**Invitation to Join the Staff Experts by Experience Group**

**Supporting** **the VSCE Paid Workforce: An Action Research Study**

**A collaboration between researchers at the University of Sheffield and Leeds Beckett University**

**We invite you to join our staff Experts by Experience group** to inform and influence a research project about improving professional and wellbeing support for Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) employees whose role involves delivering health and wellbeing-related support to clients. By health and wellbeing support roles, we mean roles such as Social Prescribing Link Workers, Health and Wellbeing Coaches, Care coordinators, and other personalised care roles, as well as Community Development Workers and Youth Workers.

**Who are Experts by Experience (EbE)?**

Experts by Experience are those who have been employees at any time for VCSE organisations providing health and wellbeing support who could use their expertise to guide the research project. This is similar to a patient and public involvement group in other research studies.

**About the study**

The project focuses on understanding how we can better support employees working for VCSEs to improve their wellbeing and stay in their roles. We will do this by working with six VCSE organisations (three in West Yorkshire and three in South Yorkshire) and co-designing professional and wellbeing support (such as training, peer networks or accreditation) with each VCSE organisation over 21 months. Organisations will pilot the professional or wellbeing support over a fixed period. The study team will evaluate the design, delivery process, and outcomes for staff.

The research is funded by the National Institute for Health and Care Research. Further information about the study is available at: [**https://fundingawards.nihr.ac.uk/award/NIHR159286**](https://fundingawards.nihr.ac.uk/award/NIHR159286)

**Joining the Experts by Experience group**

We are looking for people to join our Experts by Experience group to provide advice on the study. We seek people with experience working at a VCSE in a role delivering health and wellbeing services, including Social Prescribing Link Workers, Health and Wellbeing Coaches, Care coordinators, and other community development roles, VCSE Managers and VCSE infrastructure organisation staff. We want to recruit a diverse group, as your knowledge and experience will be invaluable in guiding the research project. We are recruiting group members based in the UK. The Experts by Experience group will have 6-8 members with different backgrounds.

As part of the group, you will influence the research. The Experts by Experience group will be integral in deciding what professional or wellbeing support the will be piloted in the organisations we recruit to the study.

**What are the benefits of being an Expert by Experience Group member?**

* People who join the Expert by Experience Group will be able to utilise their skills and experience to help the research investigate how to improve the working environment for VCSE staff, which could work towards improving staff retention rates.
* It is a unique opportunity to gain knowledge of a large research project and could be a strength on your CV.

**What would we be asking you to do?**

* Attend seven online meetings, each about 90 minutes long. These will generally be every six months until April 2027.
* Attend a stakeholder event in October 2025 to share learning between organisations.
* Promote the research project through your networks such as sharing a questionnaire invite with your colleagues.
* As a VCSE staff member or volunteer, we will pay you (or your employing organisation) £25 per hour for your involvement as a thank-you for your time.

**How do I become involved?**

Firstly, complete the Expression of Interest form below. We will then contact you to discuss the next steps.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss this further before expressing an interest, please get in touch with Sophia Arthurs-Hartnett, Research Associate, University of Sheffield: vcseworkforcestudy@sheffield.ac.uk

**Expression of Interest Form**

Please complete and return this form to vcseworkforcestudy@sheffield.ac.uk to record your expression of interest in being a member of the experts by experience group for the VCSE Paid Workforce Research Study

Organisation: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Contact Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Contact e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate by ticking a box below whether you are (Please tick all that apply):

[ ]  A service user (currently or previously)

[ ]  A volunteer (currently or previously)

[ ]  A personalised care worker (e.g. social prescribing link worker)

[ ]  A VCSE manager

[ ]  A VCSE member of staff delivering services to clients/users.

[ ]  A commissioner of VCSEs

[ ]  A staff member at a VCSE infrastructure organisation

[ ]  A service user of a VCSE organisation

We are actively seeking to build a diverse EbE group and welcome applications from individuals of all backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives. We are particularly interested in hearing from individuals with the following experiences. Please indicate whether you fit any of the following criteria (Please tick all that apply):

[ ]  I am from a minoritised community/I have worked with minoritised communities.

[ ]  I am from/my work is based in an area of socio-economic deprivation.

[ ]  I have been a service user or a volunteer previously of a VCSE.

[ ]  I have worked in/volunteered in a regional or national charity

[ ]  I have worked in/volunteered at a smaller organisation with 5-15 staff members.

[ ]  I have worked in/volunteered at a larger VCSE with 20 or more staff.

[ ]  I have worked/volunteered at an organisation based in a rural area.

If you work for a VCSE, please indicate whether the organisation you are associated with has any of these criteria (Please tick all that apply):

[ ]  Works with and/or has a staff group from minoritised communities.

[ ]  Is based in an area of socio-economic deprivation.

[ ]  Has recruited staff who were previously service users and/or volunteers of the VCSE

[ ]  Is linked to a regional/national charity.

[ ]  Is a smaller organisation with 5-15 staff members.

[ ]  Is a larger VCSE with 20 or more staff.

[ ]  Is based in a rural area.

Please provide a brief description (in bullet points) of your role:

 I am interested in participating in the study and look forward to hearing more about the project.

Name\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Role\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Please return the Expression of Interest form to vcseworkforcestudy@sheffield.ac.uk

Alternatively, if you cannot be a partner for our project at this time but wish to keep up to date with our work, please email us, and we will add you to our project mailing list. Your details will not be used or shared outside this research project.

***Thank you for your interest in the project.***