



## Introduction

On Wednesday 11 February 2026, the ALLIANCE Integration Team hosted a workshop to explore how third sector organisations can navigate difficult decisions while staying aligned with their core values.

The session opened with a discussion of how organisations define and balance value – impact, resources, efficiency – with values – ethics, mission, authenticity. Speakers highlighted the tensions between financial pressures, partnership choices, community expectations, and organisational integrity. Delegates then had the opportunity to think about how they approach balancing value and values in their own work.

## Presentations

### **Vicki Cloney, Partnership Facilitator, CVS Inverclyde**

Vicki offered a grounded, practice-based look at how values shape collaboration between the third and public sectors. Her role places her at the centre of navigating competing expectations, power dynamics, and resource constraints between sectors.

Joined-up working between partners often requires reconciling very different cultures, terminologies, and priorities. Language in particular can cause friction. For example, terms like “effective” and “efficient” are often conflated, yet they reflect very different value choices. Efficiency tends to reflect value for money, while effectiveness is more focused on outcomes.

Speaking about her experience developing the Inverclyde Life service directory, she highlighted the necessity of trusting and honest relationships, especially when managing expectations for projects when additional resources aren’t available. Vicki’s role was to maintain trust through honest conversations about capacity, pace, and consequences, for example by discussing wider concerns such as more signposting to third sector organisations already under increasing pressure. In this example, trust building was not an add-on, but an operational necessity.

Values must be constantly negotiated across organisational boundaries. Delivering value requires relationship-based leadership, transparent negotiation, and realism about capacity.

## Eddie McConnell, Interim Executive Director, SCLD

Eddie delivered a reflective and deeply human presentation on the weight of leadership in times of crisis. He opened by acknowledging the emotional toll decision makers face, stressing the need for leaders to extend kindness to themselves and to others when making complex and difficult decisions.

With funding pressures driving structural changes across the sector, organisational values should act as the framework that guides decision making. He outlined three criteria for organisational values – they should be **modern**, **relevant**, and **aligned** to the organisation’s mission and purpose – and four reflective questions for values-driven decisions:

- Who will be most impacted?
- What mitigation is needed?
- Which option causes the least harm?
- How will we communicate this honestly and transparently?

Values don’t necessarily make decisions easier, but they do help make decisions “defensible, human, and worthy of the trust placed in leaders.”

## Sean Macaskill, Director, Autistic Knowledge Development

Sean’s presentation focused on authenticity, moral clarity, and resisting value drift in mission-driven organisations. He gave an assertive, principle-driven perspective on the risk of compromising values to secure funding and influence. He spoke candidly about the necessity of moral courage and the personal resilience required to stay aligned to one’s mission.

*“Doing nothing is sometimes better than doing the wrong thing.”*

Sean emphasised that action taken for the wrong reasons can cause more harm than good. It’s important to reflect on whether your organisation’s values are reflected in its partnerships. Compromising for convenience, funding or political pressure can lead to mission drift – or mission “abandonment.” Ultimately, Sean argued that community relevance is the real test of an organisation’s values. When making

decisions, impact and relevance are just as important as value for money.

Authenticity can be a “marmite quality.” Being genuinely values-driven can affect relationships, but authenticity is necessary for impact and credibility. He underscored the value of finding allies with a strong moral voice to challenge power and injustice.

For Sean, organisations should protect their integrity when pressured to compromise their values. Authentic, values-first leadership is essential for long-term credibility and real impact.

## Activities

After the panel, delegates participated in a few activities to explore values-based decision making in their own work.

### Flipping the problem

Participants first examined what organisational misalignment looks like and what behaviours undermine values. They highlighted:

- Unethical partnerships and fundraising
- Silencing or excluding people accessing services
- Decisions driven by ease, comfort, or funder preference rather than need
- Lack of transparency, evidence, feedback, or challenge
- Prioritising financial policy over impact
- Behaviours lacking integrity, accountability or inclusion

Participants were then asked to reflect honestly on where aspects of this happen in their own organisations. One example raised was taking funding from corporations your organisation would also like to hold accountable for harms or poor practice.

## Imagining success

Delegates then imagined what their organisations would look like in five years as a model of balancing values and value, and captured these in a newspaper style headline.

These scenarios highlighted aspirations for long-term sustainability, transparent decision making, person centred and flexible support, power-shifting models, growth and transformation without compromising mission, and evidence of genuine community impact.

<i>“Revolution to Revelation: Community-led, owned and focused network of care providers in the Highlands”</i>	<i>“We can’t help everyone, we can’t please everyone... but we did! By listening to people, being person centred and flexible.”</i>	<i>“Long term sustainable funding challenges traditional short term grant model – incremental long term transformation with real impact for communities.”</i>	<i>“We aren’t needed anymore: the challenge completely met, eradicating the need for charity.”</i>
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## Summary

Across all discussions, several consistent themes emerged:

- **Values must guide decisions:** even under financial strain, values should be the framework for difficult choices.
- **Authenticity and trust are essential:** whether in a partnership or communication, trust is built through transparency, accountability, and honest conversation.
- **Financial pressures can distort mission:** participants recognised how funding can unintentionally drive decision making away from community needs.
- **Community voice is central:** ignoring lived experience is a sign of misalignment and a risk to mission.

- **Long term thinking beats short term fixes:** Many future visions centred on sustainability, continuity and realistic long-term transformation.

This workshop made clear that balancing value and values is not a binary choice but a continual negotiation. Organisations should stay rooted to purpose, act transparently, and make decisions that minimise harm while sustaining meaningful impact. By redefining value as not just money but relevance, integrity, and long-term community outcomes, the third sector can navigate a challenging landscape without abandoning it's goals.

## **The ALLIANCE Integration Programme**

The ALLIANCE Integration Programme supports the third sector to contribute to health and social care integration. We use our platform to promote and champion the role of the third sector and we play a role in ensuring the voice of lived experience is able to influence the design and delivery of integrated services.

To learn more about the programme, visit our website: [www.alliance-scotland.org.uk/health-and-social-care-integration/](http://www.alliance-scotland.org.uk/health-and-social-care-integration/).

## **Contact**

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# About the ALLIANCE

The Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE) is the national third sector intermediary for a range of health and social care organisations. We have a growing membership of over 3,600 national and local third sector organisations, associates in the statutory and private sectors, disabled people, people living with long term conditions and unpaid carers. Many NHS Boards, Health and Social Care Partnerships, Medical Practices, Third Sector Interfaces, Libraries and Access Panels are also members.

The ALLIANCE is a strategic partner of the Scottish Government and has close working relationships, several of which are underpinned by Memorandum of Understanding, with many national NHS Boards, academic institutions and key organisations spanning health, social care, housing and digital technology.

Our vision is for a Scotland where people of all ages who are disabled or living with long term conditions, and unpaid carers, have a strong voice and enjoy their right to live well, as equal and active citizens, free from discrimination, with support and services that put them at the centre.

The ALLIANCE has three core aims. We seek to:

- Ensure people are at the centre, that their voices, expertise and rights drive policy and sit at the heart of design, delivery and improvement of support and services.
- Support transformational change, towards approaches that work with individual and community assets, helping people to stay well, supporting human rights, self management, co-production and independent living.
- Champion and support the third sector as a vital strategic and delivery partner and foster better cross-sector understanding and partnership.



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HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE  
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people at the centre