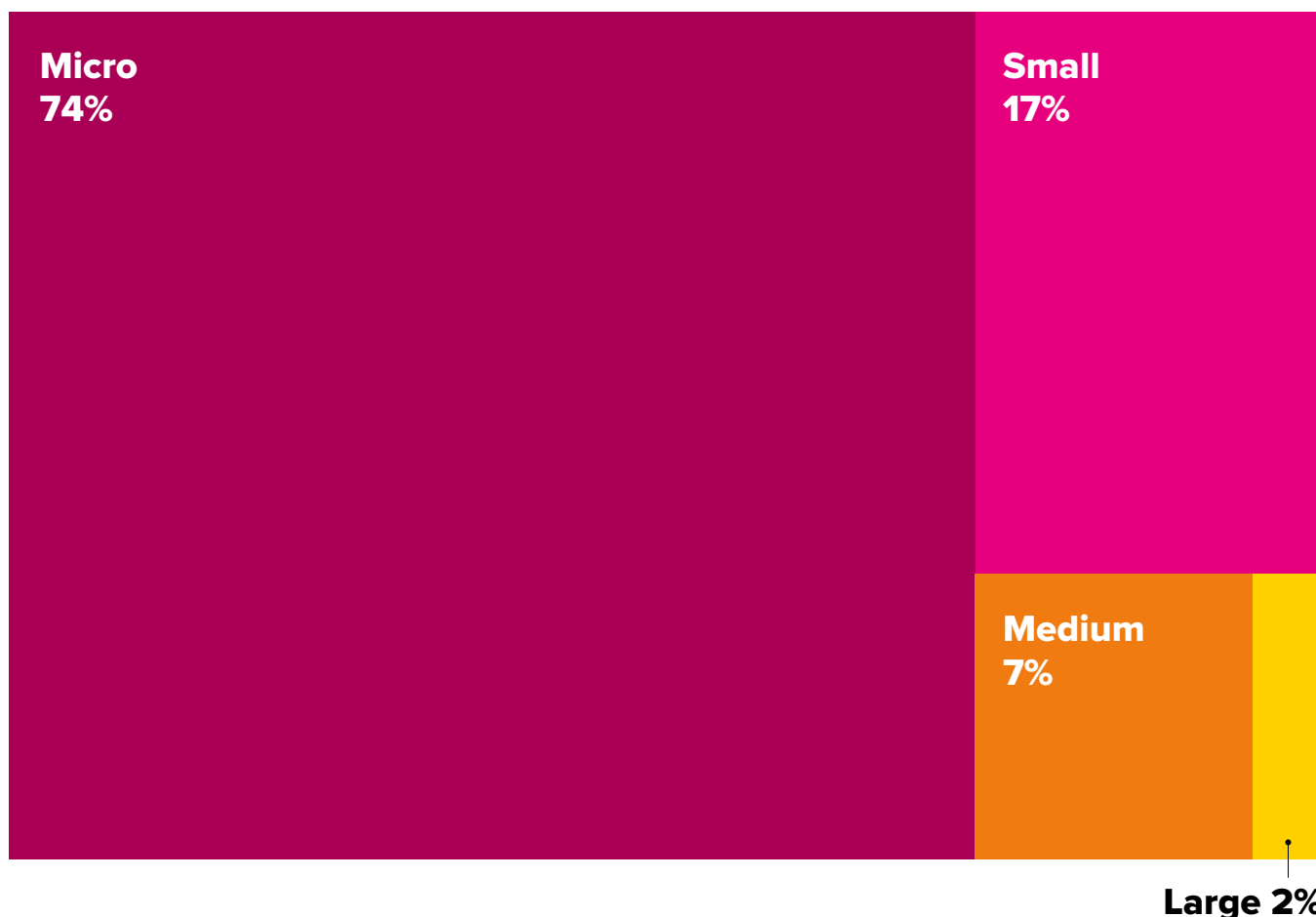
Established in 1997, we are a membership organisation that connects to the region’s Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector through VCSE infrastructure, equalities networks and providers. The latter includes large regional and national providers, while through local infrastructure organisations and equalities networks we look to support

grassroots community organisations that constitute the vast majority of the 40,000 plus groups working in the North West.

Core to our work are our partners and members. As of 31st March 2022, we have a membership of 125 full members and 49 associates. Associates do not meet the full membership criteria but look to support and engage with VSNW and our mission. We also facilitate key partnerships working in the subregions wherever and whenever we can. This includes the VS6 Partnership operating across Liverpool City Region and the Greater Manchester VCSE Devolution Reference Group.

Make-up of the VCSE Sector in the North West by income

(Micro = under £10k, Small = £10k-£100k, Medium = £100k-£1m, Large = £1m+)



Our Mission

To work together to enable the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector to positively shape the future of the North West.

Our Vision

Through the strengths of the VCSE sector, put communities in charge of driving change.

Our Values

- **Making Connections** by bringing together organisations from the full range of the VCSE and facilitating partnerships.
- **Being Ingenious** through the use of innovative solutions and making use of knowledge taken from all sectors.
- **Creating Change** and driving positive improvements within the VCSE sector and across the North West region as a whole.
- **Adding Value** to existing work through the facilitation of partnerships and providing specialist knowledge of the sector.
- **Challenging Inequality** in all forms where it exists, by providing a voice and ensuring the inclusion of equalities organisations in key partnerships.



Blackpool Tower, Lancashire

What does VSNW do?

Our mandate and our role derive from our relationship with VCSE organisations and leaders in the constituent parts of the North West: Cheshire, Cumbria, Greater Manchester, Lancashire and Liverpool City Region.

In order to best support the 40,000 plus VCSE groups operating in the North West to the best of our capacity, the emphasis is twofold:

1. Ensuring that each subregion of the North West has the support it requires. By this, we mean: the sector has access to an effective subregional partnership with a sector vision, which draws down investment and that influences and effects positive change.
 2. We develop our voice through the voices of the sector so that the interests of the VCSE sector in the North West are evidenced and articulated.
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Ensuring our work delivers our objectives & aims

The Trustee Board of VSNW reviews the aims, objectives and activities of the charity each year in order to ensure activities remain focused on our stated purposes. The trustees established in consultation with member organisations, a Strategic Plan for 2019-2022. The following four strategic aims were established:

- Increase **connectivity** within the sector
- Support sector to **influence**
- Demonstrate the **value** of VSNW and the sector as a whole
- Build an effective NW VCSE leadership **organisation**

A Reflection on Our Achievements 2019-22

Since 2019 we have achieved some great work – here are some of our highlights across our 4 strategic aims.



1. Increase Connectivity Within the VCSE Sector

Supporting and building the capacity of sub-regional VCSE partnerships is the foundation of our operating model. Our vision is to play our part in developing and/or supporting healthy, connected partnerships that deliver value for the sector in each sub-region.

We know that we have limited resources, and that this is the best way to add value, building on local networks and relationships.

VSNW has provided formal support to VCSE partnerships operating in Cheshire and Warrington, Liverpool City Region, Lancashire and Greater Manchester. As Cumbria CVS provides this function in Cumbria, we have not sought to duplicate but to build links and offer a different model of support through Cumbria CVS.

Liverpool City Region

In Liverpool City Region, VSNW provides secretariat support to the VS6 Partnership whose members support and are connected to the 8,600 VCSE organisations in the City Region. The team play a vital role in developing the partnership's policy, communications and engagement work. We (VS6 and VSNW) have worked hard developing effective mechanisms to connect the wider sector into City Region policy and influence work, using cascaded communications, developing the VS6 website (www.vs6partnership.org.uk), holding virtual assemblies, and using consultation surveys. Building on this model, Lottery investment started in August 2022, allowing us to embed this model and continue to support the wider engagement of the sector in partnership with the VS6 Partnership. An important element of this was supporting the formation of an independently chaired City Region race equality VCSE group.

 **8,600**

VS6 Partnership are connected to the 8,600 VCSE organisations in the Liverpool City Region

 **17,000**

The Greater Manchester VCSE Leadership group has links to 17,000 VCSE organisations

 **400**

Locally organised communities across Lancashire (LOCAL) engaged over 400 VCSE leaders in a collective statement on ambitions for the Lancashire's 10,000 VCSE organisations.

 **60**

Cheshire and Merseyside VCSE Health and Social Care Leadership Group links 60 plus VCSE Leaders from across 9 boroughs and with links to 14,600 groups.

Greater Manchester

In Greater Manchester (GM), the Greater Manchester VCSE Leadership Group (facilitated and chaired by VSNW) connects to a broad range of VCSE networks: disability, Black Asian and Minority Ethnic, older people, young people, LGBTQ+, faith, carers, mental health, sport, refugee, women, local VCSE



The Three Graces, Liverpool City Region

infrastructure, including 10GM and GMCVO, social enterprise, and VCSE providers, with links, through infrastructure organisations and equalities networks, to the 17,000 VCSE organisations in Greater Manchester. The Leadership Group's main bulletin has over 2,000 direct contacts. As a Leadership Group, as part of connecting to the wider sector, we use formal working groups (commissioning, inclusive economy, population health, workforce, GM VCSE mental health leaders and GM=EqAI), short term task and finish groups, focused networks (eg homelessness), assembly events, consultations, and roadshow events being held with leaders in the ten boroughs.

Through the Greater Manchester Answer Cancer Programme, over 200 organisations have committed, with their staff, volunteers and beneficiaries, to preventing and tackling cancer.

Cheshire

In Cheshire, we have helped set up the Cheshire and Warrington Infrastructure Partnership (CWIP). Formed during the pandemic, this partnership played a vital role in sharing PPE and feeding into the national VCSE Emergency Partnership work via VSNW. This group, through the Cheshire and Warrington Community Foundation, links to the Local Enterprise Partnership as part of assessing the impact of the pandemic on local communities through CWIP's community pulse survey.

To complement the NHS footprint, the Cheshire and Merseyside VCSE Health and Social Care Leadership Group links 60 plus VCSE Leaders from across 9 boroughs and with links to 14,600 groups. This includes: CVS, VCSE Place Board representatives, and equalities and specialist VCSE Providers. This group links to the NHS Board, ensures accountability to the sector and provides a platform for connecting the sector more broadly.

Lancashire

In Lancashire, we (VSNW and local VCSE Leaders) have worked alongside the VCSE Health Alliance in order to support a connected and influential sector. As part of this work, we have developed a collective statement on ambitions for the local sector (a draft VCSE Manifesto for the Lancashire sector). There has been an extensive consultation and campaign with the Lancashire sector: Locally Organised Communities Across Lancashire (LOCAL) using a dedicated website (LocalLancashire.org.uk), surveys, workshop toolkits with sessions run by VSNW and Lancashire VCSE Leaders. The model has been praised by local VCSE and public sector partners and we have engaged over 400 VCSE leaders and held or supported over two dozen workshops. Going forward, we will explore a broader Leadership support offer linked to the collective ambitions outlined in the manifesto.

North West

Our series of North West events to connect VCSE leaders across the region, culminated in our highly acclaimed online 'Festival of North West Thinking'. This event gave opportunity for over 200 VCSE leaders from right across the region to connect around a series of events.

We also hosted the North West Social Prescribing Network with over 300 people signed up to a dedicated bulletin. Working alongside Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale CVS and a network of CVS across the

North West, we support the regional VCSE Social Prescribing programme (Thriving Communities) working closely with partners from the National Academy of Social Prescribing (NASP). This included running a regional learning programme for the sector. In 2021/22, this included 82 regular VCSE participants attending the 10 sessions.

Through our role in North West Voices supporting the regional NHS equalities work, we have proven the ability of the local sector (in Cheshire, Merseyside and Lancashire) to connect with and interview 800 marginalised citizens about the impact of COVID. Those interviewed include homeless people, digitally excluded, young people not in employment, education or training, older people not in work and those for whom English is a second language.

For 10 years, the Green Bullet has run in partnership with CPRE NW has kept North West Environment Link members and wider VCSE networks up to date on environmental events and issues.

Following a review of VSNW membership, this stood at 125 full members and 49 associates and we have a general contact list of over

 **200**

Over 200 organisations have committed to preventing and tackling cancer through the Greater Manchester Answer Cancer Programme.

 **300**

Over 300 people signed up to North West Social Prescribing Network

 **10 years**

The Green Bullet has kept North West Environment Link members and wider VCSE networks up to date on environmental events and issues for 10 years

2,500 VCSE Chief Executives and senior staff across the region signed up to our bulletins: VSNW, GM Leadership, VS6 Partnership, Social Prescribing, GM Cancer Champions and the Green Bullet.

2. Enable Influence

Liverpool City Region

The VS6 Partnership of Liverpool City Region (LCR) have had an extremely busy and productive year in 2022 advocating for the local sector. The VCSE Manifesto was codesigned with the sector and the City Region Metro Mayor committed to supporting its implementation. The LCR VCSE sector is recognised as a local economic partner.

As champions for the LCR VCSE sector, VS6 have supported a growth in VCSE representation across the City Region. This includes key representatives on each of the three main governance bodies operating in Liverpool City Region: the Combined Authority Board (Ellen Loudon, VS6 Chair), the Local Enterprise Partnership Board (Angela White, Sefton CVS CEO) and on NHS Cheshire and Merseyside main board (Warren Escadale, VSNW Chief Executive), alongside a growing set of boards, such as the LCR Economic Recovery Panel.

In consultation with the sector, VS6 developed a business case for VCSE sector recovery which was included within the City Region's Economic Recovery Plan, "Build Back Better", and submitted to Government. This included a number of substantial investment propositions via the sector including a jointly proposed Sector Resilience and Capacity Fund, which has now been included in the Combined Authority's Social Value Framework.

As part of this commitment, considerable portions of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund have been earmarked for the VCSE sector as the lead on delivery (£6.635m or 15% between 2022 and 2025). There will be considerable additional opportunities for VCSE groups over and above this investment. This is in addition to the Combined Authority's commitment to delivering the manifesto, LCR Cares and the LCR Cares Grant Programme, which has previously invested (£0.5m) in the sector's role in community wealth building, tackling digital exclusion, supporting mental wellbeing and building volunteering support.

Through VS6, VSNW have continued to support the implementation of the LCR VCSE Manifesto for 2021-2024. The main elements are outlined elsewhere in this report but this also includes helping VS6 to secure a piece of work mapping the sector's role in a Sustainable, Affordable and Inclusive Food Strategy.

Cheshire and Merseyside

Across Cheshire and Merseyside, we are supporting and promoting the VCSE role in health neighbourhoods and primary care, Integrated Care Partnerships, and place-based working. An important aspect of this is developing relationships with acute and community health providers. We are a key partner in the C&M NHS strategy and implementation.



Runcorn Widnes Bridge, Cheshire



Through VS6, VSNW have continued to support the implementation of the LCR Manifesto for 2021-2024



New 5 year Accord agreement in GM between the VCSE sector, the Combined Authority and the NHS from 2021-2026



NHS Cheshire and Merseyside have committed to a larger transformation programme in 2022/23 of £400k plus

VSNW supported and promoted the VCSE role in health neighbourhoods and primary care, Integrated Care Partnerships, and place-based working. In 2020/21, over 200 local VCSE leaders contributed to the development of sub-regional NHS strategy and to developing the framework for joint NHS-VCSE work in Cheshire and Merseyside. With secondments appointed by this leadership group, we supported local pandemic responses, NHS hospital discharge coordination, PPE distribution and volunteer coordination activity.

Going forward, NHS Cheshire and Merseyside have committed to a larger VCSE Transformation Programme in 2022/23 (£400k+) which includes large-scale investment in VCSE-place partnership working.

A central part of our NHS work has been supporting the development of Place-VCSE partnership framework. This work has been incorporated into the Cheshire and Merseyside self-assessment of Place (equivalent to the local authority footprint in this instance) working. This included a focused piece of work exploring how Places can transform or step up their work with the local sector in Sefton: ‘Sefton VCF Sector at the Frontline of Transformation’.

Greater Manchester

In Greater Manchester (GM), we have continued to develop the “template for VCSE involvement in Devolution across England” through the work of our members, partners and the GM VCSE Leadership Group. Through this work, a large number (over 30 reps at any point in time) of VCSE representatives have been appointed to key public sector boards and working groups, linking back through the Leadership Group to ensure focused, accountable representation and the full inclusion of the sector in shaping Greater Manchester.

Major achievements include a new five year Accord agreement in Greater Manchester between the VCSE sector, the Combined Authority and the NHS from 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2026, with core activity funding for VCSE equalities, inclusive economy, health, local infrastructure and provider delivery activity. Key activities in the Accord include: tackling inequality, creating an inclusive economy, building a stronger VCSE Ecosystem, developing a joint workforce approach, and implementing the VCSE Commissioning Framework in order to build the sector’s financial resilience. The team have



Salford Quays Greater Manchester

played an essential and vital role in this work. Warren Escadale, VSNW Chief Executive, has chaired the GM VCSE Leadership Group.

Additional investment has landed with the sector through the influence of VSNW, sector leaders and the partnerships and collaborations that VSNW has helped establish. These include: £600k for VCSE equalities groups for mental wellbeing work (with a further £300k for 2022/23); 12 month VCSE Workforce project £300k to start in 2022; £240k PCN and population health project to start in 2022; and an additional year’s investment for a VCSE cancer screening programme (£500k) with grant investment for VCSE equalities groups (Answer Cancer).

Other major achievements in Greater Manchester include development of a Build Back Fairer framework with public sector partners (Marmot) and pump priming an Alternative Provider Federation to link the sector into the new, local NHS provider collaborative.

In terms of our role in the Greater Manchester Answer Cancer programme, the Answer Cancer Team has developed resources (in 14 community languages), case studies, and outreach strategies in order to build the evidence base for how to engage specific communities. This work includes case studies on supporting population health and prevention work with Black Asian and minority ethnic, disability, LGBTQ+, mental health,

and carer groups and in communities of financial poverty. Answer Cancer continues to demonstrate the capacity of the VCSE sector, with over 200 organisations involved, to drive prevention in communities where previous approaches have been less successful.

North West

Nationally, through the North West Thriving Communities programme, we have continued to champion the sector's role in social prescribing advocating for investment for sector referrals and the VCSE role in being adequately funded link worker hosts. We

are working with the National Academy for Social Prescribing (NASP) and a unique VCSE partnership led by Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale CVS to deliver the regional Thriving Communities programme. We continue to campaign for the sector's role as part of the National Social Prescribing Network and supported last year's virtual International Social Prescribing Conference. As part of this work, we codesigned a set of principles for better working with the VCSE sector, SP9 Principles, which have been promoted nationally through NASP, NAVCA and the National Social Prescribing Network.

3. Demonstrate value of VSNW and the sector as a whole

The VCSE sector is recognised as a core economic partner for Liverpool City Region Combined Authority. Over £7m has been earmarked for VCSE delivery and for VCSE leadership in that delivery.

In Greater Manchester, the sector is also seen a core partner. The Combined Authority has earmarked five years' investment for the GM VCSE Leadership Group. The new Health and Care Partnership is matching this investment. Both have signed the GM VCSE Accord. This sits alongside £2.5m investment in the sector with further investment proposed through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UK SPF). Delivery of over £1m UK SPF will be led on by VCSE local infrastructure.

The Cheshire and Merseyside Health and Care Partnership is investing in a sizeable VCSE Transformation Programme.

Through the NHS Charities Community Partnership programme, VSNW helped to secure £1.1m investment in local VCSE organisations in Cheshire and Merseyside. This two year investment has been used to



£20M

Over the last 3 years VSNW has supported additional investment into the NW VCSE sector of over £20M

fund NHS-VCSE pilot projects. Pilots include supporting BAME communities to access health services in East Cheshire and developing a sector-wide hospital discharge model with Halton and Warrington Hospital and the local CVS.

Alongside this, our NHS transformation work has secured and piloted the VCSE role in a maternal wellbeing programme across Cheshire and Merseyside. This has included a successful small grants programme (£180K) where 24 organisations delivered 38 perinatal wellbeing support projects across Cheshire and Merseyside with over 10,000 families benefiting.

VSNW also developed a set of principles for VCSE/Community Mental Health Provider Partnership working. This helped secure additional VCSE investment in a number of places (c.£400k to date) and is shaping further discussions.

In Lancashire, the County Council has committed to working with the sector and collaborating on the VCSE Manifesto. Reorganisation, across all partners, has delayed this work. The UK Shared Prosperity Fund discussions have occurred at district and borough levels.

Nationally, we have maintained our links to NHS England's voluntary sector team. Over the past five years, we have successfully lobbied for a VCSE Partnership programme, linked to the NHS's 42 Integrated Care Systems (ICS), modelled on our work in Greater Manchester, to be rolled out. VCSE Partnerships or Alliances are now established right across England, generally with six-figure annual local investment and clear goals for improved NHS-VCSE working, this includes



Mossforce, Lake District National Park, Cumbria

Cumbria, Greater Manchester, North East and North Cumbria). The sector now has representatives invited to the main NHS Board in all 42 areas as default.

Over the last three years, VSNW has supported additional investment into the North West VCSE sector of over £20m. However, we know that our work and the partnerships we work with and for, have created far more investment than this for the local sector, far beyond what any single VCSE organisations could hope to achieve.

4. An effective NW VCSE leadership organisation

Over the last three years, we have: Built our capacity, increased income, maintained our reserves, developed organisational and governance processes, and built our strategic connections to VCSE leaders across the North West.

We are now moving to a point where we no longer rely on one or two staff operating as exceptional individuals but creating a fit for purpose organisation that has sufficient

capacity to help the sector to connect, influence, and drive change for the benefit of our communities.

Going forward, the Board has committed to investing reserves and developing an expanded staff team for the next three years, so that we can increase our capacity to support the sector in Lancashire, Cumbria and on a North West footprint, while maintaining and developing local partnerships.

Strategic Priorities 2022-25



Strategic priority

What will we do by 2025?



Increase connectivity within the sector

- **Support healthy VCSE partnerships across the North West**
 - › Cheshire and Warrington Infrastructure Partnership
 - › VS6 Partnership
 - › Greater Manchester VCSE Leadership Group
 - › Lancashire Leaders
 - › Cumbria CVS and the Cumbria Third Sector Network
- **Support VCSE collaboration**
- **Share learning**
- **Help VCSE Leaders to connect, network and collaborate**



Enable influence for sector

- **Develop collective strategies and implementation plans**
 - › LCR VCSE Manifesto
 - › GM VCSE Accord
 - › LOCAL Lancashire VSF Manifesto
- **Investment:**
Support effective investment for the sector – UK Shared Prosperity Fund, NHS investment, Funders
- **Equalities:**
Support VCSE equalities representatives to network and influence
- **Campaign:**
Support each sub-region to create impact through one additional, high profile, campaign that is important to them
- **Influence:**
 - › Social Prescribing
 - › Local economic development
 - › Health inequality
 - › Health & Social Care systems
 - › NHS Provider Collaboratives
- **Fight for...**
 - › VCSE Ecosystem
 - › VCSE Workforce
 - › Greener Communities

Strategic priority

What will we do by 2025?



Demonstrate value of VSNW and the sector as a whole

- NW VCSE Impact monitoring system in place, with VCSE Leader vox pox
- NW VCSE Online Intelligence and Evidence Resource Hub
- Training and webinars on latest VCSE research intelligence
- Sub-regions have access to a recent 'State of the Sector' research findings
- An affordable public affairs offer for members, including routes to:
 - › Northern Powerhouse
 - › NHS
 - › NW political leaders
 - › National VCSE agencies
 - › Thinktanks



An effective voice for the NW VCSE Sector

- Be a clear voice for the sector on:
 - › Issues impacting the sector
 - › Issues impacting communities and communities of interest
- Be a clear voice for the sector on:
 - › Social Prescribing
 - › Economic role of sector
 - › VCSE role in health inequality
 - › VCSE role in H&SC health neighbourhood, place and system
 - › VCSE role in relation to NHS Provider Collaboratives
 - › VCSE Ecosystem
 - › VCSE Workforce
 - › Greener Communities
- Support the voice of NW VCSE Leaders
- Facilitate conversations and answers: Listen, Value and Invest in the VCSE Sector
- Increase VSNW Membership

To find out more about how we are going to deliver the strategic plan, please visit www.vsnw.org.uk

If you are interested in joining our Board, please contact Yen Siang Tan, VSNW's Operations Manager.

The regional voluntary sector network for the North West. Ensuring the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector, in all its diversity, takes its full part in shaping the future of the North West.

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