



Cheshire and Merseyside VCFSE News

April 2025

Welcome to our April update for voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) colleagues in Cheshire and Merseyside (C&M).

Some of you will already be receiving our news directly, or via your local infrastructure organisation and this email complements that and is another way to share our updates with you.

We hope you find this newsletter useful and we encourage you to share it in full, or any of its content with your networks.

You can also find past and future editions online [here](#).

Updates

Latest on NHS reforms

More details have started to emerge about the [structural reforms to the NHS](#) and the halving of internal running costs of integrated care boards (ICBs).

In a [letter to local NHS leaders](#) on 1 April, NHS England suggested some internal functional areas – like communications and engagement and assurance and regulation - that ICBs might look at closely as they work up plans for where they'll make their internal savings – with those plans prepared by May and cuts carried out by October.

ICBs are currently not being asked to look at external budgets for things like programmes. However our system is still running at a deficit and so may be asked to make further cuts.

The letter and other recent publications from NHS England suggest the role of ICBs will be changing - particularly in the part they play in managing hospitals - and you can read an overview of the wider reforms on the [NHS Confederation's website](#) along with an assessment of what this may mean for [integrated care systems \(ICSs\)](#).

Overview of NHS C&M March board

Chair Raj Jain's regular update opened with his reflections on a meeting of his counterparts and chief executives from all 42 ICBs on 13 March, which centred on

the state of the country's finances, the impact of this on the NHS and informing them of [reforms to the health service](#).

Raj's report reminded board members that C&M has the biggest deficit of all systems despite ranking in the middle of all ICBs, when seen as a percentage of its large overall budget.

Place directors combined report gives an overview of what's been happening in your area of C&M, as well as reporting the top five common risks, including delays in neurodevelopment assessments, urgent care flow and safeguarding capacity.

Also on the agenda was a presentation from the C&M Cancer Alliance, a case for change paper from Liverpool adult acute and specialist service providers and an update on public engagement about the city's gynaecology and maternity services.

- You can find papers and a recording of the meeting on the [NHSC&M website](#)
- You can read the latest finance report for the ICS from p29
- You can find the place directors report from p112
- Our VSNW chief executive, Warren Escadale is a full partner member of the NHSC&M board representing VCFSE – send any queries for him to warren.escadale@vsnw.org.uk

Pan North West Event: Strengthening Research Engagement and Collaboration



You can read our Cheshire and Merseyside VCFSE Research Coordinator's reflections on the recent pan North West event hosted by the research engagement network (REN) teams across the North West. The blog post shares recommendations for building more inclusive and equitable partnerships between researchers and VCFSE organisations.

[Read more](#)

Understanding the Proposed Benefit Changes

VSNW has published a summary and analysis of proposed national reforms to the benefits system. This piece is designed to help VCFSE organisations better understand the implications for their communities and service users.

The briefing outlines:

- Key themes of the consultation, including benefit system reforms, employment support, and employer responsibilities.
- How to respond effectively, emphasising evidence over opinion.
- Alternative approaches, such as public campaigning and political engagement.
- The full list of consultation questions to help organisations shape their responses.

[Read more](#)

Opportunities and Resources

BRIDGE Research Network - Join our Testing Phase!



VSNW is developing the **BRIDGE Research Network**, set to pilot in Cheshire and Merseyside. BRIDGE is a new platform designed to connect healthcare professionals, academic researchers, and community organisations to collaborate on meaningful, community-driven research.

This is your opportunity to explore the platform, connect with others, and contribute to shaping its development. Get involved and help us build a stronger research ecosystem together!

[Read more](#)

State of the Sector 2023



The *State of the Sector 2023* report for Cheshire and Merseyside remains a valuable tool for the region's VCFSE organisations. It provides reliable, up-to-date data on the size, scope and economic contribution of the sector - information that's vital for influencing policy, strengthening funding bids, and supporting collaborative working.

[Read more](#)

Events

Improving Public Services in Partnership in Liverpool City Region - VS6 Event



Join VS6 and Liverpool City Region Combined Authority for an assembly exploring public service reform and innovation.

We will be shining a spotlight on the VCFSE sector's critical role in driving change and shaping the future of public service delivery to reduce inequalities and improve life chances.

Date: Monday 28th April

Time: 10am-12pm

Location: Quaker Meeting House, Liverpool

Registration closes on 25th April at 9am.

[Register here](#)

Invitation to Cheshire and Warrington Careers Hub Employer Conference

VCFSE colleagues are invited to attend the Cheshire and Warrington Careers Hub Employer Conference on Wednesday 14 May, 8.30am-4pm at [De Vere Cranage Estate](#).

The event is free to attend but spaces are limited, so please book your place as soon as possible via [Eventbrite](#), where you'll also find details of what will be covered during the session.

[Register here](#)

Subscribe and Feedback

If you didn't receive this newsletter directly from VSNW, you can [subscribe here](#) to ensure you don't miss future updates.

We'd love to hear your thoughts on this new update—what's useful, what could be improved, and how we can make it more relevant to you and your work. **Share your feedback with us at** cmhcl@vsnw.org.uk

Thank you for your continued support and engagement. If you have any updates or opportunities you'd like us to share in future newsletters, please contact cmhcl@vsnw.org.uk



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