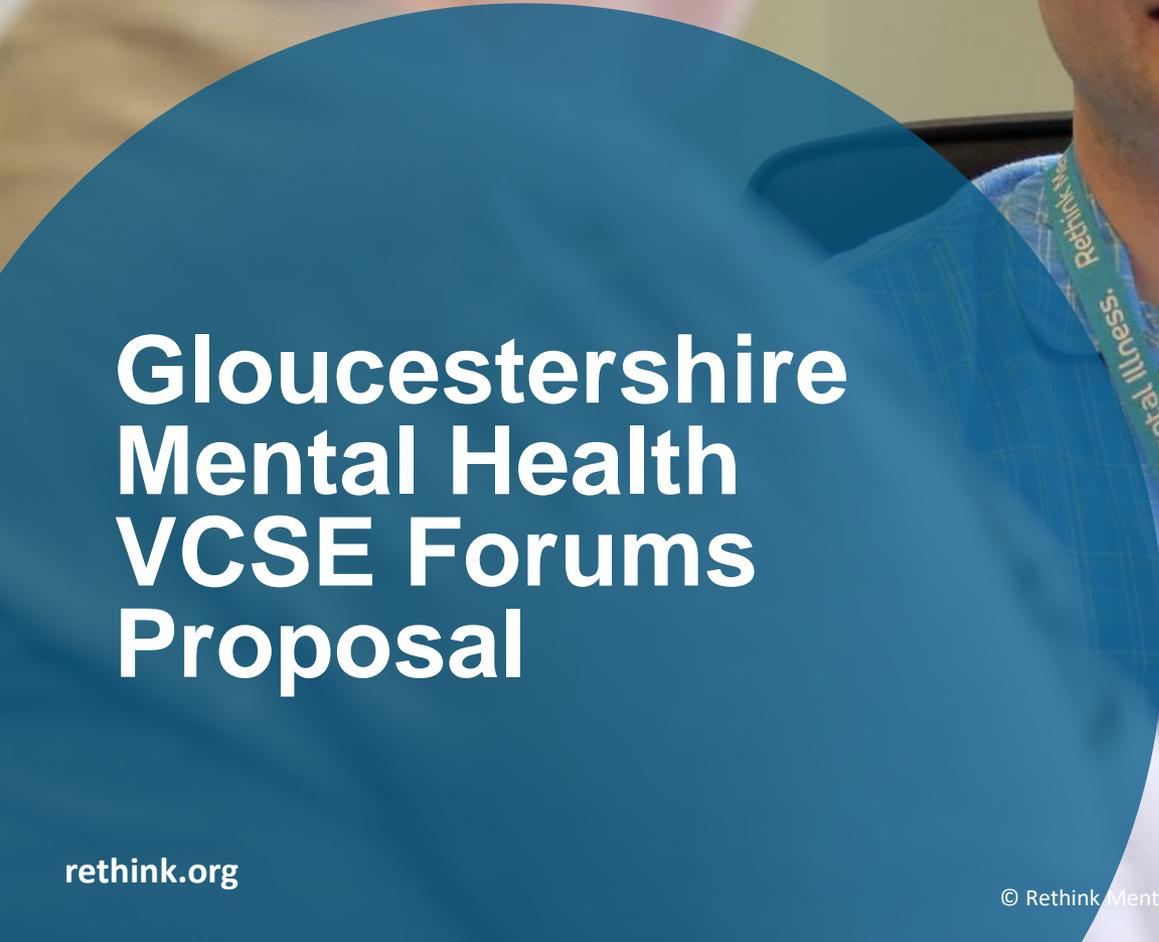




Rethink
Mental
Illness.



Gloucestershire Mental Health VCSE Forums Proposal

rethink.org

© Rethink Mental Illness. Material only to be used with permission of Rethink Mental Illness



Introduction and Overview

As part of Rethink's Mental Health Advice and Support Service contract with Gloucestershire County Council, we are looking to establish and develop Mental Health VCSE forums in the five localities covered by Gloucestershire's Locality Community Partnerships (Stroud, Cheltenham, Gloucester, Forest and TWNS and Cotswolds).

The purpose of these forums is to bring together VCSE and statutory organisations that provide services, support, or opportunities for people with mental ill health, and Experts by Experience (EBE), to develop pathways, identify training and provision gaps and coproduce solutions to local need.

The forums will align and share insights with Locality Community Partnerships (LCPs) across the county, which are regular virtual meetings, where members from health, social care and VCSE partners come together in a multidisciplinary approach, to discuss how best to support someone experiencing enduring mental illness.

We are proposing to pilot this initial approach until 1st September 2025, after which the model will be reviewed and adapted according stakeholder feedback. Beyond this date, we intend to embed the forums permanently yet flexibly, continuously improving and adapting according to local insights and need.

This proposal builds on a previous proposal developed by Gloucestershire VCS Alliance and it is with their consent that we have adapted their initial approach in alignment with our service requirements and wider system stakeholder input.



Forum Aims

- Provide space for coordinated, community-led and mental health-focussed system working and development.
- Create strategic alignment across the mental health sector, such as neighbourhood teams, including greater collaboration amongst VCSE providers and greater links to statutory services including social prescribing, social care, housing, employment, police etc.
- In partnership with LCPs, identify service, resource and training gaps and coproduce local and culturally appropriate solutions as well as upskilling VCSE partners to help meet local need.
- Develop effective, codesigned wellbeing pathways across the county and ensure individuals can access the right support at the right time and close to home.
- Leverage the voice of lived experience in the development of mental health pathways and services, in alignment and collaboration with lived experience involvement organisations such as Inclusion Gloucestershire and MHELO
- Ensure appropriate referrals to the Mental Health Advice and Support Service and to other specialist services.
- Share insights and best practice across the county and nationally.



Approach

- The forum would be a primarily VCSE and Expert By Experience group with a clear focus on mental health. Key contacts from statutory services will also be invited to be members and to ensure linkage to LCP, the LCP Care Navigator and or Clinical Lead would be a standing member of the forum.
- The forums will be established by Rethink's Community Engagement and Coproduction Lead, in collaboration with VCSE and NHS partners. Once the forums (including ways of working, vision, values etc.) are established, a local chair will be elected by the membership to oversee each forum.
- The forums will be designed to support VCSE organisations that are working with people with a wide range of MH needs. This is to build awareness of the range of opportunities available, to understand gaps in provision where future organisational work could be focused and to identify if there are possible activities/offers which would be suitable for individuals referred to the LCP. It also offers the opportunity for organisations to offer peer support and creates the conditions for collaborative work and coproduction.



Approach

- The forums would also be a distribution network of information relevant to members. As new services are set up or changes to existing services are made, members can be made aware as well as being updated on available training opportunities or funding. This ensures that those who cannot join the forum meetings are still connected and can participate in some meaningful way.
- Support for Experts by Experience involved in the forums will be provided by the Community Engagement and Coproduction Officer, in accordance with our [coproduction and involvement model](#), with wider support provided by Rethink's national team.
- Each forum would meet regularly online with face-to-face sessions planned according to the needs of each locality.
- The stages of our approach to establishing the forums follows:



Engaging with Communities

Needs assessment	Look at the demographics, deprivation, health inequalities, and geography of the area and identifying key needs.
Asset mapping	Look at which organisations are currently operating in the locality, what they offer, and who they serve.
Gaps assessment	Identify which groups of people are currently not able to access services or are having a poor experience of services. Look at funding gaps experienced by organisations.
Approaching organisations to feed into model and be members of forums	Through VCS Alliance and other relationships, present model and run listening events with local VCSE and EBE stakeholders. Adapt model based on feedback and reach out to range of diverse, key organisations about membership, ensuring offer is mutually beneficial



Vision and Strategy

Agree on common core purpose for the forums	Coproduce a purpose, vision and values across all forum members and EBE based on common interest in each forum. Ensure this is regularly referred back to and refreshed if needed.
Establish required outcomes and focus areas for the forums	For example, adults and older adults, children and young people, neurodiversity, personality disorders, or other required focus areas based on local need.
Agree on terms of reference for forum meetings	Embed the principles above and include details for how the forum is defined, developed and verified.
Develop necessary policies	For example, around safeguarding, accountability, data sharing, membership agreement etc.



Governance

Set up decision-making structure, with clarity about who makes decisions about the forum	Employ a 'one member, one vote' system across the forum. Wider structure to be designed by forum, facilitated by Community Engagement and Coproduction Officer.
Ensure decision-making structure is representative of the full range of organisations involved	It should include grassroots and national organisations, people involved in direct delivery and in management positions, and organisations that provide support with wider determinants as well as direct mental health support
Agree regular meetings to make decisions and share updates.	Consider timings, format and frequency.
Appoint forum chairs	Once forums are established, members vote to elect an organisation to the position of chair. Funding will be made available for this position and suggested responsibilities of this role are outlined latterly in this document.



Growth, Reflection and Sustainability

Coproduce comms plan and strategy	Agree processes, responsibilities and timelines from the beginning.
Hold reflection sessions with forum members and partners	Revisit initial vision and purpose. Is this still suitable and accurate? What have the learnings been so far? Does this need to change or develop?
Continuous engagement with the community	Keep identifying gaps in representation. Respond to developments and challenges in the area

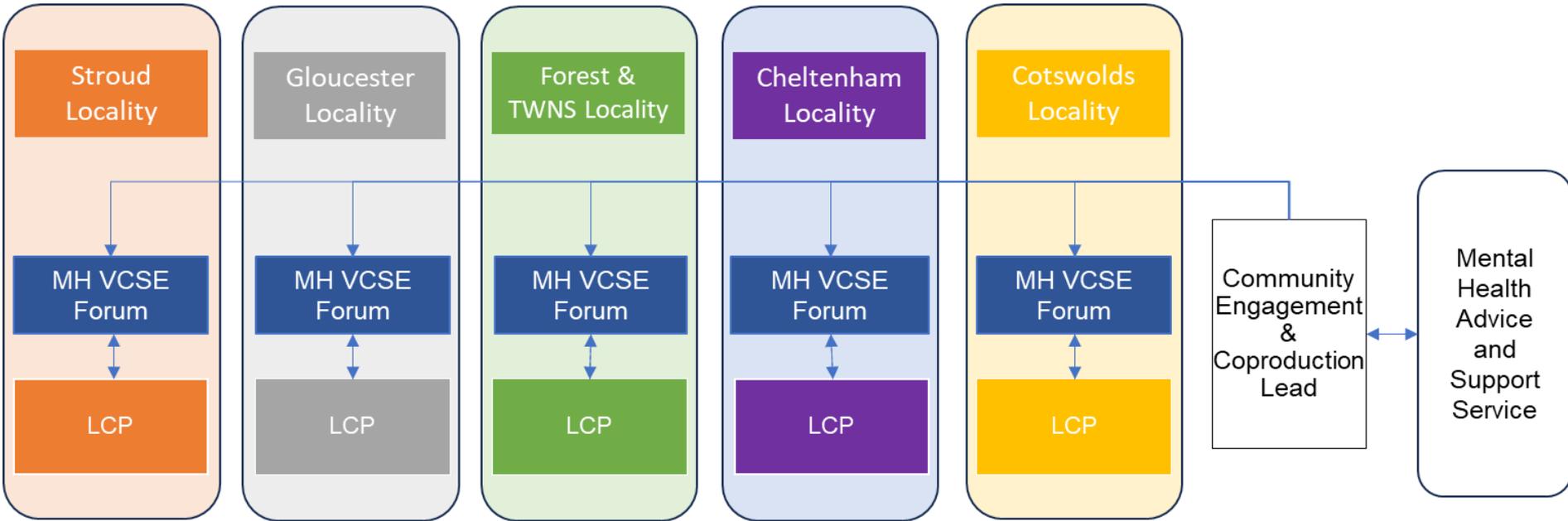


Forum Chair Responsibilities

- Create agendas and chair forum meetings
- Maintain a directory of contacts and distribution list
- Identify network contacts for all partners as the first point of contact
- Share and disseminate information among all partners
- Connect and link partners
- Be responsible for the administration of the forum
- Alongside Community Engagement and Coproduction Lead, organise workshops appropriate to local need
- Feed content to LCPs as needed
- Meet regularly with GHCT to plan activity/identify future areas for development



Organisational Structure





Next Steps

- Share initial model with stakeholders across VCSE, NHS, LA and EBEs ahead of local listening events to discuss model in greater depth and understand local feedback.
- Ongoing engagement with VCSE partners and EBEs across each locality.
- Run listening events in November 2024 in Forest of Dean, Gloucester, Stroud and Cheltenham.
- Collate feedback from each listening event and process themes, amend initial model as appropriate.
- Establish forums with support from local partners, with first meetings to be held in 2025.