

## VCSE Brokerage Framework

### – Information and Guidance for the Work & Health programme

Published date:	3 <sup>rd</sup> November 2025
Deadline for clarification questions:	25 <sup>th</sup> November 2025 - midday
Deadline for proposals:	12 <sup>th</sup> 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 Work & Health programme.

Bristol, North Somerset and South Glos (BNSSG) Integrated Care Board (ICB) funding has been made available to improve the health and wellbeing of a targeted cohort of 125 adults struggling to maintain, or return to / start work, due to physical and mental health reasons.

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 Work & Health programme

The 'Get Britain Working' Plan and the NHS 10 Year Health Plan emphasise the role of health in supporting individuals to remain in work and thrive, or return to work after a period of ill health. At a regional level, Healthier Together 2040 and the West of England Combined Authority's (WECA's) "Get the West of England Working Plan" provide a vision of an integrated approach to supporting local residents to access employment. In all policies and plans, the VCSE sector is key to delivering the innovation and impact required at a community level.

Work & Health (formerly WorkWell West) is a nationally funded programme that aims to help people aged 16 and over, if they are struggling to sustain employment due to health reasons, to thrive, stay in work, return to work after sickness absence or find new employment. A key aim of the overall Work & Health programme is to work with GPs, employers, VCSE organisations and services in the region to connect with individuals on Fit Notes to lessen the likelihood of unemployment resulting from health-related barriers.

BNSSG is one of 15 Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) to receive funding for this work. After the first year, analysis shows that there are some communities that are not currently accessing Work & Health services. The focus for this programme, therefore, is on people that struggle to maintain, or return to / start work and are from new target communities.

VCSE organisations across BNSSG will be funded to deliver community-based health and wellbeing support and activities with these new target communities:

- People who are neurodivergent
- Women's health and menopause
- People with musculoskeletal (MSK) pain and/or chronic pain
- People who experience language and cultural barriers, specifically accessing health care and employment support

This is part of the BNSSG Healthier Together 2040 programme, which is the long-term strategic approach for the BNSSG ICS. The current focus for Healthier Together 2040 is the Working Age Population with Multiple Long-Term Conditions.

Proposals are invited from VCSE organisations that are **new** to Work & Health (formerly WorkWell West) so that the activities for the new target communities add to the existing funded activities.

This programme is aiming to improve the health and wellbeing of a targeted cohort of 125 adults struggling to sustain paid employment and who have been referred via the Work & Health coaches. They will receive community-based wellbeing support from local VCSE organisations.

In addition to the target communities described above, the Work & Health programme is looking to increase provision in North Somerset and South Gloucestershire.

Referrals to VCSE organisations will be made directly by the team of Work & Health Coaches. They will make referrals to VCSE organisations after initial assessment meetings with people entering the programme, through referrals from employers, job centres, NHS and social care staff. People can also self-refer directly to the Work & Health Coaches.

VCSE organisations will set up and deliver their own health and wellbeing support and activities and will also participate in regular meetings, facilitated by the Work & Health team, to encourage peer support and learning across organisations.

No minimum or maximum time for support has been defined, because each individual will be different. It is anticipated, however, that a typical length of support will be around 3-6 months. This does not mean there has to be in-person support every week over this period, but longer-term engagement is more likely to help people sustain their employment and thrive.

Shorter term support (6-8 weeks) will however be considered where the benefits of this can be demonstrated.

### **Programme aims and objectives**

Outcome measurements for this programme will be focused on improvements in mental health and emotional wellbeing, and improved ability of participants to manage their own health. These measurements will be recorded via the wider Work & Health programme measures collected by Work & Health coaches (including Office of National Statistics 2 and Patient Activation Measures).

### **Related outcomes**

Delivery of the Work & Health programme will contribute to population health outcomes over the short, medium and long term.

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

- 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

## What may be funded?

Funding is available to deliver the Work & Health programme in line with the aims and objectives outlined in this document. Funding is available for programme costs, including staffing, training, venues, and technology, and reasonable related overheads.

VCSE organisations are invited to make proposals for funding up to a maximum of £20,000. It is anticipated that a combination of large grants (up to £20,000) will be awarded, along with smaller grants (up to £10,000).

The funding is to deliver activities and support on a 1:1 basis, or via group sessions, that will:

- Improve the mental health and wellbeing of people across BNSSG who are struggling to maintain or return to work / start work after sickness absence.
- Improve the physical health and wellbeing of people across BNSSG who are struggling to maintain or return to / start work after sickness absence.

## What cannot be funded?

This funding is not for large capital spends or anything that does not support the direct provision with the target communities.

It should be noted that proposals are invited from VCSE organisations that are **new** to Work & Health (formerly Work Well West) so that the activities for the new target communities add to the existing funded activities.

## 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

Proposals must be made using the Proposal Form provided. It 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	25%
Improving access and reducing health inequalities	20%

Integration, collaboration and connections	10%
Quality, improvement and innovation	25%
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<sup>1</sup> 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:

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

- 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, 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:	£120,000
Source of funds:	Bristol, North Somerset & South Gloucestershire Integrated Care Board (BNSSG ICB)
Duration of funding:	12 months

It is anticipated that the contracting method for the Work & Health will be through grants.

Grant agreements 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 grant agreement.

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 grant agreement is finalised.

### Indicative Timeline

3 <sup>rd</sup> November	Invitations for proposals opens
12 <sup>th</sup> and 18 <sup>th</sup> November	Engagement Event/s and Q&A
25 <sup>th</sup> November - midday	Deadline for clarification questions
12 <sup>th</sup> December – 5pm	Deadline for proposals
By 21 <sup>st</sup> January 2026	Evaluation scoring by Panel members
w/c 2 <sup>nd</sup> February 2026	Evaluation panel meeting



February 2026	Recommendations and awards
March 2026	Mobilisation and comms
April 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.

### Feedback and complaints or representations

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

### 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](mailto:proposal@bnssgvcsealliance.org) within the clarification question period (outlined above). Responses to questions raised 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](#)