**Summary**

Thank you so much for showing an interest in becoming a Board Member for the new Blackburn with Darwen (BwD) Community Network.

The Community Network is a new partnership of Voluntary Community Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) organisations and groups in Blackburn with Darwen which has been set up to support positive change in partnership with the Borough Council, the NHS, and other key partners.

At the Together Everyone Achieves More Conference held in May 2023 at the Grand Venue, Blackburn it was agreed to set up a Blackburn with Darwen Community Network. Participants at the Conference wanted to create something that focused on co-ordinating action to make a difference to people’s lives within Blackburn with Darwen. The focus is on action rather than being a ‘talking shop’.

From the Conference, a Development Group has been meeting monthly to develop the purpose, principles and functions of the Community Network and its board (see Appendix A at the end of this pack) and to develop this recruitment pack.

The Network is open to all VCFSE organisations and groups that operate within Blackburn with Darwen and we are now recruiting 16 Board Members to lead the network and have oversight of a shared strategy and action plan for the VCFSE Sector within Blackburn with Darwen. The Plan will prioritise actions that can be achieved to strengthen the VCFSE and enhance our role to improve residents’ quality of life. Questions for potential board members to consider:

* Are you passionate about making a difference and passionate about the work of the Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise Sector in Blackburn with Darwen?
* Do you have a good overall understanding of what matters to your local neighbourhood or the different communities within Blackburn with Darwen?
* Are you positive, pragmatic, and practical?
* Can you work as part of a team?
* Are you good at asking people and organisations to do things that make a difference?
* Can you bring people together and mobilise them to take action?

If you answer yes to the above, we would like you to consider applying. I enclose a description of the role, the required commitment, further information on the recruitment process, and an application form. If you would prefer to apply by video this is fine, but you will have to talk to Clair about how you submit this to us.

If you want to discuss the role and find out more, we are hosting a workshop at 2pm and repeated at 6pm on Monday 22 January at the CVS Community Hub, Railway Rd, Blackburn, BB1 1EZ.

If you would like to attend one of these workshops, or you have any other questions, please contact Garth Hodgkinson at [garth.hodgkinson@community.cvs.uk](mailto:garth.hodgkinson@community.cvs.uk) or Clair Bloomfield [clair.bloomfield@communitycvs.org.uk](mailto:clair.bloomfield@communitycvs.org.uk)

**The deadline for applications is Sunday 4th February 2024.**

If you need any help filling in the application form, please talk to any member of the CVS Team who will be willing to support you.

I hope you consider applying and wish you well with your application if you choose to apply.

Yours sincerely

Garth Hodgkinson

Chief Executive Officer – Community CVS

**The role of a Community Network Board Member**

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| **Role Title** | Community Network Board Member |
| **Network** | BwD Community Network  (the board will be supported by Community CVS) |
| **1. Purpose of the Role** | |
| As a Board member you will help to develop the Vision, Strategy and Action Plan for the Community Network. Tasks that Board Members might do include:   1. Helping to set priorities and develop project ideas or key actions to support and strengthen the VCFSE Sector including infrastructure, capacity, and capability. 2. Engaging with VCFSE groups and listening to their thoughts on what the priorities, projects and key actions should be. 3. Influencing the development of policy and investment decisions to promote the interests of the VCFSE Sector. 4. Advising and supporting the development of bids to bring in investment for the VCFSE sector and for Blackburn with Darwen. 5. Working to increase the voice of the VCFSE with a special emphasis on seldom heard voices (parts of our community that experience barriers and struggle to get what they say heard) – including lobbying and campaigning. 6. Enhancing the VCFSE ability to evidence the value and impact of what we do. 7. Bringing new insights to strategic decision making in the Borough 8. Influencing and negotiating on behalf of the Community Network with key partners such as the local authority and NHS. 9. Setting up, and taking part in, task groups as required around topics that matter to our communities such as health topics, jobs and the economy, climate change and the environment, poverty and inequalities, arts & culture, recreation and sports, etc. Anything really that the VCFSE Sector is and wants to be involved with. | |
| **2. What skills and experience will be useful?** | |
| A successful Board will be made up of people with a variety of skills and experience. People with a track record of achieving and making a positive difference will be essential, and so will people with enthusiasm and new ideas to offer. We want the involvement of people from across the neighbourhoods of Blackburn with Darwen, from different cultures, backgrounds and with different lived experience, from across the VCFSE Sector including paid staff and volunteers. We want a rich mixture of experiences and viewpoints that reflect the diversity of the community in Blackburn with Darwen.  To join the Board, it is likely that people will be able to demonstrate some of the following:   1. the ability to work together as a team 2. negotiation skills, diplomacy, and assertiveness 3. motivation to improve quality of life for residents – to make a difference 4. achievements (such as leading on - or involvement in - community projects or VCFSE groups or organisations) 5. community engagement 6. knowledge of BwD communities and their needs 7. ideas for a better future 8. a passion for equality and an understanding of how it can be delivered   Experience of developing strategies, project management and partnership working will be very useful. More important is motivation, a fresh approach, and an understanding of what our community needs. | |

**The commitment required of Board Members (*what will I be signing up for?*)**

Community Network Board Member will be expected to:

* attend all Board meetings – which will be at least every three months and are likely to be 2 hours long (in the beginning the meetings are likely to be monthly).
* attend task group meetings and engagement events for individual projects (where appropriate)
* prepare for all meetings (including reading papers, liaising with partners)
* help to plan projects and events
* help with partnership working and promoting the activities of the Community Network
* represent and work for the whole of the network – rather than purely looking out for your own organisation’s interests.

Board members will be expected to contribute positively and take an active role in developing the strategy and action plan as well as helping to deliver some of the actions. It is difficult at the start of the process to estimate how much time will be required but this is likely to be at least half a day a month.

The Board will be supported by a secretariat function provided by Community CVS. This is being developed and is likely to include organising locations for meetings, sending out agendas and taking minutes. There is also likely to be a Board development programme – which will be developed to meet your needs. This will include training (where required) to support Board members in their role.

**The Process for recruiting Board members**

At their first meeting of the BwD Community Network held on the 25/09/23 it was agreed that there would be a selection process based on the requirements of the role including:

* skills and experience
* knowledge of the VCFSE sector and BwD Communities
* equality, diversity, and inclusion
* motivation and enthusiasm

People who wish to apply can complete the attached application form, or if they wish, can submit a video application – details included below.

People who are considering applying can attend a workshop on the role for further clarity including a questions and answers session and a chance to make comments and suggestions.

Your application will be considered by a Selection Panel (which will include the CVS CEO and people from the VCFSE Sector, local authority and the NHS who have a good understanding of the VCFSE Sector). The panel will shortlist candidates and invite them to interview.

The aim of the selection process is to create a balanced, enthusiastic, and capable Board with a breadth of knowledge, understanding and experience.

**Recruitment Timetable**

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| 1 | 05/01/24 | Recruitment campaign begins |
| 2 | 22/01/24 | If you need help with your application a workshop will be held to answer any questions and clarify the process. The workshop will be repeated at 2pm and 6pm at the CVS Community Hub, Railway Rd, Blackburn, BB1 1EZ.  **Contact** [clair.bloomfiled**@community.cvs.uk**](mailto:clair.bloomfiled@community.cvs.uk)  **to book your place.** |
| 3 | 04/02/24 | Deadline for applications |
| The following dates are provisional and subject to confirmation. | | |
| 4 | Week beginning  05th Feb 2024. | Panel begins to shortlist applications for interview. |
| 5 | Week beginning  19th Feb 2024. | Two days will be set aside for interviews including evening options (provisionally 19th and 20th) |
| 6 | Week beginning 26th Feb 2024. | Applicants informed of the outcome of the selection process. |
| 7 | Monday 4th March 2024. | First informal meeting of Board members to brief and get to know one another |
| 8 | Monday 18th March 2024. | First meeting of the Community Network Board |

**Application Form – Community Network Board Member**

**Personal Details**

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| --- | --- |
| **Title** |  |
| **First name** |  |
| **Surname** |  |
| **Email address** |  |
| **Telephone number** |  |
| **Address** |  |

**Q1 – Why do you want to become a Community Network Board Member?** Please explain your motivation and enthusiasm for the role and what you to see the Community Network Board, with your active involvement, doing or changing for the better.

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| (*Example: I want to apply because social isolation for older people in rural areas is a real issue. I have lived experience of loneliness and can offer first-hand knowledge of what needs doing. Also, I helped to start up a voluntary group to bring older people together for social evenings. I would like to develop services for older people living in rural communities.)* |

**Q2 - Relevant Knowledge, Skills and Experience**

Please tell us about your relevant knowledge, skills and experience.

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| **Knowledge and Skills**  Tell us a bit about what knowledge and skills you have. It might be you know a lot about a particular geographical part of BwD, or a particular equality group (e.g. age, gender, disability, ethnicity, faith, sexual orientation) or a particular part of the VCFSE sector (e.g. young people organisations, arts & culture, sports, health and social care, environment, community finance, community transport, etc.). Tell us what particular skills you have that might be useful for the Community Network – e.g. community engagement, financial skills, fundraising, lobbying, chairing committees, etc.) | |
| *(Example: I live in Higher Croft and know everybody in the local community. I have helped to put on community events and I am particularly good at fundraising and persuading local businesses and the housing associations to contribute money to support the events).* | |
| **Experience and Achievements**  Tell us a bit about the groups or organisations you volunteer with, work for, are a committee member/trustee/director or. Or any representation or partnership work you may have been involved with. | **Dates** |
| (*Example: Member of the Roe Lee Park Supporters Group, helped the Park to get Green Flag status in 2007 and organised 2 community fun days)* | *2006-2010* |

**Q3 – Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**

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| **What do you think the particular challenges around equality, diversity and inclusion are for BwD and how could you help to ensure all communities, including seldom heard voices (people who are not normally listened to), are included in the Community Network and have a voice?** |
| (Example: I think engaging with the Gypsy Roma Traveller community is a particular challenge. I am from the GRT community and I would help the Community Network to hold engagement events at the Ewood Park Traveller site to find out their concerns and what matters to them). |

**Video Applications**

Applicants can submit a video instead of a written application. If you would like to submit a video application, please ensure you include your contact details and answer the three questions from the application form on your video. Your video should be no more than 5 minutes long and should be submitted to Clair Bloomfield [clair.bloomfield@communitycvs.org.uk](mailto:clair.bloomfield@communitycvs.org.uk). You will probably need to talk to Clair about what format to send it in and how you can get it to her via document transfer, etc.

**References**

Please give the names of two referees. One should be from the VCFSE organisation where you work or the VCFSE group where you volunteer. The other one can be anyone who knows you well.

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| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Reference 1 | Reference 2 |
| Name of the person |  |  |
| How do they know you? |  |  |
| Contact details (email or address) |  |  |
| Contact phone details |  |  |

**Deadline and interviews**

The deadline for applications is 11:59pm on Sunday 4th of February 2024.

Interviews are planned for either the 19th or 20th February 2024 (daytime or evening).

**Contact details for enquiries**

For further information and questions contact Garth Hodgkinson (Chief Executive Officer Community CVS). [garth.hodgkinson@communitycvs.org.uk](mailto:garth.hodgkinson@communitycvs.org.uk)

If you would like to book an appointment to see Garth – please contact Clair Bloomfield on 01254 583957 or email [clair.bloomfield@communitycvs.org.uk](mailto:clair.bloomfield@communitycvs.org.uk)

Community CVS are supporting the creation of the Community Network and are willing to provide the secretariat function to support the Community Network Board and the wider Community Network going forward.

**Appendix**

**The functions of the Community Network Board**

Each Board Member will play an active and positive role in developing and delivering the Network’s Vision, Strategy and Action Plan. The functions of the Board were agreed at the first meeting of the Community Network on 25th September 2023 and include:

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 the 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 BwD.
5. To be proactively involved in shaping strategies, plans and policies.
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 society.
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.

**The Purpose of the Community Network**

1. Take Action for what we want to achieve.
2. Create a Shared Plan with key priorities.
3. Coordinate 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 the wider society.

**The Principles of the Community Network**

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. To be the “Network of Networks” – bringing everyone to work together.
3. “No decision about me without me” – involving 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 and Lancashire and South Cumbria level.
5. Use people’s, organisation’s or group’s 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 focussed – not talking shops.
8. Transparent and accountable – all information publicly available and all Board Members and representatives to make themselves available to answer members.
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 the Nolan Principles (the Seven Principles of Public Life - Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty and Leadership see GOV.UK [Nolan Principles](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-7-principles-of-public-life/the-7-principles-of-public-life--2) for further information.).