

Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning Associate, Somerset Crisis & Resilience Alliance

Invitation for Expressions of Interest

Contract period: mid-September 2026 to January 2027

Indicative budget: up to £25,000 inclusive of VAT and expenses

Working pattern: flexible and largely remote, with attendance at key meetings and workshops as required

Some occasional travel across Somerset may be necessary

Applicants should provide their proposed day rate, anticipated number of consultancy days and an overall fee proposal

Background

The Somerset Crisis and Resilience Alliance is a partnership led by Citizens Advice Somerset. It brings together local organisations to provide joined-up support for people in financial crisis, and to help people and families build longer-term financial resilience.

The Alliance is funded by the government's Crisis and Resilience Fund through the Department for Work and Pensions and Somerset Council. The Fund commenced on 1 April 2026 and concludes on 31 March 2029.

The Alliance exists to do two things: 1) respond quickly and effectively when someone is in financial crisis, so their situation does not get worse; 2) help people avoid hardship in the first place, or prevent them from facing it again.

To do that, the Alliance is creating clear routes into help for people in crisis, support that addresses the underlying causes of financial hardship, and community-based activity that strengthens resilience locally.

Key service delivery objectives

- Provision of crisis payments for people experiencing a financial shock
- Targeted support to strengthen individual financial resilience
- Strengthening the local support landscape to build community resilience

Intended outcomes

- Reduced experiences of material deprivation
- Reduced need for emergency food parcels
- Increased access to appropriate and quality advice services

- Increased savings
- Reduction in debt, particularly priority debt
- Maximisation of individuals' incomes
- Improved community coordination and resilience

Delivery is through grant agreements with a broad range of voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) organisations across Somerset.

Purpose of Commission

Spark Somerset has been commissioned to support programme-wide monitoring, evaluation and learning and is seeking an experienced freelance associate to help establish the foundations for a robust, proportionate and meaningful evaluation framework during the first phase of programme delivery.

The successful associate will work collaboratively with Alliance partners to establish a practical, proportionate and evidence-based approach to monitoring, evaluation and learning that supports accountability, continuous improvement and the demonstration of impact.

The commission will focus initially on developing and embedding the monitoring, evaluation and learning infrastructure required during Year 1 of the programme, whilst laying foundations for ongoing evaluation activity across the life of the Fund.

The associate will work with Citizens Advice Somerset, Spark Somerset, Alliance partners and lived experience representatives to ensure the evaluation approach reflects both programme requirements and the realities of frontline delivery.

Approach

The Alliance recognises that this programme is more than a collection of individual projects. Its ambition is to help people move from financial crisis towards greater resilience through coordinated partnership working, community action and systems collaboration.

The evaluation should therefore capture impact and learning at three interconnected levels:

Individual Outcomes

Understanding the difference made to people and families experiencing financial hardship, including:

- Reduced material deprivation
- Increased income
- Reduced debt
- Reduced reliance on emergency support
- Increased access to appropriate support
- Increased financial resilience and wellbeing

Organisational Outcomes

Understanding the benefits generated through partnership working, including:

- Increased organisational capacity
- Stronger referral pathways
- Improved partnership working
- Better coordination of support
- Greater confidence in measuring and evidencing impact

System Outcomes

Understanding the Alliance's contribution to wider system change, including:

- Earlier intervention and prevention
- Improved coordination across services
- Reduced duplication and gaps in provision
- Better intelligence regarding emerging needs
- Increased recognition of the VCFSE sector's contribution
- Stronger evidence to inform future investment and commissioning decisions

The successful associate will be encouraged to bring expertise in systems thinking, learning, collaboration and participatory approaches alongside traditional evaluation methodologies.

Existing Evaluation Requirements

Citizens Advice Somerset, as the lead accountable body, is required to provide quarterly quantitative returns whilst also gathering qualitative learning and insight to demonstrate progress and inform annual impact reporting.

Existing commitments include:

Quantitative Measures

- Current and anticipated measures include:
- Crisis and emergency support (individual outcomes)
- Resilience and wellbeing (individual outcomes)
- Community resilience (community outcomes)
- Service quality and effectiveness (cross-cutting outcomes)

Qualitative Measures

Cross-cutting measures are expected to include:

- Lived experience insight from beneficiaries
- Feedback from Alliance partners
- Learning from partnership working
- Community and systems-level learning

These approaches should be informed by lived experience and co-designed wherever possible with people directly affected by financial hardship.

Additional Measures

- The associate may also be asked to explore:
- Social Value approaches
- Value for money methodologies
- Partnership and systems-change indicators
- Community intelligence and learning opportunities

Indicative Schedule

Task	Description	Target Delivery Date
Groundwork	Familiarisation with context, exploring existing partner, systems, tools, ways of working. Prepare a detailed work plan, focusing on Year 1	End of September
Theory of Change	Lead on development in conjunction with key partners	End October 2026
Evaluation Framework	Lead on building the system wide framework including indicators & risks in conjunction with key partners	End October 2026
Data collection methods	Lead in the design of a variety pilot tested "user friendly" tools . To be cognisant of mandated/existing tools to limit burden on partners	Mid November 2026
Training and support	Where relevant ensure partners are equipped to support data collection	End November 2026
Baseline	Collection of baseline data	End December 2026
Commission end report	Produce report outlining details of the monitoring and evaluation framework, including recommendations for implementation	End January 2027

Skills and Experience Required

Essential

- Significant experience designing monitoring, evaluation and learning frameworks
- Strong understanding of qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods
- Experience developing theories of change and outcomes frameworks
- Experience evaluating complex partnership or collaborative programmes
- Excellent facilitation and stakeholder engagement skills
- Strong analytical and report-writing skills
- Ability to design practical tools that work for frontline organisations
- Experience working independently whilst building effective collaborative relationships

Desirable

- Knowledge of the voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise sector
- Experience of financial inclusion, poverty reduction or community resilience programmes
- Experience of systems change or collective impact evaluation
- Experience of participatory and lived experience approaches
- Understanding of the Somerset landscape and local partnerships

Reporting Arrangements

The associate will be commissioned by Spark Somerset and work closely with:

- Citizens Advice Somerset
- Somerset Crisis & Resilience Alliance partners
- Lived experience representatives and advisory groups

Regular progress meetings and milestone reviews will be agreed at project commencement.

Submitting an Expression of Interest

Interested applicants should submit:

A proposal (maximum of two pages) outlining:

- What interests you about this role and the type of work described?
- Understanding of the brief
- Relevant experience
- Proposed approach and methodology, building on the guidance suggested
- Added value you would bring to the commission

Support information: CV, examples of relevant previous work (where available), proposed fee, day rate, and two references.

Applications should be sent to recruitment@sparksomerset.org.uk

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

We welcome applications from individuals and organisations with diverse backgrounds, experiences and perspectives. We are particularly interested in approaches that place lived experience, participation and community voice at the heart of evaluation and learning.

Deadline: 5pm on Friday 4 September

Conversations with shortlisted candidates will take place in W/C Monday 7 September, with work to commence W/C Monday 21 September.