VCSE Brokerage Framework:
Information and Guidance for the North Somerset Adult Mental Health Peer Support programme

Published date:	10th November 2025
Deadline for clarification questions:	28th November 2025 - midday
Deadline for proposals:	19th December 2025 – 5pm

Introduction

This document provides information and guidance for Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations to make proposals to deliver activities to address the desired aims, objectives and outcomes of the North Somerset Adult Mental Health Peer Support programme.

Funding has been made available from the North Somerset Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy (via North Somerset Council) in collaboration with the North Somerset Locality Partnerships (Woodspring and Weston, Worle & Villages) to provide one-to-one peer mentoring and facilitated peer support groups to support adults in North Somerset (aged 18 and over) to improve their mental health.

The VCSE Brokerage Framework is a system-wide approach to enable a diverse range of VCSE organisations to deliver health and wellbeing outcomes in local communities. This is through their involvement in wellbeing/health programmes across the Integrated Care System (ICS) health and social care partners. The Framework provides a standard, robust and inclusive process for assessing the best proposals for community activities. This approach was initially co-designed and tested during 2024/25, with further developments during 2025/26.

The opportunity for VCSE organisations to make proposals to meet the aims, objectives, and outcomes in this document, is provided by the BNSSG VCSE Brokerage Framework. We are inviting proposals from VCSE organisations that have been accepted onto the Framework (with or without conditions) or have an application in process. Note that all Brokerage Framework conditions need to have been completed before an award can be finalised.

Things to note when developing your proposal

- All parts (the blue boxes) of the Proposal Form should be completed.
- Word limits – maximum word limits are included. We encourage organisations making proposals to be proportionate and use the number of words needed to answer the questions. Please don't feel that you need to reach the maximum word count, if you can respond with fewer words. Additional words over the limit will not be considered.
- Proposals can be for new or a continuation of existing activities. We acknowledge that, for new activities, a longer implementation/set-up time may be needed.
- Explanations and guidance are shown in *italics* throughout the Proposal Form.
- For help when completing the proposal, you should attend the Engagement Event/s and/or note the deadline for clarification questions (see Timeline below).

- Partnerships and collaborations – if your proposal specifically includes other partners, please include an explanation about your relationship, how the work will be allocated between partners, and clearly outline in the Proposed Budget template how the resources will be allocated between partners.
- Proposed Budget – please refer to the guidance notes in the Proposed Budget template and make sure all parts (the blue boxes) of the template are completed. Your completed Budget should be submitted with your completed Proposal Form. Please note that, if your proposal is recommended for award, additional financial documents/information will be needed to complete the economic and financial standing checks – this is described in the Proposed Budget template.

About the North Somerset Adult Mental Health Peer Support programme

The North Somerset Adult Mental Health Peer Support programme will be a flexible, person-centred offer comprising both one-to-one peer mentoring support (via referral from the Woodspring and One Weston Mental health & wellbeing Integrated Network Teams - 'MINT's) and open-access peer support groups for adults across North Somerset.

The aim is to offer relational and flexible support - helping people feel confident, connected, and supported as they access the services and groups available to them.

The successful organisation will develop, set up and run a peer support offer, working closely with the MINTs and recruit, train and manage peer mentors. This is a new initiative and there is scope to lead on its future development. The programme will provide:

1. One-to-One Peer Mentoring

Following referral from either of the North Somerset MINTs, peer mentors will work with individuals to reduce barriers to accessing support. This will usually be for up to 12 sessions over a 3-month period, but if additional support is needed, the peer mentor and referring MINT will agree next steps. These could include extra mentoring sessions, or other interventions or therapies offered by the MINT.

Examples of support provided by peer mentors include:

- Meeting ahead of sessions: Meeting someone for a coffee or a walk before their first appointment or group to ease anxiety and build trust.
- Accompanying participants to sessions or activities: Taking the bus together, walking in with them, or staying for the session. This support can be just for the first session or continue for additional sessions as needed.
- Information and guidance: Helping participants understand what to expect from services, answering questions from a lived or shared experience perspective, and offering encouragement.

- Practical support: Assisting with day-to-day barriers such as IT or digital access, travel or transport planning, completing forms, navigating local community resources, or accessing social and recreational activities.
- Follow-up and reflection: Checking in after sessions, reflecting on experiences, and supporting participants to build confidence towards independence.

These interactions will provide a vital "bridge", helping people over the threshold into services and groups, and reducing the risk of disengagement. The approach is flexible and tailored to individual needs, ensuring participants receive the right level of support at the right time.

2. Peer Support Groups

Alongside one-to-one mentoring, the programme will run regular peer-led support groups across North Somerset. These groups will take place regularly, offer medium- to long-term support and:

- Offer safe, inclusive spaces for people to connect, share experiences, and support one another.
- Be facilitated by trained peer mentors, using [trauma-informed](), strengths-based approaches.
- Be held either fully in-person or fully online (but not a hybrid combination of the two).
- Focus on themes like confidence-building, emotional wellbeing, coping strategies, and recovery stories.
- Encourage ongoing social connection and resilience, helping people build their own support networks and sense of community.

Groups may take different formats to suit local needs, including face to face and online, drop-in sessions, structured recovery programmes, or activity-based groups (e.g. walking, art, or mindfulness groups), with flexibility to evolve over time.

Programme aims and objectives

Timescale	Aim/Objective	Potential Measures[1]
Short-term	**Increase engagement with MINTs and community-based peer support**: participants are referred, connected, and supported to access peer mentoring and group activities	- Number of participants referred, attending monitoring sessions and groups - Goal-Based Outcome goals related to engagement/confidence - Participant case studies or short video stories illustrating impact

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[1] See 'Proposed Approach to Measuring Outcomes' section later in this document

Timescale	Aim/Objective	Potential Measures[1]
	Reduce anxiety about accessing support: One-to-one mentoring and group support helps participants feel confident and comfortable engaging.	- Goal-Based Outcome goals relating to confidence or anxiety - Participant reflections on first experiences of mentoring or groups
	Improve confidence, social connection and wellbeing: support participants to set and achieve personal goals that enhance social connection and emotional wellbeing.	- Goal-Based Outcome scores - Attendance and participation in groups - Brief wellbeing or social connection check-ins - Participant stories highlighting changes in confidence, social connections, or wellbeing
Medium-term	**Sustain peer support engagement**: participants continue engaging with peer support activities and community opportunities over time.	- Attendance at peer support groups (unique and repeat participants) - Number of mentoring sessions delivered - Goal-Based Outcomes tracking engagement/confidence with activities - Thematic insights from participant stories/videos showing sustained engagement
	Strengthen pathways to community-based support and networks: Create links and signposting so participants can access wider community resources.	- Number of onward referrals or signposts to community support - Goal-Based Outcomes tracking participants' confidence in accessing wider resources. - Examples from participants' stories of using wider community resources
	Develop peer mentor capacity: Increase the number of trained peer mentors and support participants to progress into mentoring roles.	- Number of trained peer mentors - Number of participants progressing to peer mentor roles - Peer mentor retention/engagement data - Participant reflections on skill development or motivation to become a peer mentor
Long-term	**Support positive outcomes at scale**: Enable measurable improvements in confidence, wellbeing, and social connection across the participant cohort.	- Aggregated Goal-Based Outcome scores for confidence, wellbeing, social connection - Aggregated thematic insights from participant stories or case studies to illustrate outcomes at scale - Case studies/videos illustrating meaningful participant impact across the cohort

Timescale	Aim/Objective	Potential Measures[1]
	Reduce system pressure: Contribute to more effective community support and engagement, reducing repetitive demand on clinical services.	- Feedback from MINTs (via their quarterly Service Review Meetings) on reduced repeat referrals or improved participant engagement - Pathway connectivity metrics (referrals/signposts utilised) - Participant stories showing how mentoring or group support helped reduce reliance on clinical services
	Establish a resilient, self-sustaining peer support network: Build programme capacity, peer mentor numbers, and community links to maintain benefits beyond the funded period.	- Continuation of groups beyond initial funding period - Peer mentor numbers and ongoing capacity - Evidence of partnerships and community links maintained - Stories or reflections demonstrating participants' ongoing peer support or community engagement beyond funded activities

Related outcomes

Delivery of the North Somerset Adult Mental Health Peer Support programme will help us deliver the overall vision for the North Somerset Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy with the aim of enabling those with mental ill health to live well.

It will also contribute to the following Healthier Together system outcomes framework outcomes:

- POP1: We will increase population healthy life expectancy across BNSSG and narrow the gap between different population groups
- POP 2: We will reduce early deaths from preventable causes in the communities which currently have the poorest outcomes
- POP 5: We will improve everyone's mental wellbeing
- SERV7: We will increase the proportion of people who report that they are able to find information about health and care services easily
- SERV8: We will increase the proportion of people who report that they are able to access the services they need, when they need them
- SERV9: We will increase the proportion of people who report that their health and care is delivered through joined up services
- STA10: We will increase the proportion of our health and care who report being able to deliver high value care
- STA11: We will have a resilient workforce
- STA12: We will improve health and wellbeing of our staff

- STA13: Our workforce will reflect the communities we serve and we will support and value the difference diverse staff bring
- COM16: People will grow up and live in homes and communities where they are safe from harm
- COM18: We will increase the number of people describing their community as a healthy and positive place to live

Proposed Approach to Measuring Outcomes

The successful organisation will be encouraged to use Goal-Based Outcomes alongside a small set of core quantitative measures to capture participant-defined, meaningful change in areas that matter most to people such as confidence, social connection, anxiety management, and engagement with activities.

To complement these measures, organisations are also encouraged to gather qualitative evidence, such as brief case studies, participant stories, or short videos, to illustrate impact from the perspective of participants and mentors. These can highlight how peer support has contributed to individual progress, confidence, and community connection, providing a more rounded picture of impact beyond numerical scores.

Suggested approach:

- Participants set 1-3 personal goals with support from a peer mentor or facilitator.
- Progress is recorded on a simple 0-5 scale from the start to the end of involvement.
- Optional brief qualitative notes, participant reflections, or case studies/videos can provide additional context and bring individual experiences to life.

Aggregating and reporting Goal-Based Outcome data:

- Individual Goal-Based Outcome scores can be summarised to demonstrate overall progress across the participant cohort.
- Combined with core metrics (eg attendance, referrals, number of mentoring sessions), this approach should give a clear overview of programme reach, engagement, and impact, while keeping reporting manageable.
- Organisations are encouraged to integrate Goal-Based Outcome data and qualitative evidence with existing monitoring systems wherever practical.

Core Measures

Alongside Goal-Based Outcomes, organisations should collect a limited set of metrics:

Area	Example Measure	Source/Tool
Reach & Engagement	Number of participants receiving 1:1 mentoring	Programme records
	Number of participants attending peer support groups	Attendance registers

Area	Example Measure	Source/Tool
Inclusion & Diversity	Participant demographic profile (age, gender, ethnicity, disability, postcode area)	Monitoring form
	% of participants from priority or underserved groups	Monitoring form
Short- and Medium-Term Outcomes	Participant-reported progress on confidence, social connection, or wellbeing	GBOs/brief pre and post self-rating
Pathway Connectivity	Number and breadth of onward referrals or signposts to community groups or support	Case records
Peer Mentor Development	Number of people who have been mentored becoming trained mentors	Programme records
Participant Experiences	Case studies or short videos illustrating impact	Captured directly from participants with consent

Together, these measures will enable clear, proportionate evaluation of how the programme is meeting its aims – improving confidence, wellbeing and social connection, strengthening pathways into community support, and building sustainable peer support capacity across North Somerset.

What may be funded?

Funding is available to deliver the North Somerset Adult Mental Health Peer Support programme in line with the suggested methods and accordance with delivering the aims and objectives. Funding is available for programme costs, including staffing, training, venues, and technology, and reasonable related overheads.

What cannot be funded?

This funding is not for large capital spends or anything that does not support the direct provision outlined in this document.

Which organisations can make proposals?

Proposals must be from VCSE organisations based and/or working in Bristol, North Somerset, or South Gloucestershire and that have either been accepted onto the VCSE Brokerage Framework (with or without conditions) or have an application in process. We especially welcome proposals from small / micro VCSE organisations that have built strong, trusting relationships within their local communities.

If your organisation has not yet applied to join the VCSE Brokerage Framework we encourage you to do this as soon as possible. Applications must be made before the proposal deadline (outlined later in this document). The application forms can be found here: VCSE Brokerage Framework - BNSSG Healthier Together

How proposals will be evaluated and scored

The proposal form includes a standard set of questions that are given weightings and feed into the following evaluation themes.

Evaluation themes	Weighting
Ability to serve the community	30%
Improving access and reducing health inequalities	10%
Integration, collaboration and connections	10%
Quality, improvement and innovation	30%
Social Value	10%
Realistic costing and value for money	10%

These evaluation themes are based on procurement practice and regulations, including the Provider Selection Regime, Procurement Act 2023 and the ICB's Standing Financial Instructions, including the Grants and Contracts Standard Operating Procedures.

Evaluation of the proposals will be facilitated by the Brokerage Team and an Evaluation Panel will be chaired by the programme manager/majority budget-holder and will comprise ICS and VCSE experts related to the specific wellbeing/health programme. Declaration of interest processes will be followed.

All evaluated questions will be scored on a scale of 0 to 4, as follows.

Assessment	Interpretation	Score
Deficient	A significantly deficient answer, unanswered or unacceptable response.	0
Limited	A limited answer that does not meet the stated requirement or one that provides little detail or evidence.	1
Acceptable	An acceptable answer meeting the stated requirement with a sufficient level of detail and evidence.	2
Good	A good answer, with a comprehensive level of detail and strong evidence.	3
Excellent	An excellent answer, exceeding the stated requirement with exceptional detail and evidence and/or one that is likely to result in increased quality, improved patient experience or innovation.	4

Evaluation panel members will score independently. After all scores are collated by the Brokerage Team, the Evaluation Panel will discuss and moderate scores. Any outstanding Quality Assurance conditions or notable points will also be considered by the panel.

Depending on the programme and VCSE proposals, the panel will discuss the range of awardable proposals, how they meet the overall programme aim/objectives/outcomes and note potential award conditions and/or changes.

After VCSE proposals are evaluated and recommended for awards by the Evaluation Panel, financial checks[2] will be undertaken by the ICB (or accountable body) to ensure that the recommended grant/contract award/s can be made with confidence and minimal risk to public funds. VCSE organisations will be asked to provide the following financial information so that financial checks can be completed:

- Financial statements / accounts for the preceding financial year, depending on the timings of the financial cycle. These may be audited, independently examined or otherwise, if audit is not applicable.
- Financial statement / cashflow for the most recent financial year. This may be a set of management accounts or an organisational budget, depending on how your organisation manages its finances.
- Projection or forecast for the current financial year, particularly the year in which an awarded grant/contract will be implemented.

VCSE organisations have the **option** to provide this information at the point of submitting the proposal and budget or at a later stage after the evaluation panel makes recommendations. In any case, financial checks will be undertaken only for those organisations whose proposals have been recommended for award. In some cases, discussion/s about specific aspects of a VCSE organisation's financial management may be needed.

Following the completion of financial checks, the programme manager/majority budget-holder will coordinate the process of finalising grant agreements or contracts, as well as communication and implementation.

VCSE organisations making proposals should be aware that the possible outcomes of the evaluation process are: full award; partial award; enhanced award; or no award.

Financial information

Total fund:	The total fund is £123,500 over two years (£61,750 per year). If the contract is extended by a further year, the budget for that (3rd) year will be £40,000 Proposals with budgets for the total fund over two years, plus the potential third year, are invited.

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[2] The economic and financial standing checks enable the ICB to assess the level of risk associated with the awarded grant/contract in your organisation. The checks involve review of your organisation's documents and may involve direct conversation so that the ICB can understand more of how your organisation manages finances.

Source of funds:	• Bristol, North Somerset & South Gloucestershire (BNSSG) Integrated Care Board and the North Somerset Locality Partnerships (Weston, Worle & Villages; Woodspring) • North Somerset Council Public Health
Duration of funding:	2 years, with the potential to extend for a further year

It is anticipated that the contracting method for the North Somerset Adult Mental Health Peer Support programme will be through a contract between the Bristol, North Somerset & South Glos Integrated Care Board and the provider.

Contract/s will be finalised as soon as possible after due diligence and clarifications have been completed. Terms and conditions, including the payment schedule and reporting requirements, will be included in the contract. As the VCSE Brokerage Framework aims to include smaller VCSE organisations, and we know that cash flow can sometimes be challenging, the intention is that an element of the award will be transferred up front when the contract is finalised.

Indicative timeline

10 November 2025	Invitations for proposals opens
18th and 26th November 2025	Engagement Event/s and Q&A
28th November 2025 - midday	Deadline for clarification questions
19th December 2025 – 5pm	Deadline for proposals
By 28th January 2026	Evaluation scoring by Panel members
w/c 9th February 2026	Evaluation panel meeting
19th February 2026	Notification of decision
5th March 2026	Voluntary standstill period ends
March 2026	Mobilisation and comms
April / May 2026	Anticipated commencement of delivery

Dates and actions are subject to change; if changes happen, the Brokerage Team will update organisations on the framework and other stakeholders.

When the Brokerage team receives your completed proposal form they will check to ensure all the required information has been provided and send an acknowledgement of receipt.

Notification and feedback

If and when a contract award decision is reached, VCSE organisations that have submitted proposals will be notified of that decision and a voluntary standstill period of ten (10) working days will be observed before a contract is entered into.

Feedback will be offered to all organisations who make proposals, upon request to the Brokerage team.

Further guidance and support

For help when completing the proposal, please attend the Engagement Event/s and/or contact the Brokerage team via proposal@bnssgvcsealliance.org within the clarification question period (outlined above). Answers will be provided on the Healthier Together website on a weekly basis, up until the deadline for clarification questions.

Please note that the Brokerage Team will be unable to provide any updates on progress with your proposal once the proposal submission deadline has passed and the Evaluation Panel is reviewing applications received.

Your feedback about this process

We welcome feedback on the process which will be used to further refine the VCSE Brokerage Framework. Please share your experience of participating in or using the Framework by completing our feedback form here - VCSE Brokerage Framework feedback form - BNSSG Healthier Together

Final Version: October 2025