



## ROLE DESCRIPTION

### **Independent Chair of the Somerset VCFSE Assembly**

12-month freelance contract, valued at £8,000 for the entire project

3-4 days per month, to include weekly availability for phone and email communication

Working with Steering Group and Spark Somerset

6-month probationary period

Flexible hybrid working from home, the Spark Somerset office at Hambridge, and across the county

**We're on a mission to help change lives and build healthy, resilient communities in Somerset.**

We do this by supporting and championing voluntary and community organisations and providing a range of services, training and advice. We also believe that everyone should have the opportunity to thrive and so we work with local partners to provide volunteering opportunities for all.

Integral to this is the Somerset VCFSE (voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise) Assembly, which is facilitated by Spark Somerset and aims to strengthen the voice and influence of the sector, enabling VCFSE groups to have a say on the issues that affect the health and wellbeing of the people and communities they support.

The Assembly is part of a formal engagement framework that is being developed in collaboration with NHS Somerset, Somerset Council, and the Somerset Group of Charities, and is essential to our work to engage with the statutory sector. For further information, please refer to the background context on page four of this document.

The Somerset VCFSE Assembly now requires some dedicated strategic leadership capacity to build on achievements to date. As Independent Chair, you will be part of a team responsible for nurturing and maintaining a relationship of trust, collaboration and co-production across the Somerset VCFSE sector, the Assembly, and our strategic partners.

If you are a curious, tenacious and diplomatic leader, with a deep understanding of the Somerset VCFSE sector and a passion for partnership working, then we would love to hear from you!

### **Key responsibilities**

The Independent Chair will provide leadership, strategic direction and oversight. It is vital that the Independent Chair acts in an impartial and inclusive manner, and declares any interests that may be construed as influencing their independence and impartiality, in accordance with the Nolan Principles of Public Life.

## **As Independent Chair, you will:**

- Chair the Leadership Group and hold it accountable to the sector during this development period
- Take responsibility, supported by Spark Somerset and VCFSE colleagues, for leading the collaborative model of the Assembly at strategic level by bringing together the VCFSE to co-produce a clear strategic plan for the VCFSE Assembly. This will include the following elements:
  - Governance Model
  - Sustainable Investment Model (to include the diversity of funding sources)
  - Strategic Engagement
  - Insight & Intelligence Sharing
  - Communications and outreach (key messaging oversight)
- Be the face of the Assembly and advocate for it as a respected and valued mechanism for the VCFSE sector to connect, work together and to facilitate the engagement of the wider VCFSE sector through chairing local collaborative conversation events.
- Work with Spark Somerset and VCFSE colleagues to ensure that external stakeholders and ICS/ statutory partners are aware of the opportunities that the Assembly can offer for them and Somerset's communities
- To explore where the VCFSE Assembly might be aligned with strategic priorities to increase opportunities for influencing developments across Somerset.
- Facilitate opportunities to engage the sector to co-design the future Assembly model, to support and promote the VCFSE for the benefit of the people we support
- Be abreast of the learning and experiences of other VCFSE Assembly models across the UK to inform the development of Somerset's approach and to share our experiences.

## **You should have:**

- Strong leadership skills
- Experience of strategic engagement
- A passion for grassroots/community-based service design and delivery in the VCFSE
- Partnership working within the VCFSE sector
- Vision and enthusiasm for the Assembly model
- Collaborative co-design and co-production experience
- Solution-focused approach
- Strong chairing skills
- Cross-sectoral working and development of strategic alignments
- Governance and accountability experience
- Communications and engagement skills
- Financial and business development planning
- Ability to take an even-handed approach to decision-making

**You will be:**

- Person-centred
- Inclusive
- Collaborative
- Transparent
- Honest
- Flexible

**We will provide:**

- Flexibility and remote working options
- Open and friendly team environment

**Diversity and inclusivity**

A diverse voice is a more powerful voice. Diversity in our people brings new viewpoints and this drives debate and creativity, which is key to successful campaigning and an ability to engage new audiences. As such, we encourage applications from people who belong to groups which are often marginalised in society.

**To apply**

To apply, please submit your CV and a supporting statement (not to exceed more than 2 sides of A4) outlining your skills and experience and reasons for applying to [recruitment@sparksomerset.org.uk](mailto:recruitment@sparksomerset.org.uk).

Please address any comments, questions, or requests for further information to the Somerset VCFSE Steering Group via Cindy Furse, VCFSE/Public Sector Partnerships Lead, Spark Somerset: [cindy.furse@sparksomerset.org.uk](mailto:cindy.furse@sparksomerset.org.uk)

**Closing Date:** 5pm on Friday 1 March 2024

## Background context

The voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) sector has long been a valued partner to the public sector. The complexity of issues and the pace of change in our communities is requiring us all to find ways to work more closely together, including in health and care where system transformation is underway. In July 2022, 42 integrated care systems (ICSs) in England became statutory bodies, replacing NHS clinical commissioning groups and other existing processes that design and commission health and social care services. As set out in the NHS Long Term Plan and subsequent guidance, the VCSE sector is set to play an enhanced role in ICSs and become embedded in system leadership and governance.

This is a new way of working for health and social care, and the VCSE, who has often not had cause to work together at this geographical level before. Therefore, the VCSE sector is needing to develop its structures and mechanisms for enabling impactful partnership with the ICS.

Recognising this, the Somerset Group of Charities is a group of like-minded charities that have been working together since December 2019. This group originally came together to respond to the opportunity to improve health and wellbeing with the earlier version of changing structures in health and social care, the Sustainability and Transformation Partnerships. It was established following work that was undertaken in partnership with health, supported by The Richmond Group. Additionally, the group became a space to achieve the following, as outlined in the Terms of Reference:

- A 'critical friend' for commissioners, providing a collective voice
- Shared ideas for measuring impact, so that we are better able to demonstrate outcomes as a sector
- A forum to influence and campaign - we can't represent everyone, but we can advocate on behalf of the sector
- Opportunities for collaboration
- By working together, we can bring more funding into Somerset
- Joint leadership training/workforce development for the VCSE
- Horizon scanning
- Sharing of evidence bases and evaluations of projects
- Basic data sharing protocols for the advocacy work

The Somerset Group of Charities meets monthly (and continued to do so throughout the pandemic) and over the period October 2021 to March 2022 the focus of our discussions has been on the development of an appropriate mechanism to enable partnership with the Somerset ICS.

Spark Somerset already has a role, stipulated in their charitable objectives, to advocate on behalf of the VCSE sector, locally, regionally and nationally. Following agreement from the Somerset Group of Charities, Spark Somerset also have a formal role to advocate on behalf of the VCFSE in the ICS. Spark has supported the engagement of the wider Somerset Group of Charities to co-design an approach to partnership in the VCFSE across Somerset in response to the opportunity offered through ICS development.

The Somerset 'system' has a number of additional key features: we have one Integrated Care Board, one unitary Council, one Foundation Trust. With only 8 months between the formation of the Integrated Care Board and the new Somerset Council, there was also a unique opportunity to align the VCFSE sector with both public sector bodies and ensure both organisations were approaching VCFSE engagement from the same place.

## Our Vision

With thousands of VCFSE organisations in Somerset, from the very small to larger county-wide charities and specialist national health charities, it is not straightforward to talk of 'the sector' in Somerset. We are all united in our vision for the people of Somerset to live as well as they can for as long as they can, but we all support different people in different ways. Engaging and representing the thousands of VCFSE groups and organisations across Somerset from the outset is impossible.

Our principles for the development of a VCFSE model for partnership are that it is:

- something that can adapt and flex easily and has potential to grow;
- clear and understandable;
- person-led and inclusive, so all voices are heard;
- involving small organisations and 'levels up' – so smaller VCFSE are mentored and supported to become leaders through this process;
- accountable to the wider sector, not just a handful of organisations;
- valued as a genuine and equal partner to the ICS;
- impactful, with mechanisms in place from the outset to measure success;
- sustainable – with representative roles and the underlying administrative functions funded over the long term.

Our aim is that:

- Every VCSE organisation in Somerset has a way, or multiple ways, into the partnership with the ICS, but in a way that feels appropriate to them
- Information flows two-ways and there is a route to disseminate information to the VCSE sector from health and social care, but also to pull up information from VCSE colleague to inform health and social care
- Representatives are accountable to the wider VCSE rather than to their organisations
- There is intersectionality – with flexibility and peer support between thematic priorities and overall strategic partnership development
- This infrastructure also offers an easier route for the public sector to consult and engage with the sector and tap into expertise on impact measurement, co-design, inequalities etc.

## Progress so far

Based on learning from other parts of the country and following workshop sessions with numerous system partners, we have identified the following mechanism for enhanced engagement between the VCFSE and the Public Sector:

- A VCFSE Assembly – open to all VCFSE organisations working in Somerset
- A VCFSE Leaders Group – providing an opportunity for VCFSE leaders to amplify the voice of the sector, enable collaboration and engage more effectively with the Public Sector
- Steering Group – Somerset Group of Charities

The Somerset Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) Assembly is a place for the VCFSE sector, by the sector. Coordinated by Spark Somerset, it is part of the engagement framework that allows community organisations of any size to contribute and engage in the way that is right for them.

Three **Assembly** meetings have been held so far, with more than 250 organisations participating. This framework has flexed and adapted to the emerging needs of the voluntary sector in the 18 months since its conception, though the Assembly has remained at the heart of it. In Somerset, the Assembly is engagement with the VCFSE sector in its broadest sense. Everyone is welcome regardless of size, income, number (or lack of) paid staff and all views are equal.

These meetings have provided the opportunity to introduce the engagement framework concept to the wider sector, provide updates on ICS development and the new unitary authority and begin discussions on how we can work better together to support communities.

The **VCFSE Leaders Group**, is still in its infancy, having met in Autumn 2023, with the next meeting scheduled for January 2024. Terms of Reference for this group are being developed and will be open to any organisation that aligns with these.

The **Steering Group**, which began as the Somerset Group of Charities, is a small group of charity leaders who will continue to have oversight of this engagement programme. TOR and membership of this group will be reviewed in due course.

Following a series of development workshops and meetings a Memorandum of Understanding between the Somerset VCFSE, Somerset Council and Somerset ICB (attached) was agreed in signed in September 2023 and work has begun to bring this document to life.

We recognise that there have been changes throughout the process, however, there is still much to be done. We are committed to continuing to work towards our shared vision of a strong, resilient and collaborative VCFSE sector, whilst recognising the nuances and individuality of those within it.

## **The Somerset VCFSE Assembly**

### **Assembly Founding Principles**

- Entry point is always kept open - anyone can join the Assembly
- Those with specific interests and strengths will be encouraged to step forward
- Those that feel they need to be heard will be
- Digital systems that support the Assembly will be made open by default
- Collaboration will be encouraged
- Transparency and honesty will be a priority
- To concentrate on engagement and not representation
- To engage with existing local structures and to play a central role in developing new ones where there are gaps
- A place that provides sector peer support and development opportunities

### **Assembly Key Functions**

To support the VCFSE sector to:

- Actively participate in joint leadership, influence policy, share good practice, support networking, and collate and provide information and insight
- Create a mechanism for building the mutual understanding needed to nurture, establish, maintain and strengthen partnerships, as an essential pre-requisite of the kind of collaboration and co-design we all aspire to

- Collaboratively design service solutions harnessing the widest possible creativity and expertise of the sector
- Identify appropriate local VCFSE partners to shape the delivery offer around themes or geographies
- Champion and position the VCFSE within the strategic environment as high quality partners
- Operate as an equal partner within the Integrated Care System, working alongside statutory partners
- Identify, promote and share peer learning, training and capacity building to ensure all members' workforces are in a strong position to meet future demands.
- Seek and secure further investment as new opportunities for the Assembly (and this new model way of engaging and collaborating), emerge.

**Now is the time to secure an Independent Chair who can move this engagement work to the next level.** We are seeking a confident and courageous Independent Chair, who will lead the Assembly, support the Leaders Group and represent the sector where needed. In partnership with Spark Somerset and VCFSE colleagues, the Independent Chair will be instrumental in progressing this important work, supporting collaboration so that we can better meet the needs of our communities.