

# CVS Cheshire East Strategy 2021-2026

**Our Theory of Change**

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## Our Theory of Change

The Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector (VCFS) in Cheshire East is a strong and vibrant sector, however they have and will continue to face significant challenges which it will need advice support and guidance on to enable it to respond and thrive.

CVS Cheshire East exists to enable, develop, and empower the voluntary, community and faith sector in Cheshire East. As a charity we are owned and funded by the VCFS to work on activities that benefit them, enabling them to deliver their charitable aims supporting the whole community in Cheshire East and beyond.

During 2020-21 the sector has faced unprecedented challenges and demand when responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. During this time, the VCFS has faced an even greater need than ever for support, advice and guidance to enable them to navigate and tailor their services to the ever-changing positions.

During this time CVS Cheshire East has continued to deliver its core service and has aimed to support and guide the sector.

We have focused on:

- Providing policy updates enabling the sector to understand government guidelines and how they can deliver their services safely.
- Responding to the growing financial need, providing 1-2-1 support as well as working with local and national funders to influence their programmes.
- Providing a representative and voice function with key stakeholders promoting the impact that the sector has had on the community.
- Ensuring that there was good volunteer governance in place for organisations/ local responses that were new to managing volunteers, ensuring the services were safe for everyone involved.

### Listening to VCFS Organisations

CVS Cheshire East recognises that we need to be a responsive organisation that is aware of and reacts to local and national issues that arise to support their members and the wider sector.

At the start of 2020 CVS Cheshire East had the opportunity to reflect on our services and spend time, listening to our members and the wider VCFS to gain a clear understanding of what their current and future needs are. We wanted to take the opportunity to ensure that the services delivered from 2020 onwards were truly rooted in the needs of the sector.

In total, we have actively consulted with an estimated 14% of VCFS organisations within Cheshire East (208) working from the Cheshire East Council figure of 1,482 charitable groups within the region. We also heard from 243 current and prospective volunteers through our volunteering survey.

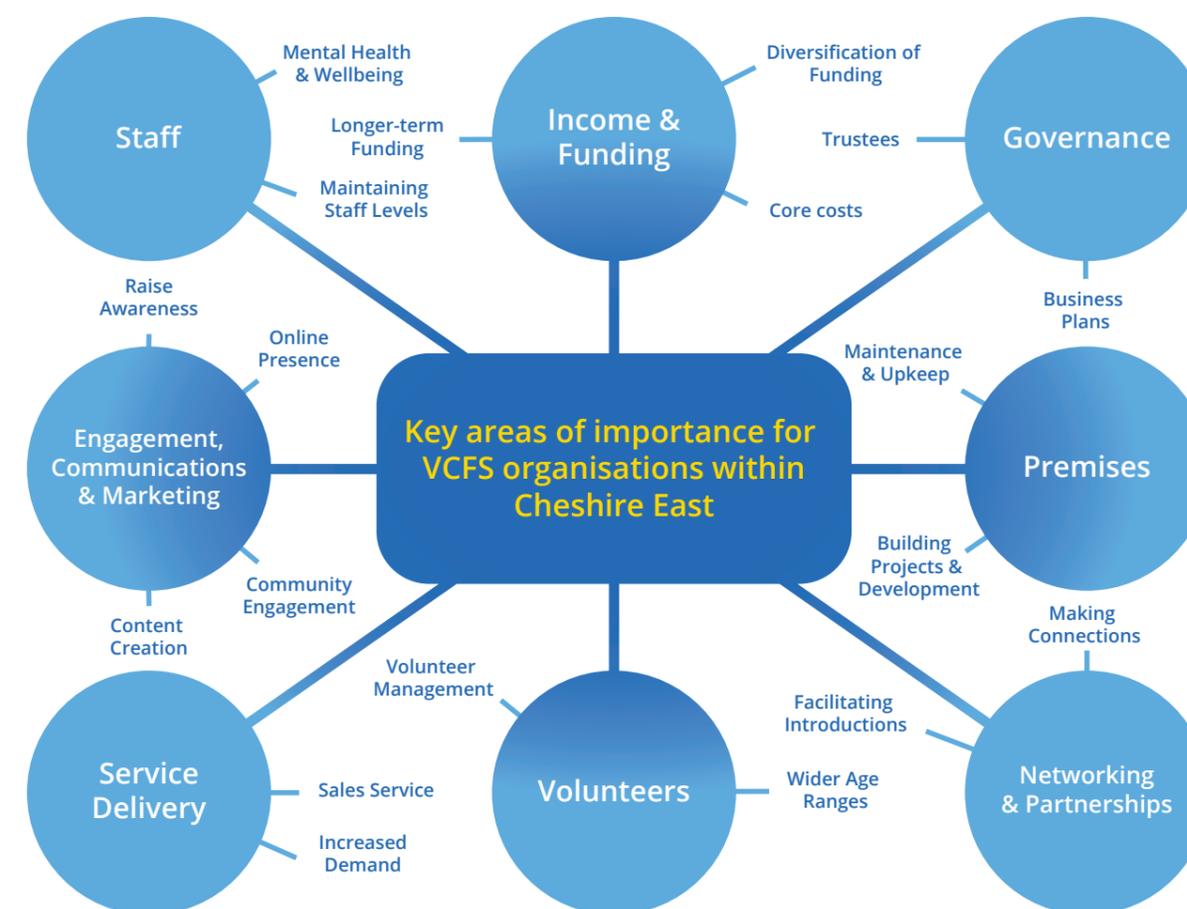
As VCFS organisations are our main beneficiaries we focused most of our time listening to them.

We engaged through:

- Direct 1-2-1 contact with members by appointment to complete the member survey.
- Online invitation for members to complete the survey.
- Online survey access for non-member organisations.
- Consultation discussions with members and non-members at CVS network sessions.
- Online survey access for current and prospective volunteers.

### Priority Areas Raised

VCFS organisations raised key issues that fell within the eight broad category areas.



### Our Theory of Change

CVS Cheshire East has robust output measurements in place however to ensure that we are making the biggest impact for our members we wanted to have a clearer theory of change which shows the difference we want to make.

When reviewing what VCFS organisations told us we were able to identify four overarching outcomes that they wanted to achieve.

These were, that they are:

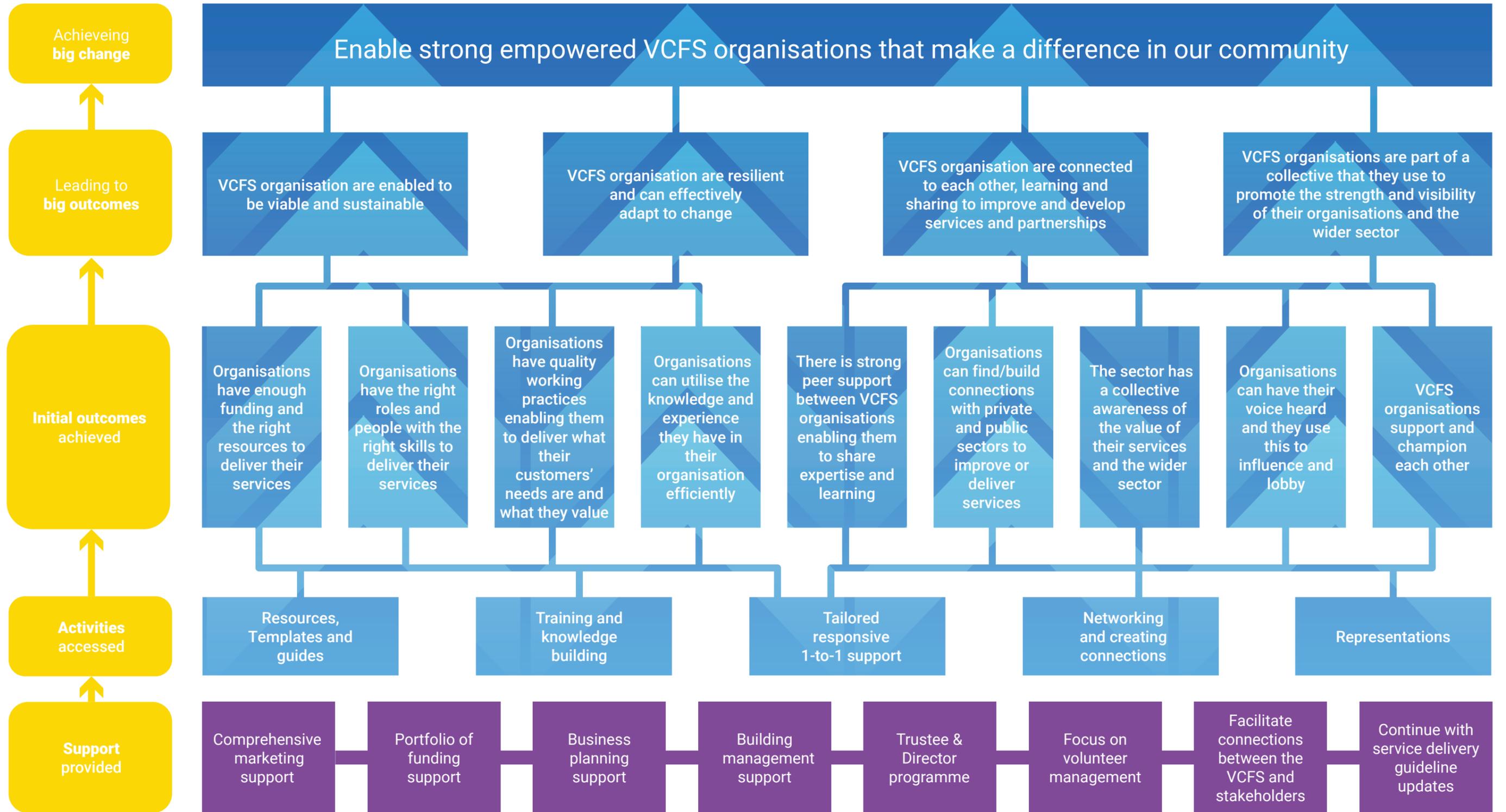
- Enabled to be viable and sustainable.
- Resilient and can effectively adapt to change.
- Connected to each other, learning, and sharing to improve and develop services/ partnerships.
- Part of a collective that they use to promote the strength and visibility of their organisation and the wider sector.

Through VCFS organisations achieving these outcomes we will realise our vision of:

**Enable strong empowered VCFS organisations that make a difference in our community**

Our CVS Theory of Change diagram shows how the outputs/activities once delivered will link to the outcomes.

# CVS Theory of Change



## Assumptions



That CVS staff and volunteers have/are given the skills required to deliver /monitor the service

That CVS is able to secure enough financial resources to deliver the service

That CVS promotes the service in a way that engages the organisations that need the support

That the offer is relevant to the full range of organisations that CVS supports

That CVS has interpreted the consultation results effectively in designing the activities meeting the right needs

That organisations will continue to engage with CVS and the services digitally

## Making This Happen

CVS Cheshire East is a small organisation with big plans and to achieve this we know that along with increased involvement of the VCFS organisations and support from our partners we need to make changes and consider new ways of working.

## Involving Partners and VCFS Organisations

A core principle of our work has been and continues to be, partnerships, whether that is with VCFS organisations, volunteers or stakeholders with a similar interest to ours.

We want to work with people, organisations and businesses that want to build, inspire and empower our community and volunteers to make a difference locally.

We expect to continue to work with partners within the statutory, business and VCF sectors. We want to work with all partners in innovative ways which challenge current methods of working and develop novel solutions to address need.

The plan below shows the key stakeholder groups that CVS Cheshire East aims to work with and how they would support or be supported by the service.



## Developing CVS

To deliver the activities and enable VCFS organisations to achieve the outcomes CVS Cheshire East needs to ensure it is a strong sustainable organisation.

To achieve that we will be focusing on:

- Ensuring that CVS can demonstrate the impact of its work on the people, organisations and wider community that the services support.
- Developing our relationships with our members and the wider VCFS, working with them in partnership to enable us to deliver the vision.
- Continuing to develop the volunteer base enabling CVS to have the capacity to deliver the service to the VCFS.
- Ensuring that there is a realistic resource and funding plan in place to ensure each activity area can be delivered effectively. This includes having a maximised membership model.
- Ensuring that there is extensive awareness and visibility of the charity, its vision and the services that we offer. This includes creating a marketing and engagement plan which focuses on ensuring that the sector in Cheshire East know who we are, what we do and how to contact us and that we have a clear online message for the wider community.
- Working strategically with partners within Cheshire East and across Cheshire and Warrington to link up and ensure effective representation of the sector.

## Demonstrating Our Success

CVS Cheshire East has a robust outputs measurement process, and we are now focusing on ensuring that we have a detailed outcomes measurement process to ensure not only can we evidence the outcomes achieved by the VCFS organisations but also the impact on the wider community. For example, when we support an organisation to achieve funding, we are enabling them to be viable and sustainable, but we want to know what difference this has on the community.

Resources, Templates & Guides	Networking, Creating Connections	Training & Knowledge Building	Tailored, Responsive Support	Representation
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**Recording outputs** – some examples include:

- Number of people/organisations - attending training/networks, downloading documents.
- Number and type of tailored support delivered.
- Number of volunteer roles advertised, and applications made.
- Number and type of volunteer/marketing campaigns undertaken.
- Number of partnerships facilitated.

**Gathering impact through follow ups**, timeline of the follow ups depends on the activity delivered. Some examples include:

- Resources – contact made to identify if the resource was used and the impact this has had.
- Networking – contact after network sessions/connections on do-it, what difference the connection made.
- Training – contact to identify the impact e.g. Marketing training, have your followers increased etc.

## Sharing stories and case studies

From the outputs and gathering impact we will build and share stories and case studies which demonstrate the difference that we have made to VCFS organisations and the wider community.

Everything gathered will focus around demonstrating the achievements of the outcomes.

**Funded by and working in support of  
the Cheshire East voluntary community**

**Enabling strong empowered VCFS  
organisations that make a  
difference in our community**

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