

Halton VCFSE Forum Meeting

06.05.2026 9:30am

In Person St Marie's

Attendees/Apologies

On separate attachment

Introduction: Claire welcomed attendees and introduced the agenda for the meeting explaining additional speakers and full agenda may mean the meeting could overrun and requested attendees stay as long as they can. This month's forum will focus on neighbourhood health and how the voluntary sector is a key partner in improving neighbourhood health.

Claire requested that 69 attendees introduce themselves and their organisation. Following attendee introductions Claire invited Andrew Donaldson, the new Chief Executive of Halton Borough Council, to speak.

Andrew Donaldson HBC CEO

Andrew welcomed and thanked everyone for attending and for inviting him to speak, noting he was impressed with the large turn out from the sector and statutory services representatives. This level of engagement evidences the strong relationships in the borough and Andrew celebrated the sector and these connections. This is Andrew's 9th week in his role in the borough, and he believes that Halton is a special place to be and feels like a good fit.

A commitment to collaborative working between HBC and the voluntary sector was emphasised, and although Halton has a robust sector there is always room for growth, particularly within a high growth city region.

Finally, with neighbourhood health being the focus of the morning Andrew confirmed he believes the voluntary sector plays crucial role in reducing health inequalities in Halton.

Attendee Updates

Caroline Moss: Space Runcorn

Caroline promoted Space Runcorn's offer and detailed some of the services available.

Space have recruited 2 new staff members:

Toni Burns – Events Manager

Faith Jones – Mental Health Services Lead

Space currently has no waiting list for their expanded funded (free) counselling service, to book and/or find out more contact counselling@spaceruncorn.co.uk.

Caroline also announced that Space are expanding their services to an additional base in Murdishaw, more details to be announced soon.

Emma Eager: Autism Wellbeing Project (AWL)

The AWP will be offering free Autism Ally Training. This training is funded by The National Lottery and designed and delivered by professionals with lived experience. Details of these sessions and all training available through the AWP can be found here [Training — The Autism Wellbeing Project](#).

For more information contact hello@theautismwellbeingproject.co.uk 0151 304 7175.

Vivienne Risk: Warrington and Halton Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

Viv reconfirmed the offer of community spaces usage at the WELL Runcorn: Runcorn Health and Education Hub once operational in the summer.

- Opportunity for VCFSE organisations to utilise space within the hub to deliver services that support the delivery model.
- Operating costs are covered by the core partners.
- You could use the WELL Runcorn hub for:
 - » Signposting to your services
 - » Promotion
 - » Physical delivery within the space
 - » Visit the following link, and providing some information about your service: <https://forms.office.com/e/rHtHtgfg31>

Drop-in sessions are available throughout May and June for confirmed, prospective or interested service providers to visit the WELL Runcorn Hub.

Tues 12th May – 2pm to 7pm

Thurs 14th May – 1pm to 5pm

Weds 20th May: 1pm – 5pm

Fri 22nd May: 9am – 1pm

Tues 26th May: 2pm to 6pm

Thurs 28th May: 8am to midday

Fri 29th May: 11am to 3pm

Mon 1st June: midday to 5pm

Thurs 4th June: 2pm to 6:30pm

Fri 5th June: 9am to midday

Steph Bartlett: Halton Adult Learning

Steph highlighted how many learners have now completed course with Halton Adult Learning, including Learning Ambassadors course which involves a Level 1 Mentoring qualification.

These students would benefit from volunteering opportunities to expand skill set, a request was made to the attendees to share potential volunteering opportunities.

Sean Bailey: Sean Bailey Wellness

Sean highlighted how the organisation currently has 260 referrals and getting through the caseload is proving difficult and the team are working on discharging cases to move on to the next cohort.

The sessions are now based at the Science Centre at The Heath, and in addition to the sessions they will be hosting monthly **open sleep clinics**. Mays clinic is fully booked but there is still availability for June. Find out about all events and activities here [Events – Sean Bailey Wellness](#).

Doreen Hesketh-Calland: Gateway Community LTD

Doreen confirmed that Gateway Community will continue to support community members reach their goals and fulfil their potential regardless of any difficulties / disabilities they may have Monday to Friday. However, in addition to the usual services available they will be opening on a Saturday for 3 hours for social purposes.

Nicola Donoghue: Halton Cancer Support

Nicola announced that the Halton Cancer Support Centre's annual fundraiser, 5k The Centre Way, is returning on the 11th of July.

The event grows year on year, and the team are hoping for similar numbers , if not more, as last year with 10 stallholders, and 350 participants.

It will be a community event in Victoria Park, Widnes and all are welcome.

you can buy your tickets now and register with Halton Cancer Support to attend.

Please do both steps

1. Buy a Ticket: <https://donate.giveasyoulive.com/.../5k-the-centre-way-2026>

2. Register to attend with Halton Cancer

Support: <https://forms.office.com/e/JGZAEbzcU8>

3. Create your own personalised fundraising link

here: <https://donate.giveasyoulive.com/.../5k-the-centre-way-2026>

Georgina Crank: Halton Housing

Halton Housing Helping Hands fund is now open; the fund offers three levels of funding, ranging from £100 up to £2,000, so you can apply for the amount that best fits the size and needs of your project.

Spring round:

Applications open: Wednesday 22nd April 2026

Applications close: Wednesday 3rd June 2026

Application Outcome: Wednesday 17th June 2026

Find out more here [Helping Hands | Halton Housing](#).

Marie Owens: Second Story Recovery CIC

Second Story Recovery CIC will be holding a launch event at Widnes CGL on the 16th of May; everyone is welcome to attend and hear more about the offer. A flyer will be shared separately and the event starts at 2pm, and will include stallholders, music, and a launch of Second Story Recovery timetable.

Diane Hubbard: Care UK

Diane provided details of Care UK's offer including the 2 charity shops, furniture provision for those in need, volunteer opportunities, house clearances and more. Referrals can be made by members of the sector and other professionals.

Care UK are currently recruiting additional Trustees, opening the opportunity to the attendees at the forum.

<https://www.careukcharity.org.uk>

Mathew Roberts: NHS Cheshire and Merseyside

Matthew highlighted that this week, 4th to the 10th of May.

The Halton Compassionate Communities Network is hosting a Dying Matters week event at Widnes Market on Friday the 8th of May.

Dead Positive CIC will also be hosting an open day event at their base in Widnes on Saturday the 9th of May.

Louise Nulty: Halton Borough Council

As part of the Borough of Culture year Music in the Park will be taking place on Sunday the 10th of May between 1-3pm at Victoria Park.

This May, Halton's cultural calendar comes into focus, with a programme of events that reflect the borough's creativity, heritage and sense of place as part of **Culture**

26. From live music, inclusive Pride performances and creative experiences, this month highlights the diverse ways culture is shared and celebrated across Halton.

With the return of the [Beyond The Tracks](#) Music Trains, to scenic boat trips along the Bridgewater Canal, Plant Hunters' Fair at Norton Priory and the reopening of Victoria Park Butterfly House for spring and summer.

Music on the Trains returns, between Runcorn and Chester, live music meets travel once again in Halton, as **Music Trains** roll back onto the rails this May half-term.

Travellers with a standard rail ticket between Runcorn and Chester can enjoy a *free live concert onboard*. Find out more here [What's On 'Culture 26; Made in Halton' in May | Visit Halton](#).

Halton Fest will also be returning, **Halton's annual festival at Runcorn Hill Park.**

6th & 7th June 2026

With the return of the Music & Performance Marquee and new for Culture 26, the Creative Marquee supported by Cultivate Halton Network.

To participate as a performer or creative

contact cultivatehalton@gmail.com or Louise.nulty@halton.gov.uk.

Hitesh Patal: Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)

Hitesh shared flyers with attendees explaining the CAB's energy advice project, flyers are displayed at St Marie's if required. Support can be provided in residents homes.

The CAB have funding to extend the Domestic Violence project; the support is aimed at a preventative stage. For more information contact CAB at [Email Enquiry Contact Form – Citizens Advice Halton](#).

Hitesh highlighted the limitation in service delivery due to lack of funding.

The recent Young People pilot has been hugely successful with 40% of participants engaging with work or training/education. This highlights how beneficial investment in the sector can be in so many areas including work with NEETs and worklessness.

Tommy Thackaberry: Halton Community Transport

Tommy detailed how the utilisation of the Dial a Ride service has increased 75% over the last year, reaching 12,000 journeys. Tommy highlighted that increasingly these journeys have been to attend medical appointments.

Halton Community Transport need support with funding, trustees, and volunteers to meet the current demand and be able to enhance their offer. The service has enough vehicles but need more volunteer drivers.

Pauline Ruth: Trinity Safe Space (TSS)

TSS have been awarded funding through Culture 26 to deliver Heritage workshops. These workshops will be a celebration of diversity in the borough and will be in a variety of sites potentially including the library.

Pauline called for attendees at the workshops; more details will be shared as they are confirmed.

Alicia Abbott: VCA

The VCA have an end of project survey for the Connected project. Completion should take a few minutes and can be accessed here [About Your Recent Experience Survey](#).

The VCA have been reviewing our membership offer.

We are pleased to share the outcome of our recent membership review. Following valuable feedback from our members, we have taken steps to ensure our offering remains accessible, transparent, and aligned with your expectations.

In direct response to your input, we have maintained our current pricing structure, with **no increase to our Gold membership fee**, which remains at **£10**. Our aim is to continue delivering value while keeping costs as low as possible.

Additionally, membership will now operate on an **annual basis from the date of sign-up**, ensuring that all members receive a full 12 months of benefits, regardless of when they join.

We would like to thank all members who contributed feedback as part of this review. Your insights play a vital role in shaping our approach and ensuring we continue to meet your needs.

You can find out more here [Membership | Halton & St Helens VCA](#).

The VCA are hosting a variety of training across both sites for our members, including Introduction to AI for the Voluntary Sector, Legal Structures, and Safeguarding, find out what is available here [Events | Halton & St Helens VCA](#).

Alicia will also be working with community groups to deliver workshops centred on resilience and preparedness including 'Be Ready for Anything: Preparing for Emergencies'. If you would like to discuss this further, please contact Alicia at aabbott@haltonsthelensvca.org.uk.

Claire Redford-Kerr: VCA

Claire announced that the 2026 Volunteer Awards would be held on the 2nd of October at The Heath, Runcorn. The awards will be officially launched during Volunteers Week in June.

During Volunteer's Week we will be hosting a quiz night on the 4th of June with Claire at the Quiz Master, spaces will be limited and more details, including how to book, will be shared soon.

The Halton Mental Health Alliance are holding a mental health conference 'What Keeps Me Well - Halton Mental Health Alliance Conference'.

Join Halton Mental Health Alliance on Wednesday 20th May 10am to 4:30pm at The Heath Conference Centre for their What Keeps Me Well Mental Health Conference. Alongside showcasing the variety of activities and services our members have on offer to local residents, we will be joined by guest speakers to explore both Debt and Sleep on our mental Health.

There will be opportunities to engage in interactive experiences, including understanding neurodiversity and masking; an introduction to journalling and tools to keep us well amongst others.

We will also be joined by individuals with lived experience sharing their journeys and what keeps them well.

Who Should Attend:

The event is open to individuals in the sector supporting individuals to keep well and mental health professionals.

Marketplace

There will be a variety of VCFSE stalls providing information, with time to network and explore. If you would like to have a stall, please get in touch so that we can book you in.

Book your place here [What Keeps Me Well - Halton Mental Health Alliance Conference | Halton & St Helens VCA](#).

Claire Memorandum of Understanding for Halton.

Working better together for our communities: Developing a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for joint working between:
Cheshire & Merseyside (C&M) VCFSE alliance and
NHS Cheshire & Merseyside (NHS C&M)

- **What is it?** - represents a commitment to partnership working between public and VCFSE sectors, with the aim of ensuring a strong and productive relationship for the benefit of communities. Sometimes called a compact, covenant, or partnership agreement
- **Why is it important?** - provides shared clarity on roles, expectations and accountability, reducing the risk of inconsistent engagement, unequal power dynamics and missed opportunities to deliver joined-up and better outcomes for communities.

We will be exploring this MoU in an online lunch session on the 19th of May 12:15pm to 1pm and you can register here [Developing the Memorandum of Understanding Halton Workshop online | Halton & St Helens VCA](#).

VCFSE voices in Halton matter — and this is your chance to be heard
We're inviting VCFSE organisations across Halton to help us shape how partnership with our local NHS really works.

As part of our C&M VCFSE Alliance for health and care, we're developing a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with NHS Cheshire and Merseyside, the integrated care board.

Tell us what should be in our MoU, so it reflects what strong, fair and effective partnership looks like from the sector's point of view.

There's two ways to get involved:

1. Sign up for our Halton online workshop to have your say on what matters to you from our MoU by registering here
2. Tell us what you think by completing our online survey by close of Friday 29 May 2026 <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/23SLLCT>

Your views will directly influence how NHS C&M works with our sector across the area.

Guest Speakers

Stephen Bennett: North Cheshire and Mersey NHS Foundation Trust.

An introduction to North Cheshire and Mersey NHS Foundation Trust. Better Care Together Integration Programme

Stephen highlighted the health inequalities in the borough, particularly the number of years residents live in poor health, and how with aging population this is likely to get worse over the next 20 years.

Stephen noted that the voluntary sector plays a central role in supporting residents to be well and have care at home.

Full details of the presentation are included in the slides.

Stephen answered questions and accepted observations including:

Sally identifying the need for a fully funded model of inclusion for voluntary sector organisation's to be valued partners, and for the sector to be included in conversations and the decision-making process at the earliest opportunity.

Tommy noted that for services to be fully inclusive and reach those in need transportation must be considered, and offered data held by Halton Community Transport. Additionally, Tommy suggested that using their services would be a less expensive option for the NHS.

Promotional methods to reach younger residents were suggested, particularly as a lot of misinformation circulates on social media platforms.

Sean emphasised that to progress services effectively digital methods must be utilised.

Stephen highlighted that the service transformation was still in its first few weeks and offered to return to the forum in a few months to continue the discussion.

Jessy Noe: One Knowsley The Phoenix Way Northwest Cheshire and Merseyside

Slides from Jessy's presentation are included alongside the minutes.

The Phoenix Way (TPW) is a national racial justice movement working to ensure BRM communities can thrive, lead, and shape the decisions that affect their lives.

TPW exists to:

- Support and grow BRM communities, organisations and leadership.
- Shift power towards those most affected by inequality.
- Challenge and change unfair systems — particularly grant funding.

Why:

- BRM-led organisations face structural barriers in accessing funding
- National statistics show BRM-led organisations are successful in only around 24% of funding applications
- Without fair access to funding, communities cannot sustainably support or represent their people

TPW is about changing the system, not asking communities to work harder within broken ones.

Join One Knowsley for The Phoenix Way listening event for Halton, St Helens and Warrington.

The Phoenix Way - Listening Event - Halton, St Helens and Warrington

Join us in person for The Phoenix Way listening event in Widnes! It's a great chance to come together, share your thoughts, and really listen to what's going on in the community. Whether you want to speak up or just soak it all in, this is the spot. Don't

miss out on connecting with others and being part of something meaningful.
Friday 15th May, 13:00 – 15:00.

Address: Halton and St Helen's VCA Widnes Office. St Marie's, Lugsdale Road, Widnes, WA8 6DB

Contact: jessy.noe@oneknowsley.org

Book a place here [The Phoenix Way - Listening Event - Halton, St Helens and Warrington Tickets, Friday, May 15 • 1 PM - 3 PM | Eventbrite](#).

Erin Denton and Adon Shaw: Halton Haven Hospice

Erin and Adon provided an overview of the recent updates and rebranding at Halton Haven Hospice.

Slides included alongside the minutes.

New brighter décor is in place to create a welcoming and home from home feel for the patients and families.

A new social café has been launched to provide families with an opportunity to interact with other in comfort.

Halton Haven has lots of events and fundraising activities coming up, including the Forget Me Not Appeal and Haven Fest. You can find out more about how to get involved here.

[Events - Halton Haven Hospice](#)

Erin and Adon celebrated the contribution made by the volunteers in the team and highlighted that volunteering opportunities are always available whether you have only an hour to spare or can make lengthier commitment.

Erin ended the presentation by noting the hospices moto “**We cannot add days to life, but we can add life to days.**”.

Zoran Blackie: Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust

Mersey Care 2026-31: Patient and public engagement sessions – 2026

Slides included alongside the minutes.

Zoran introduced Mersey Care's vision to lead the way in perfect, whole person care that helps people of all ages live healthier lives.

Mersey Care are hosting a variety of engagement events; these meetings are a chance to:

- Meet with a senior leader from Mersey Care
- Share your experiences of Mersey Care services
- Hear about plans for service improvements

Zorah identified the need to engage with the voluntary sector at the start of the process of change to co-produce strategy for areas including prevention, inclusion, and digital inclusion, and suggested returning to a future forum for more feedback.

Sarah Vickers: NHS Cheshire & Merseyside – Halton Place

Slides included alongside the minutes.

Integrated Neighbourhood Working

Sarah introduced the 10-year plan that focuses on Neighbourhood Working, marking a mindset shift in the way that the NHS works.

This shift builds on the collaborative work of the One Halton Partnership backed by the new guidelines for 2025/2026.

A neighbourhood health services aims to deliver services closer to home, ensure services are delivered at a local level whenever possible, with a proactive approach that holds the voluntary sector as a crucial partner for effective delivery. Using a neighbourhood health hub model.

Purpose: help integrated care boards, local authorities and health and care providers develop neighbourhood health services in 2025/26

Neighbourhood health model is intended to join up services in the community in a more effective way, particularly for people with more complex health and care needs, helping children thrive and supporting adults to stay independent for longer, improve health and wellbeing, and reduce avoidable pressures on health, social care and other public services.

Ask: for local systems to focus on supporting adults, children and young people with complex health and social care needs who require support from multiple services and organisations, developing and bringing together into an integrated service offer six core components of a neighbourhood health model

- Population health management
- Modern general practice
- Standardising community health services
- Neighbourhood multi-disciplinary teams
- Integrated intermediate care with a 'Home First' approach
- Urgent neighbourhood services

What does this mean for Voluntary Services?

Opportunities

- Formal recognition as **core partners**, not “add-ons”
- Strong **alignment with voluntary sector strengths:**
 - Prevention, wellbeing, social prescribing
 - Tackling loneliness, inequalities and wider determinants of health

- Potential access to:
- Co-location in neighbourhood health centres
- Co-design of services

Risks & Implications

- Inclusion is **not automatic** – depends on local arrangements
- Funding is **not ring-fenced** for the voluntary sector
- Risk of being involved too late unless engagement happens now
- Greater expectations to show impact, collaborate, and work at neighbourhood scale

In practice, VCFSE organisations already support neighbourhood health by:

- Supporting prevention, proactive care and coordination
- Working with people with early or moderate frailty, addressing isolation, confidence and low-level needs before escalation
- Providing relational, community-based support that complements Primary Care Networks and community services
- Acting as connectors for people with multiple needs, supporting navigation, engagement and joined-up care

Sarah called for ongoing collaboration and input in designing services and support. Co-design will be a crucial part of developing robust provision. Details of further engagement opportunities and workshops will be shared when confirmed.

Claire closed the meeting by thanking the guest speakers and everyone for attending and reminding attendees that they are welcome to stay in the room for networking and refreshments.

2026 Forum Dates

- Thursday 11th June [Halton's June VCFSE Forum | Halton & St Helens VCA](#)
- Tuesday 7th July *Voluntary Sector only*
- Wednesday 9th September
- Thursday 8th October
- Tuesday 1st December