

BLACKBURN WITH DARWEN COMMUNITY NETWORK CONSTITUTION

PREAMBLE

The Blackburn with Darwen Community Network brings together all voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise organisations operating within Blackburn with Darwen to mobilise and lead collaborative efforts to achieve positive social, economic and environmental change for the residents of Blackburn with Darwen. The network's origins were confirmed at a CVS Together Everyone Achieves More Conference in May 2023 and it has been developed collaboratively with the active involvement of the VCFSE Sector (containing Voluntary, Community, Faith or Social Enterprise groups or organisations) and our public sector partners in meetings that have taken place prior to the Conference and through the development group that has met since the Conference.

The network is an unincorporated association on a not for profit basis with any funds raised to be used for the benefit of residents of Blackburn with Darwen and the VCFSE Sector operating within Blackburn with Darwen.

1 NAME

The network's name is Blackburn with Darwen Community Network¹.

2 PURPOSE OF THE NETWORK²

- (1) Take - Action for what we want to change.
- (2) Create a Shared Plan with key priorities.
- (3) Co-ordinate work across organisations and networks.
- (4) Involve people who are not normally asked or listened to ('seldom heard voices').
- (5) Demonstrate our value by Gathering information about the sector and about volunteers.
- (6) Promote what everyone does.
- (7) Nominate people to be the voice of the Community Network within wider society.

The focus of the network's efforts is to create positive social, economic and environmental change within Blackburn with Darwen and the neighbourhoods that make up Blackburn with Darwen.

3 CARRYING OUT THE PURPOSE

In order to carry out the purpose, the network has the power to:

- (1) raise funds, receive grants and donations.
- (2) apply funds to carry out the work of the network.
- (3) co-operate with and support other charities, community groups and social enterprises with similar purposes.
- (4) do anything which is lawful and necessary to achieve the purpose.

All funds raised through the network will be held by Community CVS as a designated fund or restricted fund.

4 PRINCIPLES OF THE NETWORK³

- (1) Open and Inclusive – any VCFSE Sector organisation or group operating in BwD can join; we will engage people in the best way for them.
- (2) Connect with what exists or might be created – to be the ‘network of networks’ – bringing everyone to work together.
- (3) ‘No decision about me without me’ – involve people with lived experience of the topic under discussion.
- (4) ‘Make decisions at the right level and involve the right people’ – neighbourhood level, BwD level, Lancashire and South Cumbria level.
- (5) Use peoples’, organisations’ or groups’ strengths and knowledge – play to our strengths.
- (6) Agile and Flexible – set up task groups to do the job and then move on.
- (7) Action focused – not talking shops.
- (8) Transparent and Accountable – all information publicly available and all board members and representatives to make themselves available to answer to members through network structures.
- (9) Value Independence and Diversity – respect the right of each organisation to make their own decisions.
- (10) All board members and representatives to sign up to Nolan Principles and be available to be contacted by members.

5 THE COMMUNITY NETWORK BOARD AND ITS FUNCTIONS⁴

The network shall be governed by a board with up to 16 board members plus the potential to recruit an independent chair from outside the board if the board wants to pursue that option.

The Community Network Board functions are:

1. To convene network meetings and listen to members, engage widely and ensure everyone’s voice is heard.
2. To influence partners on behalf of Community Network.
3. To oversee the development of a shared BwD VCFSE Sector Plan and drive its delivery.
4. To connect VCFSE networks and activities across Blackburn with Darwen.
5. To be proactively involved in shaping strategies, plans, policies, etc.
6. To champion and promote the BwD VCFSE Sector with external audiences
7. To nominate people to be the voice on the Community Network within wider society⁵.
8. To work closely with and support the work of infrastructure bodies to meet the needs of the VCFSE Sector.
9. To be accountable to the wider Community Network and facilitate regular and effective two-way communications.

10. To create a safe space for VCFSE Leaders to have a voice.

Recruitment to the Board is to be done via an open and transparent process where members will be made aware of the opportunity and anyone interested will have to complete an application, be interviewed and selected against criteria that will be set by the Board. The application process will be supported by a recruitment pack detailing the expectations of the role, the term of office, the selection criteria, etc. The board will approve the recruitment pack, the timetable and the independent interview panel prior to launching the recruitment process.

The interview panel will be an independent panel consisting of CVS, public sector partners and people from the VCFSE Sector who are not on the board and will have no conflicts of interest with who is seeking a board position. If a conflict of interest arises – the individual will step down from the independent interview panel.

The normal term of office for a Board Member will be a three-year term and anyone standing down is eligible for reselection by going through the selection process mentioned above. There is no maximum number of times that any person can put themselves forward to be a Board Member. For the initial board, the term of office will be staggered with a third of the board standing down each year. The decision of who will stand down each year will be taken by drawing lots. Similarly, the normal term of office for the Chair and any other roles created by the Board (e.g. vice chair, treasurer, etc.) will be a three-year term and anyone standing down is eligible for reselection by going through a selection process that is determined by the Board.

6 THE SECRETARIAT AND SUPPORTING OFFICERS⁶

Community CVS will provide the Secretariat for the Blackburn with Darwen Community Network⁷.

Secretariat Functions will include:

1. Service the Board. Agree agenda with chair. Distribute papers.
2. Training and support board members and representatives.
3. Manage any funds given to the Community Network
4. Set up task groups, engagement events, neighbourhood events.
5. Seek resources for and hold Annual Conference
6. Maintain member list of all VCFSE organisations operating in BwD (who are automatically members of the Network).
7. Gather Data on the VCFSE Sector and on volunteering via surveys, desk analysis, etc.
8. Publicise minutes and relevant documents and papers on its website.
9. Distribute regular communications with the network members.
10. Support development of VCFSE Sector Shared Plans and support implementation.
11. Marketing, Promotion and Celebration of Sector Achievements.
12. Any Other business agreed between the Community Network Board and the secretariat organisation.

Officers from Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council and the NHS's Blackburn with Darwen Place Based Partnership will also be invited to attend board and network meetings in a

supporting capacity. They will be able to contribute and advise the board and network– but will not have any voting rights.

7 MEMBERSHIP

The Community Network shall have an open membership. Any Voluntary, Community, Faith or Social Enterprise group or organisation that operates within Blackburn with Darwen is automatically a member of the network and will be eligible to attend any public meetings of the Community Network. Community CVS will keep an up-to-date membership list of all the known Voluntary, Community, Faith or Social Enterprise operating within Blackburn with Darwen and it is the responsibility of each group or organisation to let Community CVS know their up to date contact details.

The Board may remove an organisation's membership if they believe it is in the best interests of the network and the organisation has breached the values of the network such as being open and inclusive, respecting equality and diversity, being open and accountable, working collaboratively, etc. The Network member has the right to be heard by a committee of the Board before a final decision is made and can be accompanied by another network member to present their case.

8 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The Network will hold a Conference every year (subject to funding).

The Board shall present an annual report and CVS will present information on funds that are being held on behalf of the Community Network.

Any key recommendations made by the Board or CVS in terms of the development of the Community Network will be made at the Annual Conference. There must be at least 30 member organisations present at the Conference to be able to take a decision. Every member organisation has one vote and any decision will need a simple majority of those members present.

9 COMMUNITY NETWORK BOARD MEETINGS

- (1) Board members must hold at least 3 meetings each year and can choose to have as many meetings as they require to pursue the business of the Community Network. The majority of decisions will be consensual but if the board has to make a decision by vote – a simple majority will suffice and the chair will have a casting vote in the case of a tie.
- (2) Board meetings will be public meetings with members of the network or public allowed to attend as long as they adhere to the procedures for attendance set out by the Board. Under no circumstance will board meetings be recorded.
- (3) The Board is responsible for selecting the chair and any other positions that it wants to create. The Board may choose to elect the chair from within the board members or may wish to conduct an open and transparent process to select an independent chair from outside of the board. If the board wishes to appoint an independent chair, the board will agree an interview panel which can contain board members and non-board members at their discretion and once appointed the chair will have full voting rights as any other board member.
- (4) At least 4 Board members or 25% of the board membership, whichever is the greater must be present at the meeting for the meeting to be quorate and to be able to take decisions. At the chair's discretion, on-line participation is allowed so long as the board member can fully participate in the discussions and decisions. Minutes shall be kept for every meeting.

- (5) If Board Members have a conflict of interest in any matter discussed at the board, they must declare it and not participate in any discussion or decision relating to the topic. At the chair's discretion, the board member may be asked to leave the room while the matter is discussed.
- (6) All board members are expected to adhere to the Nolan Principles. The board may remove any board member, who they feel have breached the Nolan Principles and behaved in a way that is unbecoming of a holder of public office.
- (7) Community CVS provides the secretariat to the Board and must be present at every meeting for the meeting to go ahead. Officers from Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council and the NHS will be invited to attend every Board meeting, but their attendance is not compulsory.
- (8) During the year, the Board may co-opt anyone else to attend the board meetings in an advisory capacity with non-voting rights.
- (9) The Board Members may make reasonable additional rules to help run the network. These rules must not conflict with this constitution or the law.
- (10) Board Members are expected to attend a minimum of 75% of the board meetings in any calendar year. Failure to attend 75% of meetings may lead to the automatic removal from the Board. At the chair's discretion extenuating circumstances can be taken into account if a board members attendance falls short of the 75% attendance for no fault of the individual concerned.

10 MONEY AND PROPERTY

- (1) Money and property must only be used for the network's purposes.
- (2) Community CVS on behalf of the network will keep management accounts on the affairs of Blackburn with Darwen Community Network. A summary of the annual management accounts can be seen by any network member on request and will be made public on the CVS website.
- (3) Board members cannot receive any money or property from the network, except to refund reasonable out of pocket expenses. If the board member is a paid member of staff for a network member organisation, the organisation may be re-imbursed for their time. If the board member is a volunteer, out of pocket expenses may be paid direct to the individual. Both out of pocket expenses and paid re-imburement are subject to Blackburn with Darwen Community Network having the funds and the correct forms and approvals being completed.
- (4) All money and property secured by Blackburn with Darwen Community Network must be held in the Community CVS bank account and all payments must conform with the Community CVS financial controls and procedures.

11 NETWORK MEETINGS, SUB GROUPS AND OTHER MEETINGS

- (1) Blackburn with Darwen Community Network will endeavour to hold quarterly network meetings, which include the annual conference.

- (2) The Community Network Board has the power to set up sub groups or task and finish groups on any topic in order to progress the business of the network.
- (3) The Community Network and Community CVS, as secretariat, will look to connect with all existing or new networks that are led by the VCFSE Sector – to ensure effective communications and linkages so that Blackburn with Darwen Community Network can operate as the ‘network of networks’.
- (4) Community CVS, as secretariat, will put on workshops, meetings and events that respond to local need and may be of interest to Blackburn with Darwen Community Networks.

12 CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION

If the Board or any member organisation considers it is necessary to change the constitution, or wind up Blackburn with Darwen Community Network, they must call a General Meeting or put forward a proposal to the Annual Conference so that the membership can make the decision.

The Board can ask CVS to call a general meeting at their discretion. For members to call a General Meeting there must be a written request that is signed by at least 20 member organisations and clearly states the purpose for the meeting and the decision to be taken at the meeting to change the constitution. The request must be sent to the Chair and Community CVS.

All members, who have provided their up to date contact details to CVS, must be given 14 days notice and told the reason for the meeting. The general meeting must have at least 30 member organisations present to be quorate and the decision taken at the general meeting require a simple majority to be carried. Minutes must be kept of all general meetings.

- (1) If there is a decision to **Wind up** - any money or property remaining after payment of debts must be given to a charity with similar purposes to this one. This charity must be named when the decision to wind up is taken.
- (2) **Changes to the Constitution** - can be made at the Annual Conference or a specific General Meeting that has been called to change the constitution. No change can be made that would make the network no longer a not for profit network for the benefit of Blackburn with Darwen.
- (3) **General Meetings for Other Purposes** – can be called on written request from at least 20 members. The request must be e-mailed to the chair and CVS contact and name the purpose of the meeting and name the 20 network members supporting the request.
- (4) The Board may also call a General Meeting to consult the membership on any topic it deems fit.

13 SETTING UP THE NETWORK

A decision to set up the Network was taken at the CVS Together Everyone Achieves More Conference, which was held on 10th May 2023. The network agreed a selection process for the Board at the meeting in September 2023. A recruitment pack was prepared by the development group (Dec 2023) and nominations sought (January 2024) with interviews held

in February 2024)⁶. The board met in shadow format at a development session in March 2024.

This constitution was formally adopted by the Board on behalf of the Network on the 23rd April 2024 by the people whose names appear below. They are the first members of the Community Network Board and will be the founding board members until their period of office ends.

Name	VCFSE Organisation
Vicky Shepherd	Age UK Blackburn with Darwen
Jawad Bhatti	Bloke Talk / Spark
James Hadleigh	Care Network (Blackburn with Darwen)
Donna Merton	Deaf Village
Hannah Goldthorpe MBE	Friends of the Infirmary Area
Mohammed Tayyab Sidat	IMO
Suzanne Murray	Lancashire Women
Rachel Davies	Newground Together
Agnieszka Kwiecien	Q Language Services
Rolande Bradshaw	Roots Community – Spark; Red Rose Recovery
Angela Allen	Spring North
Shifgufta Khan	The Wish Centre – Blackburn and District Without Abuse
Supporting Officers	
Garth Hodgkinson	Community CVS
Donna Talbot	Community CVS
Richard Brown	Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council
Philippa Cross	Lancashire and South Cumbria NHS Integrated Care Board – Blackburn with Darwen Place Based Partnership.

Status

Adopted by the BwD Community Network Board on the 23rd April 2024.

Appendix A: Notes and Background

1. The name for the network was voted on at the CVS Together Everyone Achieves More Conference on 10th May 2023. About 300 people from across the VCFSE Sector within Blackburn with Darwen attended the event. At the end of event, delegates were asked to vote to agree to establishing a network – 97% agreed and the delegates were asked to vote from a list of options on what to call the network with 51% favouring calling the network – Blackburn with Darwen Community Network.
2. The Purpose of the Network was drafted and developed by the development group of 20+ VCFSE organisations at two meetings on the 19th July and 13th Sept 2023 before sharing and being agreed by the full Community Network at its meeting on the 25th September 2023.
3. The Principles of the Network were drafted and developed by the development group of 20+ VCFSE organisations at two meetings on the 19th July and 13th Sept 2023 before sharing and being agreed by the full Community Network at its meeting on the 25th September 2023.
4. The Board Functions were drafted and developed by the development group of 20+ VCFSE organisations at two meetings on the 19th July and 13th Sept 2023 before sharing and being agreed by the full Community Network at its meeting on the 25th September 2023.

To select and appoint the initial board, an open transparent process was adopted. We received 21 applications, interviewed 17 and agreed to appoint 12 people in the initial process. The Interview Panel consisted of a member of the CVS team, 3 members of VCFSE organisations operating in Blackburn with Darwen, 1 officer from Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council and 1 officer from the NHS.

5. Blackburn with Darwen Community Network will be responsible for nominating representatives to sit on VCFSE Sector partnerships and multi-sector partnerships and statutory bodies at the Lancashire and South Cumbria/ Lancashire levels and Blackburn with Darwen levels. For example, the network is responsible for nominating Blackburn with Darwen representatives onto the Lancashire and South Cumbria VCFSE Alliance – which represents the VCFSE Sector in our relationship with the integrated care system at the sub regional level.
6. The Secretariat Functions were drafted by the development group of 20+ VCFSE organisations at two meetings on the 19th July and 13th Sept 2023. They were shared with the Community Network at its meeting on the 25th September 2023. The functions were further considered and refined by the Development Group in October 2023 before being re-presented to the full Community Network on the 23rd January 2024 where they were approved. At the meeting, Michael Wedgeworth proposed that Community CVS be confirmed as the organisation to provide the secretariat functions, which was universally accepted by all VCFSE organisations present. Community CVS will ensure that appropriate public liability insurance is in place for all conferences, events and workshops that it holds on behalf of the Blackburn with Darwen Community Network.