**Attendance**

* Mel Bonney - Cavca
* Elaine Stevenson - HADCA
* Liz Lockey – Hambleton Community Action
* Carol Shreeve – Citizens Advice
* Peter Murphy – Groundwork Yorkshire
* Chris Hailey Norris – Up for Yorkshire
* Cathy Grant - Richard Shephard Music Foundation
* Laura Mumford – Welfare Benefits Unit
* Emma Williams – Avalon Group
* Sophie – SWR Mind
* Debbie Swales – Revival North Yorkshire
* Natasha Babar Evans – Better Connect
* Sarah – Living Potential
* Emma Pears - SELFA
* Louise Terzza – Time Together
* Sarah Parker – Age UK

**Quick recap**

The meeting covered introductions of new attendees. Updates were provided on infrastructure support grants, safeguarding, sector meetings, and initiatives related to adult safeguarding, rural health, and probation services. The conversation ended with presentations on skills and employment initiatives in York and North Yorkshire, including funding programs and support for inactive individuals and employers.

**Next steps**

* Jane to share Tracy Watts' presentation slides with all attendees.
* Jane to organize a presentation from Emma Pears at the next meeting on August 28th about her research trip findings.

Jane to arrange a session on how VCSE leaders want to work collaboratively on procurement with commissioners and funding providers for the next meeting. This will result in the group developing a plan for discussing and educating funders about short-term pilot funding issues.

* Jane to work with colleagues to create a map of relevant meetings in North Yorkshire for VCSE leaders.
* Mel to set up a call with Sarah Parker to discuss the North Yorkshire landscape for new VCSE leaders.
* Katie Leon to share contact information for potential collaboration on probation service projects.
* VCSE leaders to monitor the York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority website for updates on community fund dates for the Trailblazer program.
* Chris to follow up with Katie Leon regarding support for rehabilitating sex offenders.

**Summary**

New Leadership and Meeting Protocols

The meeting began with introductions from various attendees, including Jane, who welcomed everyone and emphasized the importance of noting attendees for attendance records. New faces were introduced, such as Elaine Stevenson, the new CEO of Harrogate and District Community Action, and Laura Mumford, the new CEO of the Welfare Benefits Unit. The group was introduced to Deb, who was taking minutes, and it was mentioned that Claire Smith would be taking over minuting the remainder of the meeting when Deb had to leave. Attendees were reminded to keep their microphones on mute unless they wanted to contribute to the discussion.

**Infrastructure Grant and Sector Updates**

Jane provided an overview of the new approach for the infrastructure support grant, focusing on priorities such as health inequalities, community resilience, and digital inclusion. She introduced a theory of change model and outlined initial steps for implementation, including changes to the website and support for volunteer recruitment.

Jane also discussed a safeguarding update, mentioning a refresh of the safeguarding adults board structure.

The group discussed feedback from a recent VCSE Assembly meeting, particularly regarding changes to non-emergency patient transport criteria by the Yorkshire Ambulance Service.

There was a discussion about the number and purpose of sector meetings, with participants expressing a desire to reduce meetings while maintaining a forum for open discussion before addressing issues with other stakeholders.

**Adult Safeguarding and Strategic Updates**

The meeting focused on updates and discussions around adult safeguarding, strategic meetings, and sector-specific initiatives. Liz emphasized the need for better communication and feedback from strategic meetings, such as the Health and Wellbeing Board, to ensure VCS representation and participation.

Jane provided an update on the rural health strategy and highlighted the importance of revisiting actions from the rural task force.

Carol discussed a data leak involving legal aid applicants and encouraged referring concerned clients to the Ministry of Justice.

Emma shared her upcoming research trip to Canada and the US to study great leaders in the sector, and requested contacts in Montreal and New York.

Sarah raised the need for a beginner's guide to the VCS landscape, and Mel offered to help create such a resource.

Natasha shared positive outcomes from a recent DWP event, emphasizing the importance of a joined-up strategic approach.

**Probation Service Commissioning Overview**

Katie introduced herself as the new Commissioning and Partnerships Manager for the Probation Service's Community Integration team, outlining their role in identifying and filling service gaps for people on probation.

Katie presented an overview of the probation service's commissioning and partnership activities in Yorkshire and Humber. She explained their vision to fill evidence-based service gaps and work with local organisations, including VCSOs. Katie detailed their funding routes, including core commissioned rehabilitative services (CRS) and the Regional Outcomes and Innovation Fund (ROIF). She highlighted previous commissions, such as supporting ethnic minority individuals in education and employment, and pilot interventions for people with neurodivergent conditions. The discussion concluded with a question about commissioning accommodation, where Katie clarified that they cannot commission bricks and mortar, but can support services around accommodation.

**Sex Offender Rehabilitation Support Challenges**

The meeting focused on challenges faced by organisations supporting sex offenders in rehabilitation and employment programs. Chris expressed frustration over conflicting advice and lack of support from other organisations, while Katie acknowledged the difficulties but highlighted the importance of finding the right support organisations. Carol criticised short-term pilot projects funded by the government, expressing scepticism about their long-term effectiveness. The group discussed the need for a comprehensive plan to address funding issues in rural areas, with Liz suggesting a discussion on how to approach and educate funders.

**Centre for Social Justice Overview**

Ben Robinson from the Centre for Social Justice introduced his organisation's work in Yorkshire, aiming to make connections and explain their role in supporting vulnerable communities.

Emma asked if Shared Lives had been considered, she will share the details of the York Office

**Poverty Reduction and Policy Initiatives**

Ben is the regional manager for Yorkshire, and presented an overview of his organisation's work, highlighting their focus on addressing poverty through policy recommendations and philanthropic support. He discussed recent reports on socially isolated young men and mental health support, as well as their efforts to increase funding for small charities across regions. Carol raised concerns about the organisation's political bias, which Ben acknowledged but emphasised their commitment to working across the political spectrum based on evidence from the frontlines.

**York & North Yorkshire Combined Authority’s Employment Initiatives Update in Yorkshire**

Tracy Watts provided an update on several key initiatives related to skills and employment in York and North Yorkshire. She discussed the Inactivity Trailblazer program, which received £10 million in funding and aims to engage inactive individuals, support employers, and join up systems and services. The program is set to launch on April 1st and will focus on three priority areas: engaging and supporting inactive people, supporting businesses and employers, and joining up systems and services. Tracy also mentioned the upcoming Connect to Work program, which will provide employment support for individuals with disabilities or health conditions, and the Get Britain Working plan, which aims to address under-utilisation of skills and labour market constraints. Finally, she noted that the devolution of powers for the Adult Skills Fund has been confirmed, allowing them to proceed with grant allocations and procurement processes.

**Employer Skills and Funding Initiatives**

Tracy Watts presented an overview of various initiatives, including skills boot camps, free courses, and careers hub activities, but deliberately omitted details about Trailblazer community funds and DWP grant funding due to pending arrangements. Liz inquired about the timeline for community funds, to which Tracy Watts responded that these were tentatively planned for July, emphasizing the need for mechanisms to ensure timely funding distribution. Carol raised a question about the inclusion of the voluntary and community sector in the report, to which Tracy Watts confirmed that the sector is recognized as an employer and integral to the broader employer-employee relationship framework.

The conversation ended with Jane expressing gratitude for the informative session and outlining plans for the next meeting in August, which will feature Emma's insights from a trip to New York and Montreal and focus on collaborative work with providers.