Voluntary Organisations Disability Group

Shared Principles of VCFSE Disability Organisations | What Makes Us Different

Introduction

The aim of the principles below is to provide a helpful narrative when engaging with decision makers, to help make the case for how voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) organisations are different to for-profit providers, the value and impact they deliver and how they align with national and local policy drivers.

The principles and supporting statements are aimed at a broad audience including commissioners, Councillors, MPs, funders and other stakeholders (including the NHS, civil servants and other providers).

The principles should be supported by data, case studies and stories from the workforce, people you support, families and carers.

Shared Principles

1. **Disabled People First:** Our primary purpose is to support disabled people to live the lives they choose. Putting people first is at the heart of VCFSE provision, but must never mean compromising quality, absorbing the costs of underfunded services or using charitable resources to subsidise statutory responsibilities. Sustainable, person-centred support requires care and support to be fully funded, with reasonable uplifts to sustain quality, invest in staff and reinvest in vital provision.

2. **Rooted in Communities and Responsive to Local Needs:** VCFSE organisations have a deep understanding and unique ability to respond to local needs, based on our mission, morals and ability to reach groups who are too often overlooked or underserved. Any surplus we make is reinvested in our mission, people and local communities - rather than extracted or distributed to shareholders - helping to build stronger, more inclusive and sustainable communities.

3. **Creating Social Value and Lasting Impact:** The VCFSE sector generates added social and economic value for individuals, communities and the economy by (re)investing locally. VCFSE organisations create training and

employment opportunities for local people and provide vital support for disabled people, families and carers so they can be active citizens in their communities and contribute meaningfully to the local economy.

4. **Amplifying Rights, Choice and Voice:** We champion and amplify the rights, independence, inclusion and aspirations of disabled people. We understand and address inequity and inequalities disabled people face by striving to ensure people with lived experience can shape the support and services they receive and the policies and systems that affect their lives.

5. **Collaborative and Connected**: We are more than service providers; we build partnerships across and within communities. We bring people and organisations together, share expertise and work collectively to help achieve better outcomes for disabled people, their communities and society. We seek to reframe commissioning to be person centred and outcome focused, built on partnership, bravery, risk sharing and a long-term view of current and emerging needs.

6. **Leaders of Change and Innovation:** The VCFSE sector is a driver for positive change, balancing social value, mission and vision with the financial sustainability needed to deliver lasting impact. We are ambitious for the future and committed to finding better ways of working.

Supporting Statements

Disabled People First

- VODG members occupy a unique and vital position in the health and social care landscape. Our organisations exist to ensure disabled people are supported to live the lives they choose.
- What distinguishes our approach is our unwavering commitment to putting people first.
- We deliver person-led support, positive social and economic impact and respond to unmet needs where other interventions have fallen short. The fundamental purpose of being person, rather than profit, driven, shapes everything we do.
- Being person-centred does not mean that VCFSE organisations do not need to be fully funded for the services they provide. The full cost of service delivery must be covered, supported by reasonable uplifts. Reserves and fundraising are not sources of funding for statutory care.
- Being person-centred means not compromising on quality. We will not be forced into a race to the bottom that diminishes quality to fit into an unrealistic financial envelope.

- While some providers make profits for shareholders or international companies, any surplus made by VCFSE organisations is reinvested into frontline support, including the workforce, and therefore the local economy.

Rooted in Communities and Responsive to Local Needs

- We have a deep understanding of the communities we serve. Our local relationships, knowledge and connections enable us to provide personalised, responsive and relevant support including to people and groups who are too often overlooked or underserved.
- Our organisations have evolved in response to real community needs, often supporting the most marginalised or disadvantaged groups. This place-based expertise means we understand local dynamics and can respond flexibly to changing requirements. We do not just deliver services - we advocate for those we support and drive positive systemic change in the care sector.
- While operating independently from both government and the private sector, we balance our social mission with commercial viability through clear funding requirements and responsible resource management. Our charitable status often enables us to add value beyond contracted services and provide constant community engagement.
- Whether focusing on specific disabilities, age groups, or protected characteristics, our organisations combine frontline experience with strategic advocacy, positioning us as natural leaders in driving positive change while maintaining our core focus on improving outcomes for the people we support.

Creating Social Value and Lasting Impact

- Social value is legally enshrined in the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012, which places specific obligations on public authorities when procuring services. The Act requires commissioners to consider how their procurement might improve the economic, social, and environmental well-being of their area before starting the procurement process. VCFSE organisations are ideally placed, because of their mission, values and ingenuity, to deliver community impact that reaches far and wide.
- The voluntary sector offers distinctive value at a time of unprecedented pressure on public finances. While councils and the NHS face significant funding pressures, rising demand and costs, our sector's approach - combining a person-centred focus with commercial understanding - is increasingly vital.
- We provide solutions for commissioners that are closely aligned to national and local policy priorities, missions and shifts. By bringing together lived experience, community assets, quality and safeguarding with clinical expertise, we deliver better value for money, embedded in local communities

rather than costly acute settings and intervene early to avoid crisis and help people build resilience and independence.

- As employers we demonstrate how values-driven organisations can create meaningful employment while maintaining high-quality care standards. Our approach to employment reflects our broader social mission - we invest in our workforce not just to deliver services, but to create positive social impact through employment practices.
- Our sector's commitment to social value extends to how we employ and develop staff. We prioritise fair pay and working conditions, recognising that well-supported staff deliver better care outcomes. Many of our organisations also create employment opportunities for disabled people and those from disadvantaged communities, contributing to wider social inclusion goals while building a diverse and representative workforce.

Amplifying Rights, Choice and Voice

- We recognise that people are disabled by societal, environmental and attitudi nal barriers. We challenge these barriers and work towards a society that respects difference, promotes equality and enables disabled people to ex ercise their rights and participate fully.
- Disabled people are experts in their own lives. We actively ensure people with lived experience shape the support and services they receive and the policies and systems that affect their lives.

Collaborative and Connected

- We work collaboratively with disabled people, families, carers, communities, public services and other VCFSE organisations, recognising that better outcomes are achieved through collective effort.
- Our local knowledge, relationships and networks enable us to connect people to wider opportunities, resources and support, helping build more inclusive and connected communities.
- We contribute our experience, knowledge and expertise to shape policy, improve public services and drive better outcomes. We are partners in delivering solutions, not simply providers commissioner to deliver services.

Leaders of Change and Innovation

- VCFSE providers of disability support understand the complex balance between service quality and financial sustainability. As mission-driven organisations, we continuously innovate to meet growing needs despite financial constraints.
- Our organisations' ability to convene and leverage additional resources through deep community connections, partnerships, place-based expertise

and in some cases fundraising, enables us to deliver solutions and impact beyond what purely statutory funding allows.

- Rather than simply being service providers, we are strategic partners who can help local authorities and the NHS navigate current pressures while maintaining quality of care. Our combination of commercial viability with social purpose positions us to work constructively with commissioners to find sustainable solutions that protect vulnerable people's interests during this period of economic constraint.