

The draft Brent Collaboration Charter 2026–29

Developed in partnership
between Brent's VCFSE, Brent
Council with wider partner input
from January–June 2026





The Brent Collaboration Charter 2026-29

Foreword

The Brent Collaboration Charter aspires to be a shared agreement between the VCFSE, Brent Council and other local partners such as the NHS, that guides how we work together towards shared goals.

Together, our vision is a '***Brent where the VCFSE and public sectors are aligned and work together in equal partnership to support and empower all Brent residents'***

The Charter has been co-developed through wide engagement to reflect the priorities which are considered most important locally. It is shaped around three shared outcomes and is underpinned by a shared set of principles:

- Shared outcome 1: A thriving, diverse and sustainable VCFSE sector in Brent
- Shared outcome 2: A strong and clear role for the VCFSE sector in shaping local decision-making
- Shared outcome 3: A leading and active role for residents in shaping the places where they live

Within this we anticipate the Charter focusing on priority borough wide themes. For example, these might include youth and local people support, cost of living, our high streets, tackling substance misuse and enhancing health and well-being.

This is the first version. We are starting with the sign up of VCFSE and Brent Council. This recognises that immediate action and impact can be achieved together. Building on this, further engagement will continue to take place with other partners including NHS, police and schools.

We aspire to all partners committing to the Charter to ensure its effective delivery and impact. We know that everything won't be right first time. Continual learning and reflection will ensure the Charter and its commitments remain relevant and viable. We will also report on impact regularly.

Cllr Tina Amadi (Cabinet Member Communities, Culture & Cost of Living Support) and VCSFE Steering Group

The development of the Collaboration Charter

Brent Council commissioned Rocket Science to work with a Brent VCFSE Steering Group to convene a 'World Café Cross-Sector Consultation' event in September 2025. The purpose of the event was to bring together local VCFSE organisations, the Council and other partners to:

- Understand the needs and aspirations of the VCFSE sector
- Recognise the sector's unique strengths and impact
- Shape a shared vision for more effective collaboration and partnership
- Identify opportunities and priorities to support the sector

A wide range of topics and ideas were raised at the event and there was clear motivation for increased future collaboration. Subsequently, VCFSE and public sector representatives have collaborated to co-produce the core elements of this Collaboration Charter. The Charter is intended to define the partnership journey and boost momentum around a series of practical commitments for partnership working over an initial two-year period from 2026-2028.

Process for developing the Collaboration Charter:



What we want to achieve together

Our 'North Star' (end goal) for collaboration between the public and VCFSE sector in Brent

A Brent where the VCFSE and public sectors are aligned and work together in equal partnership to support and empower all Brent residents



By working together, the change and impact we want to see:

- Stronger and more trusting relationships
- Greater transparency and openness
- Delivery of shared strategic goals
- A stronger, more sustainable VCFSE
- Maximise our collective impact and resources to improve services and outcomes for Brent
- A greater focus on prevention and early intervention
- Improved equity and fairness for residents and communities

Principles for working in partnership



- **Impact** – everything we do as partners is done for the benefit of Brent, its people and communities
- **Co-operation** – public and VCFSE sector partners share their assets such as spaces and training resources, where possible
- **Community and resident-focused** – partnership working is motivated by ensuring equitable and inclusive support for residents
- **Transparent** – partners have open conversations and share hopes, ideas, successes and challenges
- **Proportionate** – partners are realistic in what they can ask of one another and work together towards agreed actions and goals
- **Supportive** – the public and VCFSE sectors recognise, appreciate and lift each other up

Shared outcome 1: A thriving, diverse and sustainable VCFSE sector in Brent

Joint commitments:

VCFSE and public sector partners will set up processes and spaces to support the identification and sharing of learning and good practice, and will work as one team to intervene early in response to residents' needs

VCFSE sector commitments:

The Brent VCFSE sector will:

- Reflect and represent the diversity of the Brent community
- Ensure events and networks allow for cross-fertilisation of ideas and learning
- Commit to share spaces, training and resources where possible
- Collaborate and work together to achieve better outcomes for residents and where appropriate connect to and involve the public sector



Shared outcome 1: A thriving, diverse and sustainable VCFSE sector in Brent

Public sector commitments (Brent Council will:

Funding and commissioning



- Improve the accessibility of opportunities to local VCFSE sector organisations and adopt procurement practices that promote VCSFE participation
- Consider whether grants or contracts are the most appropriate method of funding, as opportunities arise
- Recognise the VCFSE sector requires advance notice when changing or ending a contract or funding
- Consider multi-year funding commitments to support the sector's sustainability
- Explore setting up a joint 'collaborative commissioning group' – an equal partnership of council, partner and VCSFE to guide commissioning practice and approaches

Support and guidance



- Ensure that services and representatives are visible and accessible to VCFSE organisations, with named individuals able to offer support
- Clarify the future role for a local Council for Voluntary Service, or equivalent infrastructure body, which will provide future support and capacity building to the VCFSE sector

Recognition



- Recognise, respect, appreciate and listen to VCFSE partners
- Find ways to measure, recognize and communicate growth and impact of the VCSFE sector

Spaces



- Unlock and better deploy council owned spaces for community activity and benefit

Shared outcome 2: A strong and clear role for the VCFSE sector in shaping local decision-making

Joint commitments:

- Establish a VCSFE Strategic Advisory Board –with overall oversight for the Charter, building from the existing Steering Group with links to Brent's Startegic Partnership Structure
- Promote and encourage exploration of new ideas and work together to test initiatives that could be scaled
- Commit to co-design and deliver projects with residents and VCSFE together, wherever possible

VCFSE sector commitments:

The Brent VCFSE sector will:

- Provide support to enable the joining up and planning of community services in neighbourhoods
- Listen to and represent the views of new or smaller VCFSE organisations in decision-making where their capacity is limited, ensuring the views of people and communities who are often excluded are heard



Shared outcome 2: A strong and clear role for the VCFSE sector in shaping local decision-making

Public sector commitments (Brent Council will):

- Ensure sufficient resourcing and remuneration for community engagement, co-design and participation in decision making where appropriate
- Agree to consistent and transparent mechanisms and spaces for VCFSE sector representation (including in major governance structures), considering the needs of different types of VCFSE organisations, recognising the sector is not homogenous
- Communicate opportunities for participation via a 'one stop shop' web page where VCFSE organisations can access the latest information and input to decision-making
- Produce accessible data and insights to enable VCFSE sector engagement, participation and co-design of services
- Ensure learning from neighbourhood and place-based approaches informs the development of future borough-wide partnership arrangements
- Review how various local strategies and service-specific compacts compare and connect, to support consistent engagement with the sector
- Continue to support open dialogue with VCFSE organisations and communities to help shape and evolve the long-term partnership vision for Brent – using the establishment of a VCFSE Advisory Forum to co-design and steer this

Shared outcome 3: A leading and active role for residents in shaping the places where they live

Joint commitments:

- Value community development and engaging people in shaping the decisions that affect them
- Recognise the inequality in current levels and systems of community engagement and the need to empower all residents, including new and emerging communities
- Adhere to the principle of subsidiarity – i.e. that decision making is devolved as appropriate and, wherever possible, to the level closest to Brent residents
- Appreciate the impact that local neighbourhoods and communities have on the health, safety and wellbeing of Brent residents, including the role of accessible and culturally appropriate services and support

VCFSE sector commitments:

The Brent VCFSE sector will:

- Listen to and enable inclusive participation and feedback by residents
- Enable residents to create change in areas that matter to them
- Ensure all future co-design of local services features the lived experience of residents, including young people



Shared outcome 3: A leading and active role for residents in shaping the places where they live

Public sector commitments (Brent Council will):

Brent Council and its partners will:

- Commission a new infrastructure and capacity-building support service with a strong focus on resident and community empowerment, including local volunteering
- Promote and consider the resourcing requirements of spaces in which to engage residents and communities, including faith centres and multi-faith networks
- Ensure the strengths and assets in Brent's communities are understood and supported in the way the Council designs and commissions services and support
- Work with VCFSE sector organisations as equal partners as the Council (and partners) develop the approach to 'Working in Neighbourhoods' including VCFSE sector representation / links to neighbourhood governance
- Continue to develop participatory budgeting approaches, including grant making, that enable residents to have direct decision-making influence in their neighbourhoods
- Facilitate appropriate involvement of the VCFSE sector in all key stages of the Council's commissioning and procurement process
- Establish ways in which community / resident feedback shapes social value priorities and responds to local needs



Putting the Charter into practice

Governance and oversight

Governance arrangements include:

- A new VCFSE Advisory Group will provide overall oversight of the Charter and its implementation and delivery (building from the current Steering Group)
- Appoint 3x VCSFE leads for Charter and each outcome
- A programme of awareness raising, engagement and education about the Charter with key council (and partners) particularly contract managers, grant funding processes and commissioners
- Ensure the Charter is aligned with and supports the Council's emergent Council Plan
- Engage and promote sign up to the Charter across wider agencies such as Probation, all health partners

Measuring success and impact

- Identify a clear and measurable set of performance indicators by which to baseline and assess the effectiveness and delivery of the Charter
- Convene an annual, cross-sector Charter review to learn, reflect on achievements and renew commitments – report to Brent Strategic Partnership
- All partners encouraged to share and promote examples and stories of positive impact and benefit
- Use the implementation of the Charter locally to position Brent as a viable testbed for rolling out the Civil Society Covenant and access the Local Covenant Partnership Fund

For more information, please contact:

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