

CORNWALL VOLUNTARY SECTOR FORUM

THIRD SECTOR

ALLIANCE AGREEMENT – Plain English version

“Issues do not respect organisational boundaries, so we shouldn’t be constrained by them.”

Executive Summary

Cornwall Voluntary Sector Forum (CVSF) is an infrastructure organisation whose purpose is to support the work of groups in the local voluntary, community and social enterprise sector in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

We provide the sector with:

- Strategic, local, and thematic partnerships and alliances to enable and equip
- Representation on the CloS System Leaders Board and other strategic boards & forums
- A central voice for the sector
- Opportunity to influence engagement and collaboration with stakeholders
- A climate of collaboration and trust
- Resources and support to create the best outcomes for their beneficiaries

We are seeking to change the way the system operates for the sector, to be better integrated, more preventative, inclusive and outcome driven, changing the way we all work to achieve more for the citizens of CloS. To do this, we are drawing on our experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic, to create an integrated, systems-based approach, where like-minded organisations pull together, rather than competing.

Commissioning proposals

Part of CVSF’s plan is to influence commissioners to upgrade their commissioning model. Primarily, it is based on more constructive communication across the entire system of commissioners and contractors, in an Alliance-based model, leading to a continuous cycle of learning and co-working to generate better outcomes and greater social impact.

The new approach would involve moving to a system where the commissioned project is viewed as a dynamic organism, where potential exists to adjust outcomes and measures, to learn and adapt throughout the process, and co-operate with all those involved to achieve the best outcomes for all, both within the project timeframe and going forward.

Strategic, Local and Thematic Alliances

CVSF is planning a Strategic Alliance Model to operate within the sector in Cornwall. Issues do not respect organisational boundaries, so we need operate outside of these too. This will have three elements:

- Strategic Alliance – built from the VCSE Emergency Response Alliance (VERA) effective during the crisis, comprised of system leaders (systems including ‘housing & homelessness’, ‘disability’, ‘mental health’, ‘environment’, etc)
- Thematic Alliances – chaired by VCSE system leaders in the above areas and others – 17 in total.
- Local Alliances – operating in the 19 Community Network Areas defined by Cornwall Council, chaired by local VCSE reps, and including invited representatives from public, private and faith sectors.

The aim is to achieving better Third Sector response and results, through alliance-based relationships. All Alliance Members will be encouraged to become CVSF Members, to access restricted resources and shared areas. If you are not a member then please join here, for free: <http://www.cornwallvsf.org/become-a-member/>

Alliance Agreement¹

CVSF proposes asking Alliance Members to sign an agreement to abide by certain behaviours and principles, to set the tone for our working relationships. This will take the form of a Memorandum of Understanding, (MoU), rather than a legal entity, as all involved organisations will retain their own legal identities.

The full list of Alliance Principles are set out in the agreement, along with the expected behaviours, but they can be summarised as the intent to work together, efficiently, openly and fairly, for the good of our beneficiaries and the sector as a whole.

¹ The concept of Alliance Agreements outlined in this paper has been drawn from the work of Andy Brogan, Founding Partner at Easier Inc

THIRD SECTOR

ALLIANCE AGREEMENT

Introduction

This Alliance Agreement forms a commitment between each VCSE organisation which signs it, and the other signatories, demonstrating agreement with the shared principles and expectations below.

The Alliance principles you are committing to collectively operating by are:

In your organisation, keeping in line with these agreed principles with regard to governance, purpose, leadership, priority setting, commercial and financial framework, and working relationships within the sector:

- Transparency,
- 'Best for beneficiaries' focus,
- Mutual benefit across the VCSE sector,
- Local people involved in local solutions,
- Flexibility, with new information and circumstances,
- Friendly rather than combative interactions,
- Working to avoid both gaps and duplication,
- Modelling best practice,
- Good quality outcomes and impact.

The Alliance behaviours and beliefs you are committing to are:

- We will work together as part of one Third Sector for Cornwall
- We will work collaboratively, share power, and speak collectively for all
- We will have open, trusting, relationships to enable effective dialogue.
- We will view each other as resourceful and bringing strengths.
- We will involve our beneficiaries and residents in decision-making wherever possible.
- We will ensure that Leadership is collaborative, and makes mature, ethical decisions.
- We will hold a shared vision.
- We will be accountable to one another
- We will seek continuous feedback, and collective learning will drive adaptation.

Membership: TBC

The CEOs, or the equivalent level of seniority, leading VCSE (Third Sector) organisations in CloS.

Purpose:

This Third Sector Alliance is not a formal decision-making group. However, it can make collective commitments, even if some of those need to be ratified by individual boards/organisations. The Alliance is made up of Third Sector local leaders, who have come together for the benefit of their beneficiaries, and the citizens and Third Sector in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. They will collaborate with their intelligence, assets, influence and resources, to achieve shared priorities and goals. Healthwatch (not a voluntary organisation) participates in The Alliance as the public voice, contributing in their role of critical friend to those who provide publicly funded health and social care services to the citizens of CloS. The Alliance can provide a single point of truth (SPOT) for the Third Sector.

Frequency and Timings: Agreed by Alliance Members

Aims:

- To provide local leadership and influence.
- To share intelligence across the sector.
- To provide an integrated response to strategic issues and priorities, across all delivery areas and systems.
- To share assets, resources and broker access to help and support for others.
- To help identify emerging issues/priorities, trouble-shoot and present solutions to the group.
- To share in creating plans which will increase social impact and improve outcomes.
- To help build capacity and increase capability in the Third Sector system.
- To address gaps and help avoid duplication.
- To share best practice and help identify next practice.

Governance

The leader for Third Sector Alliances is CVSF which will delegate its authority to chair the Alliance to a Third Sector System Leader. Members of this group will decide on the agenda, frequency, timings and administrative requirements of the alliance.

Each member must abide by the principles and behaviour the Alliance Agreement. In relation to conflicts of interest, the secretariat (CVSF) will keep a log for future scrutiny.

Where any Alliance member has an actual or potential conflict of interest in relation to any matter under consideration at any meeting, the Chair (at their discretion) shall be properly informed of the (potential) conflict, and will decide whether or not that member may participate and/or vote in meetings (or parts of meetings) in which the relevant matter is discussed. In this instance, a deputy may be nominated to take the place of the conflicted member in relation to that matter.

Review

These terms of reference and the membership of the Alliance will be reviewed in January 2021 and annually thereafter. Further reviews will be undertaken in response to any material developments or changes in the wider governance arrangements, as needed.

Signatories

We, the undersigned, have secured the endorsement and support of our Boards to commit to honour the principles and behaviours contained within this Alliance Agreement, as it is applied to the work of the Local Alliance. In doing so, we will recognise and uphold the important contribution that this Alliance makes to improving the lives of people in Cornwall. We will endeavour to work constructively together for the “common good” of all citizens in this County.

..... (Signed)

..... (Name)

..... (Role)

..... (Organisation)

..... (Date)