

Partnership Agreement

Between

South Lanarkshire Council

and

South Lanarkshire's Third Sector

November 2025

Purpose

This Agreement establishes a strategic partnership between South Lanarkshire Council and local third-sector organisations to collaborate on delivering services and activities for local people and communities of South Lanarkshire.

Our partnership will be grounded in trust, transparency, fairness. Our partnership will recognise, respect and value, the benefits that third sector organisations bring to communities and the roles and responsibilities of the council.

Recognising that we share the common aim of supporting people and helping residents of all ages and communities of both place and interest to flourish, this Agreement is about much more than money. It is about focusing on our shared commitment to strive for equality, social justice, improved quality of health & wellbeing and an end to poverty.

Our Context

The third sector encompasses a diverse range of organisations, including voluntary and community groups, charities, social enterprises, cooperatives, and other not-for-profit entities operating in South Lanarkshire. These organisations play a vital role in supporting communities, delivering essential services, and driving social change through collaborative partnerships with South Lanarkshire Council and with other stakeholders.

This Agreement aims to build on existing good foundations to establish and develop the best environment for the local third sector to operate in Scotland, acknowledging the financial environment within which both the council and the third sector operate.

The relationship will be nurtured through ongoing collaboration and a commitment to partnership. It recognises that a collaborative relationship should become a way of working across the council and should not be dependent on individual relationships.

This Agreement recognises that the council and the local third sector have more than one type of relationship and that at times we are professional strategic partners with a wide range of knowledge and resources to bring to the table. But it also recognises that, in some instances, we also have a financial relationship wherein we are also delivery partners. Both types of relationships are valued within this Agreement.

And while we all recognise there are legal and statutory duties that must be maintained, we will all work flexibly to find a way to make the best of the resources, tools and skills available between us for the benefit of South Lanarkshire.

Objectives of this Agreement

- Strengthening communication and engagement.
- Enhancing resource-sharing and collaboration
- Building capacity and knowledge exchange.
- Improving joint strategic planning and collaborative monitoring.
- Fostering innovation and collaborative problem-solving.
- To create the conditions to enable the best possible outcomes for residents of South Lanarkshire.

Principles and Behaviours

A collaborative relationship is built on mutual respect, shared goals, and open communication. We have agreed the following core principles to help us foster effective collaboration:

- We share a commitment to supporting people and communities
- We will focus on what our respective organisations and services can do to meet the needs of our communities
- We will respect each partner's roles and limits
- We will be flexible in our approaches and willing to adapt
- Co-production will become a tool and a way of working.
- We will use evidence-informed decision making
- We will ensure [Best Value](#) is achieved where public funds are in use
- We will operate a learning environment and be willing to make and learn from mistakes
- We will be committed to building and maintaining this relationship.

Roles and Responsibilities

Defining roles and responsibilities in a partnership is important for clarity and trust.

Council Responsibilities:

- Improve the council's understanding and value of the local third sector and its expertise.
- Consistently seek to embed sector voices into strategic decision making and policy development early in the process.
- Engage with the sector as professional partners as well as delivery partners.
- Provide clear information and timeous and transparent two-way communications.
- Be clear on how and where a decision is made.
- Increase the council's knowledge and operational relationship with the third sector.
- Seek to provide sustainable, and transparent fair funding to enable both representative engagement and collaborative delivery, subject to available resources.
- Participate in joint funding applications and non-financial resource-sharing initiatives where appropriate.
- Acknowledge and support the infrastructure needed to sustain volunteering.
- Collaborate on impact assessments and monitoring of shared outcomes.

Third-Sector Responsibilities:

- Improve the council's understanding and value of the local third sector and its expertise.
- Engage with accountable third sector representation mechanisms that evidence a coherent third sector voice.
- Deliver services aligned with community priorities and agreed objectives.
- Engage in knowledge sharing and capacity-building activities.
- Participate in joint funding applications and resource-sharing initiatives.
- Contribute to data collection and collaborative reporting efforts.
- Where appropriate, identify additional sustainable funding models.
- Engage constructively in strategic dialogue.

- Evidence good governance and accountable use of public funds.
- Collaborate across the sector.
- Understand and consider the council's responsibilities.
- Be clear on limitations

Third Sector Interface responsibilities:

- Improve the council's understanding and value of the local third sector and its expertise.
- Improve the sector's understanding of council processes, opportunities and limitations.
- Ensure that the sector is represented wherever possible and applicable.
- Encourage collaboration, communication and co-produced solutions with all stakeholders.

Third Sector Strategic Representation

VASLan in its role as the local Third Sector Interface (TSI), will be an independent broker and conduit between South Lanarkshire Council and local third sector organisations.

South Lanarkshire Council will engage strategically and operationally with the third sector through VASLan organised thematic and place-based networks run for and by the third sector.

Where a representative structure exists, South Lanarkshire Council will endeavour to provide space for both a representative third sector organisation and a TSI Officer to participate in wider strategic, outcome focused partnerships.

All partners recognise the need to work together to create contact points across a range of themes.

It is envisioned that more frequent discussion and networking spaces through events, joint workforce training and other opportunities will improve collaboration and build the relationship and innovation.

Together we will:

- Create clearer, transparent, more accountable ways to engage and participate in collaboration and partnership working.
- Acknowledge that the landscape is complex and that there may not be a single clear path to participation; we will open entry points, map and communicate these clearly and review them regularly.
- Increase involvement of the wider third sector in collaborative planning and decision making across Council resources which will need to consider how to work with a variety of resource planning systems and processes, some of which are regulated.
- Ensure third sector options are considered in circumstances where an existing service is under review and it would be appropriate to do so.
- Ensure a co-design and co-production process takes place when a new service is being considered and created where it would be appropriate to do so.

- Ensure opportunities to engage are open to all of the sector as well as engage with those who currently participate and /or are in receipt of public funding.
- Clarify where decisions can be shared and where they cannot. Where they cannot be shared, we will endeavour to ensure they include a third sector voice.
- Ensure capacity support and, where applicable, resource support to enable third sector engagement in planning, reviewing, co-design and development of shared data sets.
- Collaborate on securing external funding, including grant applications and co-financing opportunities.
- Develop and support routes through VASLan to facilitate representative third sector strategic engagement structures.
- Develop a programme of regular networking, discussion and shared learning spaces across all levels of the Council including regular meetings with senior management and councillors that will help each Resource and service in making themselves aware of different third sector organisations relevant to their remit
- Recognize and celebrate successful collaborative initiatives.

This agreement is subject to the legal obligations of all parties. It shall remain in effect until December 2027 and be subject to a joint review, amendment and continuation.

Signatures

For Council:

Name: _____

Position: _____

Date: _____

For Third-Sector Organisation(s):

Name: _____

Position: _____

Date: _____

Partnership Agreement Action Plan

Objective	Agreement Commitment	Actions	Measures
Strengthening communication and engagement.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Communicate how and where to get involved through VASLan 2. Develop and support routes through VASLan to facilitate representative third sector strategic engagement structures. 3. Develop a programme of regular networking, discussion and shared learning spaces across all levels of the Council including regular meetings with senior management and councillors that will help each Resource and service in making themselves aware of different third sector organisations relevant to their remit 	Co-develop clear and consistent information both on Council and VASLan websites on how and where to get involved.	Number of Communications
		VASLan and sector to define their representative structures.	Third Sector Networks and Forums metrics
		A Council third sector 'landing' page for accessing Council funding and signpost to other sources of funding support.	Website traffic
		Co-develop a shared learning and networking programme.	Number of networking events
		Annual third sector report to Executive Committee.	Report
Enhancing resource-sharing and collaboration.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Develop a bespoke shared monitoring and data set for any third sector organisation to contribute to across thematic areas of work both within Council policy and strategy and with South Lanarkshire's Community Planning Partnership. This data set would contribute to strategic evidence for decision making and would be different to any funding monitoring undertaking with respect to delivery of services or activities, although where relevant, this should also contribute to the data set. 5. Collaborate on securing external funding, including grant applications and co-financing opportunities. 	Co-develop bespoke data set.	Bespoke Data set created
		Annual third sector report to Executive Committee to include examples of collaboration.	Number of joint projects
Building capacity and knowledge exchange.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Shared Learning opportunities 7. Recognize and celebrate successful collaborative initiatives. 	To be determined in collaboration with wider third sector.	To be determined

Improving joint strategic planning and collaborative monitoring.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Create clearer, transparent, more accountable ways to engage and participate in collaboration and partnership working. 9. Ensure opportunities to engage are open to all of the sector as well as engage with those who currently participate and /or are in receipt of public funding. 10. Increase involvement of the wider third sector in collaborative planning and decision making across Council resources which will need to consider how to work with a variety of resource planning systems and processes, some of which are regulated. Ensuring third sector options are considered where appropriate for service requirements. 11. Ensure opportunities to engage are open to all of the sector as well as engage with those who currently participate and /or are in receipt of public funding. 12. Clarify how and where decisions are made. 	<p>Resources undertake internal exercise to determine how and where they might make space for both VASLan and representatives of third sector structures in local partnership tables and strategic reviews or through more informal measures.</p>	<p>Numbers increase in participation</p>
Fostering innovation and collaborative problem-solving.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 13. Joint working takes place. 	<p>Case studies developed</p>	<p>Number of examples</p>