



NORTHAMPTONSHIRE VCSE ASSEMBLY

Thematic Groups Terms of Reference

BACKGROUND:

The Thematic Groups form an essential part of the work of the Northamptonshire VCSE Assembly. They have been established to bring together individuals and organisations who have interest and expertise in relation to the theme and who will work together in a collaborative way to address the challenges and opportunities for that theme. The thematic approach is important because it will be part of a new framework envisaged for working with partners in health, education and the new Unitary Authorities. It also provides an opportunity for a wider group of concerned stakeholders to engage effectively together in a structured way.

PURPOSE:

The thematic groups are intended to lift the effectiveness of the voluntary sector in Northamptonshire; to collaborate together, to determine and represent its views and to encourage partnership and joint working with the statutory and other sectors in Northamptonshire. The group will:

- Operate within the VCSE Assembly framework and structure and report to the Assembly Board
- Work to the agreed Thematic Terms of Reference.
- Raise the profile of the VCSE Assembly and support VCSE Assembly events.
- Encourage members to share their knowledge and experiences.
- Plan joint responses to issues and challenges of mutual concern.
- To build partnership with statutory bodies, the commercial sector and other bodies to support its priorities.

The group will encourage networking, sharing, collaboration and support between interested members so as to build mutual respect, knowledge of the capacity and capability of the sector and to further sector resilience.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

The main responsibility is to work collectively to identify and positively address the issues and challenges facing the individuals and organisations who are the focus on the Theme, in particular:

- To identify the Theme relevant work that is underway currently together with any good practice
- To identify the emerging, trends, patterns and key insights that are the focus of the theme.
- To work as a group to agree suitable key priorities and thematic goals.
- To work together as a group to represent those priorities and goals to funders and stakeholders.
- To identify ways to support each other, as voluntary and community organisations, and promote sector sustainability.
- If considered appropriate, to deliver a Thematic Plan of action which can be used as a basis for joint working, discussion and funding with key stakeholders.

MEMBERSHIP:

The Thematic Lead should be chosen from within the Thematic Group of individuals and organisations. (The Thematic Lead will be responsible for convening and chairing meetings, for helping to guide the group in discussion and for passing matters through to the Assembly Board.)

There is no limit on the number of members who can join a thematic group. The group will seek to ensure that their Membership is always current and relevant.

There is no restriction on the amount of time that a member is part of the thematic group.

The membership celebrates diversity and will actively encourage a diverse and inclusive membership.

Key stakeholders from other sectors can be invited in as guest speakers or observers, as required.

MEETINGS:

The groups will meet monthly or bi-monthly as the group decides.

Each group is encouraged to link into and work with other, existing or new, forums or collaborations.

Each group is encouraged to visit and observe at other Thematic Groups.

Meetings can be virtual or through face-to-face activity (as restrictions allow and the group decides).

There will be a note of each meeting taken, recording at least the highlights and action points, as agreed.

The group will remain in being and meeting regularly for however long its members and the VCSE Assembly Board agree is necessary.

CONDUCT:

The Thematic Group will observe accepted standards of conduct relating to issues of confidentiality, courtesy, honesty and respect for all. Members will be encouraged to make a positive input and to listen and to be supportive of their colleagues.

The Group is not, therefore, about any one organisation or individual but a joint effort to address important issues in Northamptonshire that we all face moving forward.

The members of the group are non-voting for the purposes of their remit. It is expected that there will be consensus and agreement across the membership of the group.

The group will encourage openness and transparency in all its dealings, internally, externally and within the VCSE Assembly structure.

COMMUNICATIONS:

The Thematic Lead is responsible for ensuring effective communication on the work of the Group, including; concerns, priorities or decisions, with the VCSE Assembly Board.

There will also be an expectation that Thematic Groups will make every effort to keep their members informed, to seek out relevant interested and expert parties for inclusion in communications and to promote and explain their work widely and proactively within the wider VCSE Assembly communications as they develop.