Notes and action points

Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise Sector Forum

Thursday 24th September 2026

Chair:	Dave Bagley	**Notes:**	Farzana Patel

Welcome
Present: David Bagley, Dee Luczka, Farzana Patel, Sam Smith, Louis, Cameron, Cecilia Afriyie, James Duckworth, Vicky Shenton, Sumaiya Akter, Owen Hewson, Anita Powley, Shabeen Rehman, Rimsha Rasul, Samim Vali, Nick Russell, Jam Hirata-Smith, Grace Higgins, Sue Desai, Jane Carwardine, Alan Carwardine, Anji Devi, John Hastings, Leah Edwards Apologies: Laura Phelan Dave welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Funding Update	**Lead**
Anji provided an overview of the different funding opportunities available to VCSE organisations in Bolton. Bolton's Fund offers several levels of funding: • Micro grants – up to £2,000. • Small grants – up to £5,000. • Medium grants – up to £15,000. • Partnership grants – up to £35,000. Anji highlighted other funding opportunities included the Crisis and Resilience Fund, Bolton Housing Partnership, Holiday Activity Fund and Eric Wright. Anji provided guidance on completing funding applications, highlighting the importance of clearly demonstrating: • Need: Evidence through research, local issues and case studies. • Impact: Statistics, clear examples and wider community impact. • Budget: Clear figures, hourly rates and unit costs. Recent changes to funding was underlined, particularly in relation to Bolton Fund's micro and small grants, revenue grants versus project funding and small equipment. Attendees were encouraged to visit the Bolton CVS website for the latest funding information and updates or e-mail funding@boltoncvs.org.uk. The full presentation can be found here.	Anji Devi, Bolton CVS

Everyone Knew: From Crisis Intervention to Prevention an Opportunity	**Lead**
Sam introduced Genuine Futures CIC and shared how his own lived experiences growing up in Bolton inspired him to create opportunities for young people.	Sam Smith, Genuine Futures CIC

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He went on to talk about the growing number of young people nationally and locally who are not in education, employment or training (NEET), alongside challenges relating to school exclusions, care and youth justice. Sam emphasised the importance of early intervention, building trust and identifying warning signs before young people reach crisis point. He provided an overview of Boss Your Future, a programme supporting young people aged 16–24 through confidence building, wellbeing, employability, work experience and enterprise. Sam introduced We Shine Academy, which provides practical workplace experience, helping young people develop skills, confidence and responsibility. Louis and Cameron who are part of Genuine Futures CIC, shared examples of young people's journeys, demonstrating how positive relationships and real opportunities can help build confidence and create pathways into employment and further education. Sam encouraged Bolton CVS members to work collaboratively by making early referrals, offering placements, mentoring and work experience, and developing stronger partnership pathways. The full presentation can be found here.	

Volunteer Charter	**Lead**
Samim introduced herself and provided an overview of volunteering in Bolton, highlighting the contribution of approximately 58,000 volunteers, giving over 211,000 hours each week. Samim outlined the benefits of volunteering, including developing skills, building confidence, improving wellbeing and supporting local communities. Samim introduced the Bolton Volunteer Charter, a recognised pledge demonstrating an organisation's commitment to good practice in volunteer management and development. She explained the five key areas covered by the Volunteer Charter Deep Dive Health Check, which organisations need to complete to achieve the Charter. Samim highlighted the support available from Bolton CVS, including identifying gaps, training, volunteer recruitment, promoting opportunities and access to the Volunteer Development Network Forum. She encouraged organisations interested in achieving or reviewing the Charter, or promoting volunteering opportunities, to contact Bolton CVS for support. The full presentation can be found here.	Samim Vali, Bolton CVS

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All about We are Explorers	Lead
Jam introduced We Are Explorers CIC, a neuroqueer-led organisation supporting LGBTQ+ and questioning people, with a focus on accessibility and inclusion. Jam outlined the range of free activities and support available, including youth groups, adult social groups, wellbeing sessions and drop-in support across Bolton and Leigh. Jam highlighted the importance of creating safe, inclusive spaces where people can feel accepted, build confidence and access support without needing a formal diagnosis. Jam explained the organisation's referral process, accessible volunteering opportunities and availability of free essential and wellbeing-related items. Shared details of training and consultancy services around neurodiversity, equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI), with income reinvested into keeping community activities free. Further information: www.weareexplorers.org or e-mail hello@weareexplorers.org The full presentation can be found here.	Jam Hirata-Smith, We are Explorers CIC

1. Any Other Business	Lead
John from Recycle IT advised that they have secured funding and are currently looking for suitable premises. They would be open to sharing accommodation with another organisation. Anyone able to offer support or identify potential premises is to contact John. Chris Movement CIC supports to combat poverty, social isolation, food insecurity, and hardship while empowering vulnerable individuals and communities. Contact them if you need more information.	

Date of next meeting:
Please note an earlier start time for the next meeting: Thursday 26th November 2026, 10.00am – 11.30pm at The Bolton Hub