



VCSE
EAST SUSSEX ALLIANCE

Quarterly Report

Executive Summary

Q2 2025/26

1st July – 30 September 2025

Q2 in numbers

East Sussex VCSE
Alliance members

26



Meetings of priority
working groups

27

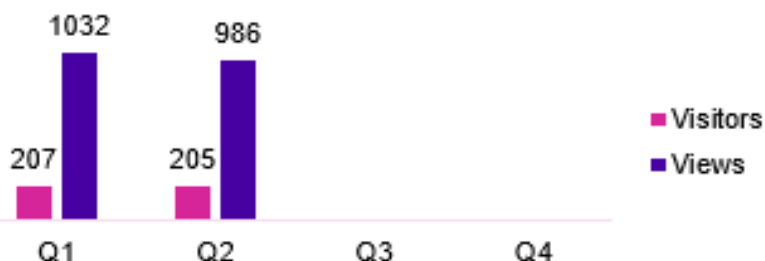


Multi-agency
meetings co-chaired

3



Website visitors and page views



Documents shared
on the website



[Draft East Sussex Compact 2025](#)



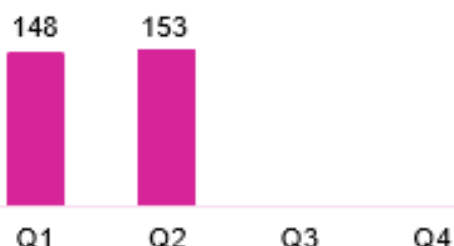
[Draft Understanding the Resolution of Disagreements Process](#)



[East Sussex VCSE Alliance Report, Executive Summary Report April – June 2025](#)

No. of Newsletter subscribers

3
Newsletters
sent



No. of boards/partnerships/programmes &
steering groups with Alliance representation



210

Hours Alliance members
contribute to strategic
partnership meetings
approximately

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Highlights and strategic impacts

The East Sussex VCSE Alliance plays a vital role in shaping local service design, influencing policy, and strengthening the voluntary, community, and social enterprise (VCSE) sector. This summary captures high-level activities and outcomes during the past quarter, structured by thematic priorities as outlined below. More information on each area can be found in the main report.

1.1 Priority one: Financial Inclusion & Cost of Living

Efforts under this priority focused on strategic alignment with financial inclusion initiatives and the co-design of specialist money advice services.

- 🌀 **Multi-Agency Financial Inclusion Steering Group** - co-chaired to monitor funding changes and impacts and address root causes of financial exclusion.
- 🌀 **DWP Crisis & Resilience Fund design** – provided insight into the new fund.
- 🌀 **Co-design and potentially co-commission specialist money services**, working alongside ESCC colleagues to design the new service
- 🌀 **VCSE sector led on defining service requirements** and quality assurance standards as part of the new money advice service.
- 🌀 **ESCC's Early Help Transformation Programme** - drafted a positioning paper for increased VCSE collaboration to co-design the new programme.

1.2 Priority two: VCSE Sector Resilience

The Alliance concentrated on understanding the sector's current resilience through its research and preparing for future local authority structural changes.

- 🌀 **State of the Sector research** being prioritised this quarter:
 - Commissioned Colligo Labs & Ideas Alliance to undertake research
 - Research activity - surveys, focus groups, workshops, deep-dive analysis.
 - Mid-point report reviewed; final report received end of September.
- 🌀 **Local Government Reorganisation & Devolution** – Alliance drafting a joint response to proposals.

1.3 Priority three: Representation, Relationships & Influencing

This priority aimed to strengthen the VCSE sector's voice and influence across strategic systems and partnerships.

- 🌀 **Strengthen VCSE representation at strategic meetings:**
 - Develop sustainable representation model with remuneration.
 - 45 strategic meetings represented by Alliance members currently.
 - Representation Working Group to review capacity and develop protocols

- Meeting prioritisation and nomination process for Reps developed.
- Scoped 'Associate' representative model and remuneration framework

1.4 Alliance Oversight Groups

Groups provided governance and strategic input across key thematic areas.

- 🌀 **Social Prescribing** - Commissioning paused; Alliance developed a joint VCSE response with Sussex Voluntary Leaders Alliance.
- 🌀 **Climate Change** - Launched Wealden Climate Action Group; planned health impact presentation to Alliance members later in year.
- 🌀 **Equality, Diversity & Inclusion** - Launched EDI Charter with six key actions; 18 members currently signed-up.

1.5 Collaborative programmes of work

Collaborative programmes advanced strategic partnerships and co-designed services across East Sussex.

- 🌀 **Compact 2025 & Dispute Resolution:**
 - Refreshed principles for cross-sector collaboration.
 - Promoted trust, generous leadership, and collaboration.
- 🌀 **Commissioning Excellence Programme:**
 - Phase 1 ended; survey conducted to assess its impact.
 - Considering Phase 2; to embed co-commissioning and strategic VCSE role.
- 🌀 **Tackling Loneliness Programme:**
 - Delivered by SCDA; endorsed for continuation.
 - Focused on shared learning, capacity building, strategic change.
- 🌀 **Befriending Scheme:**
 - Co-designed with Age UK; innovative 26-week support model.
 - Piloted volunteer survey with University of Kent.
- 🌀 **SPACES Programme:**
 - Advocated for Community Asset Transfer.
 - An Alliance-supported bid for VCSE use of empty buildings.
- 🌀 **Collaboration, Co-design & Commissioning:**
 - VCSE-first commissioning approach in development.
 - Co-design of specialist welfare advice services underway.

1.6 Sussex Voluntary Leaders Alliance

The Alliance worked closely with the Sussex Voluntary Leaders Alliance (SVLA) to ensure strategic alignment and shared VCSE leadership across Sussex.

- 🌀 Joint Strategic Lead role established between the Alliance and SVLA.
- 🌀 Coordinated responses to NHS commissioning intentions and ICT governance.

- SVLA Steering Group discussed funding, ICT Champion roles and commissioning delays.
- Ensured East Sussex research informs Sussex-wide strategy.
- ICT Champions - SVLA leads embedded to support ICT Reps and engagement.
- PgCert Healthcare Leadership Course - One VCSE member awarded full-fee waiver place.

1.7 Communication and engagement

Efforts focused on increasing visibility, stakeholder engagement and information sharing.

- Published 3 newsletters and 2 news articles.
- Website traffic increased by over 50% since last year; July saw record engagement.
- Hosted member workshops and meetings.
- Promoted EDI Charter and sector research updates across platforms.

1.8 Secretariat and governance

Governance activities ensured robust oversight, member engagement and transparent commissioning processes.

- Alliance membership reached 26 organisations; new Associate member application pending.
- Held 27 working group meetings and multiple strategic planning sessions.
- Reviewed direct commissioning; developing 5-tier co-commissioning model.
- Received funding for State of the Sector research from ESCC and Sussex Community Foundation.

1.9 Quarterly Focus: State of the Sector Research

This quarter's central strategic focus was the comprehensive research into the resilience, value and impact of the VCSE sector in East Sussex.

- The Alliance commissioned Colligo Labs & Ideas Alliance to do research.
- Activity included surveys, focus groups, workshops and deep-dive analysis of 7 VCSE organisations.
- Preliminary findings call for:
 - **Systemic change** in governance and commissioning.
 - **Long-term funding** over short-term projects.
 - **VCSE integration** into strategic decision-making.
 - **Collaborative infrastructure** and support for small orgs.
 - **Better understanding** of sector challenges by commissioners.
- Final report received end of September; launch planned for 12th November.
- Findings will inform future strategic planning and cross-sector collaboration.