



Being a VCSE Advocate

The Strategic Forum will regularly review and identify any key board or committee seeking VCSE representation.

The Advocate Request form will be sent to the key contact for the Committee to seek information on the role, knowledge, time commitment, etc.

The Request form will also be used to identify any support available, e.g. reimbursement, back-fill, travel, care costs to support widening participation from less well represented and resourced communities and organisations.

The Strategic Forum Advisory Group will scope likely organisations to ensure they are aware of the opportunity.

The Advocate opportunity will be advertised through the Strategic Forum website and twitter, the Somerset County Council Voluntary Sector web page, through Strategic Forum information cascades and through partner newsletters and websites.

A written role description will be provided.

Applicants will be asked to respond in writing giving brief details of how their specialist knowledge, skills and experience match the requirements. A time-limit will be set for responses.

The Strategic Forum Advisory Group will provide details of all the applicants to the individual board or committee to undertake a selection process against their requirements.

The Forum Strategic Advisor will liaise with the board or committee and obtain dates, times and venues for meetings for the Advocate. The Advocate roles will be limited to four years; this can be extended if no replacement comes forward.

Accountability

Advocates will be expected to provide a short written or recorded summary of the main points from each meeting attended and where there is a wider request or 'call' for information from the wider sector.

On rotation Advocates will be asked to make a short presentation to the Strategic Forum on the work they have been undertaking and any major issues arising for the sector.

Advocates can only hold one Advocate position to ensure a good range of representation.

Advocates are expected to attend the majority of their meetings, to let the Forum Strategic Advisor know if they cannot attend, and if they consistently fail to attend without good notice or good reason they may forfeit their role as Advocate.



Advocates are also expected to:

- Read papers, be prepared and represent the sector well at all times
- Represent the views of the wider sector, not personal or organisational viewpoints
- Liaise with the Forum Strategic Advisor
- Attend Strategic Forum meetings at least twice a year
- Promote contact details to the wider VCSE and make time to listen to VCSE ideas or concerns
- Attend an annual Strategic Forum Advocates meeting
- Declare any conflicts of interest

Support available to Advocates from the Strategic Forum:

- Annual Advocates meeting
- Promotion of the Advocates role through Strategic Forum communication routes
- Training or support as required in particular for people new to this type of activity
- Initial link with the coordinator/Chair of the committee or board