

Thinking Differently About Social Value in Bolton

One of the key areas of focus of the VCSE Commissioning and Investment Group is to influence how Social Value is thought of, measured and secured by commissioners and procurement colleagues. This case study describes how one of our local areas, Bolton, is working collaboratively to improve their approach to Social Value.

A Partnership Approach

Bolton have created a Bolton Family Social Value Partnership, which brings together a group of public, private and voluntary organisations to work together to make Bolton a strong, vibrant and prosperous place to live. It gives Bolton the opportunity to come together across all sectors to direct social value investment to their local priorities, build a supportive ecosystem for their local business and social enterprise base and deliver positive outcomes for their communities.



Reviewing Practice

Bolton Council has selected 20 TOMS (Themes Outcomes and Measures) indicators that they feel best meet the ambitions for the area of Bolton. However, the Partnership recognises that current social value practices take a one-size-fits-all approach aimed at larger businesses, and so they are reviewing the questions that procurement teams ask about social value, to better reflect in-built value generated by local VCSE and small businesses. Watch this space to see how they get on with their review work.

Social Value Pledges

The Partnership have also developed a mechanism which is supporting social value activity to move away from purely from just transactional one-off support (toy appeals volunteer days etc.) to one that builds partnerships across the local economy and community. To do this, they have identified 20 Social Value pledges, effectively offering a menu of support and actions that organisations can deliver, which will make a difference real to people in Bolton.

In January 2024, the Partnership brought together Bolton's businesses to launch Social Value Pledges and provide connection opportunities for businesses to engage with partner organisations from Bolton's Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) and Public Sectors to work together and create meaningful social value for Bolton. The event also kickstarted a 12 month social value journey, leading to Bolton's Fund 5th Birthday in December 2024.

