



## **Supporting the VCSE paid workforce: An Action Research Study**

### **Study Summary**

#### **Improving Support for Frontline Workers in Community Organisations**

##### **What is this study about?**

This research aims to understand how to better support people in paid roles in community organisations (Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprises or VCSEs). These organisations, like charities and local community groups, provide important health and wellbeing services to people in our communities. We focus on frontline staff who directly deliver services to people, such as those assisting with social connections, mental health, or community support.

##### **Why is this study important?**

Many people working in these community organisations feel they don't get enough support in their jobs. As a result, they often leave, which can affect the people they support. We know that providing good professional support, like training and mentoring, can help staff feel more valued and stay in their roles. However, we need to learn how to provide this support in a way that works best for community organisations, which are often different from larger organisations like the NHS.

##### **What questions will this study answer?**

- What types of professional support are most helpful for community organisation staff?
- How can we tailor support to meet staff's different needs, considering factors like their backgrounds and experiences?
- What makes providing good professional support in these organisations easy or difficult?
- How can we create resources that community organisations can use to support their staff?

##### **Study Design Details:**

This study uses a multi-case action research design. This means we work directly with organisations to implement change and then study the impact of that change. We will also

conduct a systematic mapping review of the academic literature to examine the broader picture of professional support. This study started in November 2024 and will finish in April 2027.

### **How will the study be conducted?**

This study will involve several steps:

- 1. Reviewing Existing Research:** We will look at what is already known about providing professional support in similar roles.
- 2. Working with Community Organisations:** We will work closely with community organisations in West Yorkshire and South Yorkshire. We will:
  - Ask staff about their experiences with professional support through questionnaires and interviews.
  - Calculate the costs of different types of support.
  - Help organisations develop and implement support strategies that fit their needs.
  - Evaluate how well these support strategies work.
- 3. Creating Resources:** We will develop practical tools and training materials that community organisations and other stakeholders can use.

### **Who will be involved in guiding the research?**

We involve a variety of people in our research, including:

- People who use services provided by community organisations.
- Staff working in community organisations.
- Managers and leaders of these organisations.
- Organisations that fund community services (like the NHS and local councils).
- VCSE Infrastructure organisations.
- Other relevant stakeholders.

We are primarily running the study in West and South Yorkshire.

### **What will the research achieve?**

We expect this study to help community organisations provide better professional support to their staff. This will lead to staff feeling more supported, staying in their roles longer, and providing better care to the people they serve. We will share our findings through networks that reach community organisations nationwide.