

# Merger FAQ's

Hunts Forum of Voluntary Organisations (Hunts Forum) and Cambridge Council for Voluntary Service (CCVS) are planning to merge. These FAQ's answer some of the questions we have been asked and address some of the concerns people have raised. We must state that this merger is coming from a position of strength and growth from both partners, it is being driven by a philosophy about how we can work harder and do more for the voluntary sector across Cambridgeshire and not from any position that we need to reduce services or cut back on our work.

## Why are we proposing a merger now?

The merger is being driven by two main factors.

1. Julie Farrow the CEO at Hunts Forum will be retiring from her role in April 2025. As part of their succession planning the Trustees of Hunts Forum approached CCVS with the idea of a merger of the two organisations as it offered a unique opportunity to bring the two organisations together.
2. The two organisations have been working more and more collaboratively over the past five years. Both organisations have collaborated under the Support Cambridgeshire brand but have also developed many partnership projects including the new Volunteer Cambs website. This collaboration has meant that both organisations hold joint contracts and deliver on agreed workplans for these as well as working on projects for just their area of operation.

## What do we think the benefits of the merger are?

We believe the benefits of the merger are.

1. It will make the delivery of support more efficient and effective.
2. It will make things less confusing for members.
3. It will allow us to be more financially resilient.
4. It will give us a greater collective voice.
5. We will be better able to represent the sector at a county level whilst maintaining our district links.
6. It will enable the team to work as one, sharing skills and capacity.

## What is happening to the staff?

With the exception of Julie, we do not intend to lose any staff members. We are planning no redundancies, and whilst there will be changes to jobs and responsibilities all the

existing staff will be staying in place. This means that you will not lose your contact and that you will still be able to reach the staff members you have always dealt with

We are in fact looking at what additional staff capacity we will need to recruit to make up for the changes in roles that Julie's departure will create.

## How will you support staff?

Our staff are our greatest asset, we want them to be happy and fulfilled in their work. We have arranged independent HR advice and support during the merger process and have identified external training and development opportunities to support a new team structure, one team with shared ambitions and capabilities.

## What is happening about the CEO?

The trustees have agreed that initially Mark Freeman the current CEO at CCVS will take on the role of CEO for the new combined organisation. This will offer continuity of relationships and important stability as the two organisations come together.

The trustees and Mark have agreed that after the first year of merger there will be a review to look at the leadership. This will be a mutually agreed process to look at the best way forward for both the organisation and Mark.

## Who will the trustees be?

Initially the trustee board will be made up of those trustees from both the Hunts Forum and the CCVS trustee board who are willing to continue as trustees. In the first year it is intended that Noel Kearns and Flóra Raffai the current chair of Hunts Forum and CCVS respectively will jointly chair the board.

A Trustee skills audit will be undertaken, which will identify any gaps.

In the first year of operation the trustees will look to co-opt new members to the board to fill skills gaps and there will be elections at the first AGM.

## Where will we be based, and will we lose any of our local focus?

We will be keeping our offices in both Cambridge and Huntingdon. Our offices serve as important hubs for other local charities and it is important that we maintain this offer. By keeping the offices we hope it demonstrates our commitment to being a single county organisation with local knowledge and presence.

Our team members will maintain their local focus but will also be able to work more closely together to share knowledge and skills and thus provide an even better service. . Any in person training and events will continue as before.

We will continue to recruit from across the county and will have two senior staff members one who will focus on the north of the county and one on the south.

## What will the process be?

We have looked at a process that will involve the lowest cost and be as smooth as possible.

Hunts Forum will vote to change its name to Support Cambridgeshire at [their AGM on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2024](#). At the same time, they will vote to agree to the merger and to take on the CCVS staff and resources.

At [the CCVS AGM on the 28<sup>th</sup> November 2024](#) the members will vote to wind up the organisation and to transfer all assets, contracts and staff to Hunts Forum.

This is the simplest solution and is possible under the rules governing both organisations. It is possible to do this without charity commission agreement but we will look to be entered onto the register of merged charities.

## What will the organisation be called?

The new organisation will be called Support Cambridgeshire and will utilise the branding that already exists.