

# Oldham VCFSE Infrastructure Grant 2022-2025

## Introduction - Action Together - for stronger communities

Action Together was formed in April 2016 to bring together two charities; Voluntary Action Oldham (VAO) and Community and Voluntary and Action Tameside (CVAT). Action Together is a charitable incorporated organisation (CIO) registered charity number 1165512 formed under the Charities Act 2011.

Our ambition is to bring about a significant increase in citizen-led action that improves local lives. We also want to promote recognition of how important that is. To help us achieve this we have a strategy that guides our work.

Our strategic aims are to:

- To dramatically increase social action and sustain the vital work of local voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) organisations
- To radically amplify the voices of local people and create new ways to share decision making and design policy
- To be audacious and ensure the VCFSE sector is recognised by public agencies as integral to achieving local ambitions.
- To invest to achieve our charitable purpose and be financially sustainable

*The 'enablers' that help us to achieve our strategy are:*

### Membership

We are a membership organisation and will increase opportunities for members to shape our role and the support we offer. Members will be offered some enhanced support and asked to contribute to joint action and work with us to influence change. [Click here](#) to find out more.

### Promoting local giving and 'doing good'

We won't focus on organisational form but look to support anyone, business, social enterprise or charity to 'do good' locally and maximise their offers of time, resources and money and put them to maximum use. Our free support will be prioritised for those that are small with a low income but making a big difference. [Click here](#) to find out more.

### Quality and impact

We will reflect on our impact, learning from what is working and what isn't to help prioritise our support. We will strive to gather meaningful insight into the impact of community and action and the work of VCO's across Tameside and Oldham.

### Our workforce

We will invest in developing our workforce and ways of working to enable us to respond to increasing



demand, complexity and spatial levels. We will need to be nimble in our approach therefore quick to recognise opportunities and respond.

### **Our systems**

We will invest in our systems and technology to ensure the relational value and intelligence we gather can be shared and creates maximum impact. We will need a flexible and mobile workforce and the systems and support in place to enable this.

### **Sustainability**

To achieve our strategic aims Action Together must have a sustainable financial model that is true to its values, diversifies its income, reduces costs and seeks efficiencies through strategic alliances. In order to achieve this, we will need to be ready to take opportunities when they arise and extend our services without competing with our members.

*Action Together's values are to;*

**Believe it's possible** - Vision and ideas matter. We have confidence in the power of people and communities and strive to release their potential to create the widest possible benefits whilst promoting social justice.

**Strengthen others** - we work in ways that strengthen people, places and partnerships. We achieve this by working collaboratively, sharing skills and developing relationships between people and groups.

**Be true** - we are brave enough to share constructive insight in order to make progress. Our unique insight comes from our connections with, and amplification of, the diverse range of voices of people and groups that we work with.

Our work is organised into these core themes:

1. [Volunteering](#)
2. [Development](#)
3. [Partnerships and Collaboration](#)
4. [Grants and Investment](#)

## **Oldham VCFSE Infrastructure Grant Activity delivery**

Through the VCFSE infrastructure grant funding provided by Oldham Council, Action Together will provide and deliver the following activity:

### **Volunteering**

As the Accredited Volunteer Centre for Oldham we will deliver the following:

1. 'Volunteering in place'. Volunteer Centre hubs delivered in each of the 5 districts providing in-person volunteering brokerage which includes; support with volunteer registration, strength-based conversations to match potential volunteers with live opportunities, support to connect with an organisation offering an opportunity.
2. [On-line volunteer brokerage](#) via our website.



3. Managing an [online bank of volunteering opportunities](#)
4. Hosting [#MeetTheCharity](#) information sessions so potential volunteers can find out more about local charities, the work they do, the people they support and the variety of volunteer roles available
5. Pre-volunteering training and support to volunteers to get the ready for volunteering

## Development

The provision of 'place-based' organisational development infrastructure support to VCFSE groups and organisations in Oldham, and the provision of 'place-based' community development infrastructure support to Oldham residents with an idea to strengthen or improve their community. The defined support offer delivered is as follows:

1. Support people to think through an idea for community action and bring people together to form a group or start a project.
2. Support groups to become constituted and advice on legal structures, incorporation, charity information and registration, and social enterprise advice
3. Work with groups and organisations to undertake an organisational health check (assessment tool) and produce an action plan of support for developing the group or organisation
4. Finding funding advice and support including bespoke funding searches
5. Advice and support to complete grant applications at all levels of funding
6. Support to plan services or activities and events
7. Support with monitoring and evaluation systems
8. Support with policies and procedures and completing the [Quality in Action Award](#)
9. Advice and support and signposting to workforce development opportunities and training delivered by others.
10. Delivering a core programme of training courses including Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults, Writing Funding Applications, Trustee and committee member training, First Aid, Food and Hygiene.
11. Delivering [#WednesdaysWeekly](#), our weekly bite-sized information and training sessions.
12. Delivering a 6 month ['Learning Development Community' Programme](#)
13. Support with developing volunteering opportunities
14. Support with basic book-keeping
15. Support with business planning
16. Support with governance and Trustee / Management Committee development
17. Support with reporting back to funders, charity commission, and members
18. Support to develop monitoring, evaluation and demonstrating impact

## Partnerships and Collaboration

1. Co-ordinating and facilitating VCFSE forums that bring people together primarily focused on sharing information, relationship building and peer support:
  - a. [Community Explorers](#) (Monthly - Grass roots VCFSE forums in each of the 5 Districts)
  - b. [Voluntary Sector Leadership Group](#) (Strategic forum for Leaders in the VCFSE)
  - c. Community Centres and Community Anchors Network (Forum for people leading community centres or community anchor organisations)

2. Co-ordinating the strategic representation of the VCFSE at key Oldham Partnership Governance Boards including:
  - a. Oldham Leadership Board
  - b. Oldham Health and Wellbeing Board
  - c. Oldham Safeguarding Adults Board
  - d. Oldham Safeguarding Children's Partnership
  - e. Oldham Children's Alliance
  - f. Oldham System Health and Care Board
  - g. Oldham Community Safety and Cohesion Partnership

The strategic representation co-ordination function includes preparing for the board meetings and gathering insight to inform discussion and decision making, attending and representing the views and issues, providing appropriate challenge and potential solutions, and then actioning any work that arises as a consequence. It also includes feeding back key formation, decisions or priorities to the appropriate parts of the VCFSE system including VSLG and grass-roots groups and orgs.

## Communication and Sharing Information

We have further developed our communications strategy to ensure that we can communicate and share key information quickly and in a way that is accessible to our different audiences. Our key audience is our members of VCFSE and so we use our [Website](#) and Membership CRM, together with our socials to communicate important information and opportunities to the right audiences. Alongside our targeted comms we also deliver the following mailings to around 1,500 members of the VCFSE:

- Bi-Weekly Oldham Community News - Everything and anything useful for the VCFSE in Oldham
- Bi-Weekly Funding Bulletin - All local and national funding opportunities
- Bi-Weekly Events and Training Bulletin - All local training opportunities or learning events

## Impact Monitoring

Action Together will provide quarterly monitoring reports against the following KPI's with impact commentary:

Volunteering	No. of volunteers (registered)	Impact narrative around the difference that we make to volunteering
	No. of volunteers matched	
	No. of volunteers actively volunteering	
Development	No. of events and training sessions	Impact narrative around the difference that we make through our development work
	No. of people attending training	
	No. of VCFSE groups supported	
Collaboration and Partnerships	No. of partnership forums	Impact narrative around the difference that we make by facilitating forums and partnerships
	No. of groups attending forums	
Communications	No. of locality ebulletins delivered	
Grants and Investments	No. of funding applications received	Impact narrative around the difference that we make through grant making
	Amount of grant funding requested	
	No. of funding applications awarded	
	Amount of grant funding awarded	

Our Impact Monitoring Report for our work so far in 2021-2022 can be [viewed here](#). Our Annual Report for 2020-2021 is available on our [website here](#).

## Our work that isn't funded through the Infrastructure Grant

Other areas of work that Action Together deliver in Oldham that is funded in addition to the work delivered through the Infrastructure Grant from Oldham Council includes:

### Partnerships and Collaboration

#### Equalities Networks

Facilitating networks is a critical part of how we provide the infrastructure for social change, they are a key way for our members to share their insight and expertise, collaborate on developing solutions, and take shared actions

Action Together facilitates the following equalities networks:

1. Poverty Action Group
2. Food Solutions Network
3. VCFSE Women's Network

We have significantly developed our thinking and approach to delivering networks in the past 18 months and through this work have identified the capacity and resource that is required to deliver this work successfully. We are working with 2 national funders to secure the resources required for us to continue to deliver this work.

### Grants and Investments

Action Together has significantly increased the number of grant funding awards and investments it makes and the amount of funding that is granted ([Please see 2021-2022 Monitoring Report](#)). In order to resource the capacity to do this we will apply a grant management fee of 10% to funders who we work with to distribute funds. This ensures that we can pay the salary of a dedicated grant administration role.

### Programmes and Projects

We deliver a range of programmes and projects that are additionally funded including:

#### Covid Community Champions

Investing in the capacity of VCFSE groups to undertake covid community engagement with their beneficiaries and for them to capture insight from their communities in relation to inequalities faced around the Covid response. Additional capacity currently funded via Oldham Council via DCMS and

#### Covid Emergency Response Volunteering

Action Together continue to co-ordinate and supervise emergency response volunteering in relation to covid, and currently have volunteers mobilized each week across Oldham Foodbank, a number of community vaccination clinics and a number of Care Homes.

#### Big Local Oldham

Action Together continues our work as the Local Trusted Organisation (funded by Big Local) with the Oldham Big Local Partnership Board, supporting them to implement their current plan which runs from April 2021 for three years. This represents the final three years of the Oldham Big Local Programme and



there is a focus on thinking about the legacy that will be left behind in Clarksfield, Littlemoor and Greenacres.

### **Poverty Truth Commission**

Action Together leads on coordinating the Oldham Poverty Truth Commission, this project has had additional funding from Oldham Council and J R F- Seed Fund

### **Local Pilot**

The Oldham Local Pilot is part of the GM Moving whole system approach to increasing physical activity. When whole systems work together to get people moving, we can also solve other problems too, such as improving educational attainment and health outcomes, supporting the local economy, reducing our impact on the environment and creating healthier, happier, safer places; collectively making Greater Manchester a better place for everyone to live. Action Together is a member of the steering group and receives funding from Greater Sport for dedicated staffing capacity to the project to co-ordinate and deliver community engagement, supporting neighborhood partnerships and delivering investments to the VCFSE in Oldham.

### **Real Change Oldham**

Real Change provides an alternative way of giving donations to help people who are homeless. Real change accepts donations and then distributes the funds to cover essential costs that help people who are homeless or at risk in our area build lives away from the streets. The Real Change fund supports people who are homeless by paying for items they need - things like a deposit for a home, a training course, or clothes for a job interview. People affected by homelessness can apply for grants through one of the registered partners. Action Together was instrumental in setting Real Change up in Oldham and facilitating the Real Change Partnership. We are in the process of identifying a partner to handover the lead role in this project to.

### **Our Current Commissioned Activity**

Alongside our core VCFSE Infrastructure work and additional projects, we currently deliver two commissioned services:

#### **Oldham Social Prescribing Service**

Action Together leads on the Innovation Partnership that delivers Social Prescribing in Oldham. The Innovation Partnership brings together Positive Steps, Age UK Oldham, Tameside ,Oldham and Glossop Mind with Action together to deliver a social prescribing services that connects Oldham residents to community groups, activities and organisations that could support you to improve their health, wellbeing and social connections. We produce quarterly impact reports for social prescribing and the service was recently independently evaluated as part of the Thriving Communities Evaluation by Human Engine.

#### **Healthwatch Oldham**

Action Together is the host organisation for [Healthwatch Oldham](#), which is the independent champion for people who use health and social care services. We also deliver the Independent NHS Complaints service. The annual Report for Healthwatch Oldham can be [viewed here](#).

