

Voluntary**Action**Islington



ANNUAL REPORT

2022-23

Thank you to all our funders who make our work possible

VoluntaryActionIslington

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WELCOME TO OUR ANNUAL REPORT

This year we celebrated 50 years of service to the Islington community. At a major event at London Metropolitan University on 2 November 2022, we paid tribute to our founders; everyone who had served as volunteers, staff and trustees; the Borough's diverse Voluntary, Community Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) and our hugely valuable partners and funders. Council Leader Cllr Kaya Comer-Schwartz and Jeremy Corbyn MP were among the speakers who inspired the many representatives of the local VCFSE who contributed and attended.

After 9 years as a trustee I will be standing down and I'm delighted to hand over to Emma Hutchins as the new Chair. We've had some challenging moments, but I've always found it to be an enjoyable and rewarding experience, not least because of the great team at VAI and the many excellent VCFSE striving to make a fairer Islington. Long may you prosper!

Chair of Trustees VAI, Joe Irvin OBE

In all my work, combatting inequality has been my driving force. I think myself and VAI are well-matched. I have seen how they are working to bridge the inequality divide in Islington. This work makes a positive difference and is increasingly important.

**Mayor of Islington,
Councillor Gary Heather,
naming VAI his Charity of
the Year**



STRATEGIC AIM 1:

Support VCFSE Development

We continue to **offer advice, information and support to local groups** (mainly on funding, general development, starting up and registering as a charity), responding to 240 requests this year. We worked with a broad range of groups, many in health and wellbeing, children & young people or who work with the whole community. Most of the groups we helped are BAME led. We also supported a range of women's groups mainly focusing on health and well-being issues.

Our continuing **partnership with the National Lottery** enables local community groups to have 1-to-1 surgeries with the local Lottery Officer. We are seeking to reach out to more local groups and make the sessions more accessible.

We produced two **funding booklets** with over 100 funding programmes in each booklet. We also disseminated over 35 funding updates.

The **VAI Resource Centre** at 200 Pentonville Road continues to provide valuable desk and room hire facilities to charities and community groups. Activity increased as groups recovered from the impact of the pandemic.

We are seeking to extend our current lease beyond 2024. We took the opportunity to upgrade our IT and office facilities and applied a flexible approach, including hot-desking.



CASE STUDY



Families in Harmony promotes better care, upbringing and life opportunities for children unable to live with their birth parents. “The support we received has been pivotal in helping us direct the work of the organisation and become a registered charity. We had little experience in administration and strategic planning. Meeting with Yvette helped us to prioritise and identify funding to support our work. An exceptional service is not just a transaction; it’s an experience that leaves a lasting impression”.

STRATEGIC AIM 2:

Empower Communities

Developing the **Local Wellbeing Networks (LWN)** continued to be a major priority. We strengthened our partnership with the **Octopus Community Network** and continued to develop the mechanisms for promoting community voice, connecting the VCFSE, public sector and residents and using this partnership to co-deliver services. We organised monthly LWN meetings in community settings throughout the year.

In partnership with Octopus, we teamed up with Community Organisers, a national agency, who went on to deliver a series of 'An Introduction to Community Organising' training to empower resident voice and engage localised communities across the borough.

We also teamed up with the **Social Change Agency** to deliver Network Development training, with 10 'Change Makers'.

In partnership with **Healthwatch Islington** and the Islington **Integrated Care Board**, we carried out community research to understand better the barriers to disabled people in accessing Islington Council's employment support offer. We also held a session for 29 organisations in November in partnership with **Islington Council** and Healthwatch to raise awareness of the Council's employment service.



NADINE'S STORY

Nadine volunteered at VAI to gain experience towards study and career development.

“I always looked forward to being at VAI. I still do. Volunteering has many benefits, especially when in the right place that nurtures you to grow.

I am so blessed that I chose VAI as a learning ground. It was a safe and supportive space with an amazing team.

As a volunteer, I enhanced my skills, gained new ones, and grew my confidence. I used my experience from VAI to secure a job after graduating. I am now working as a Community Investment Project Lead. I use my experience from VAI in my current role as an exemplar of fantastic volunteer management and support. VAI will always be home”



STRATEGIC AIM 3:

Enable Volunteering

VAI operates Islington's nationally accredited **Volunteer Centre**. During Covid we mounted a major mobilisation of volunteers to support the vaccination programme and deliver food and medicine to vulnerable residents. Now the focus has shifted to the cost-of-living crisis. Although the number of **volunteers** declined elsewhere in London, we had 351 newly registered volunteers – close to pre-pandemic numbers – making a total of 4,122. 56 new VCFSE organisations registered with our Volunteer Centre, bringing the total to 489. VAI hosted 4 **Volunteering Fairs** with VC Camden, to support the recruitment of volunteers. We increased our outreach in public places like community centres, colleges and libraries.

We hosted the **Islington Volunteer of the Year Awards** in November 2022 at London Metropolitan University, with the biggest number of attendees ever. The awards were presented by the Mayor of Islington, Cllr Marian Spall and sponsored by Doubletree by Hilton, and attracted media coverage, raising the profile of volunteering locally. The awards . In partnership with HeathProm and Union Chapel we supported **Ukrainian families** and **asylum seekers** to improve their welfare and engage with the local community whilst volunteering. We worked with **Peabody Trust** to create new volunteering opportunities among Peabody Trust and South Islington residents.



VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARD 2022



Older Volunteer of the Year 60+:
Molly McConville, the Sunday Club at St John's Church

Volunteering Team:
Islington Bereavement Support Volunteers

Volunteer of the Year 26-60:
David Batchelor, Help on Your Doorstep

Pat Haynes Memorial Trustee of the Year:
Guilene Marco, MEWSO

Young Volunteer of the Year 16-25:
Edward Campbell, Soapbox Youth Centre

STRATEGIC AIM 4:

Stronger Voice

We worked with Islington Council to **support** the three **Young Islington Locality Networks** and the New Youth Offer as part of the 'Fairer Together' initiative. We focused on grassroots organisations in the Bangladeshi, Kurdish, Somali and Turkish communities. In January, we brought together 62 delegates from 41 groups, to share experience, network, meet local funders and learn about the **new Youth Work Offer**. We also conducted research into how to reach this target group with high quality services. Our CEO, Navinder Kaur assembled a **VAI Advisory Group** made up of 13 organisations and networks, meeting monthly. One significant areas of work was on refreshing the **Islington Compact** – the partnership agreement between the Council and the VCFSE.

Navinder represents the VCFSE on nine LBI partnership boards, including the Inequality Task Force, Let's Talk Islington, Fairer Together, Islington Together Cost of Living Summit, Community Partnership and Winter Wellness Partners. She represents the Islington VCFSE within the NHS Integrated Care Board for North Central London. VAI continued to host **Community Conversations**, co-chairing with Public Health Islington in April and November 2022. In February 2022 we created the **borough-wide Health and Wellbeing Network**, in response to the pandemic, but also the growing need for clear communications about physical and mental health.



WORKING FOR A **FAIRER** **ISLINGTON** BY SUPPORTING **COMMUNITY** AND **VOLUNTARY** ACTION



STRATEGIC AIM 5:

Strengthening Partnerships

Our annual **VCFSE Conference**, on 18 May 2022, highlighted the main challenges for the sector: increasing poverty and health inequality, need for more joint working within the VCFSE and between sectors, address the lack of infrastructure and workforce development to support joint working, and the need for better access to statutory funding by eliminating complex procurement processes.

We hosted **Grassroots and Small Organisations Summits** in July and September 2022, highlighting the desire for help with a stronger VCFSE voice, volunteering, communications and demonstrating impact, organisational development and funding.

We sought to foster stronger partnerships and cooperation, through:

- Supporting Local Wellbeing Networks, in partnership with Octopus Community Network
- Creating VAI's Advisory Group of 13 voluntary, community groups and borough-wide networks
- Supporting the borough-wide Health and Wellbeing Network
- Convening our annual VCFSE conference & two Grassroots Summits
- Representing the VCFSE on Islington Council partnership boards & the NHS Integrated Care Board for North Central London
- Beginning a review of the Compact – the partnership agreement between LBI and the VCFSE



WHO WE ARE:

Voluntary Action Islington is the umbrella body that connects the Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise sector (VCFSE) in Islington and runs the accredited Volunteer Centre.

Our Vision: A thriving VCFSE in Islington: enriching people's lives and building stronger communities

Our Mission: To strengthen our local VCFSE sector's ability to deliver services effectively and to promote social justice

Our Values

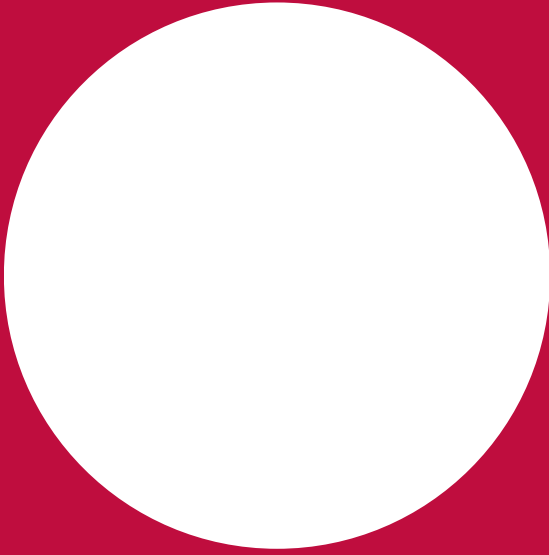
- **Effective:** *creative, energetic and responsive*
- **Collaborative:** *building partnerships and co-designing solutions*
- **Inclusive:** *valuing the importance of diversity and equality*
- **Positive:** *building on strengths, not just focusing on problems*
- **With Integrity:** *honest, professional and respectful*

FINANCE SUMMARY:

Year ended 31st March 2023

	Restricted funds £	Unrestricted	Total (£)
Income from:			
Donations and legacies	1,000	75,000	76,000
Charitable activities			
Community Development	50,000	-	50,000
Member Services and Support	20,000	3,930	23,930
Sector Development and Volunteering	44,372	288,423	332,795
Investments and other	-	8,128	8,128
Total income	115,372	375,481	490,853
Expenditure on:			
Charitable activities			
Community Development	45,273	-	45,273
Member Services and Support	30,488	51,606	82,094
Sector Development and Volunteering	77,436	232,743	310,179
Total expenditure	153,197	284,349	437,546
Net (expenditure) income before net losses on	(37,825)	91,132	53,307
Net losses on investments	-	(14,976)	(14,976)
Net (expenditure) income for the year	(37,825)	76,156	38,331
Reconciliation of funds:			
Total funds brought forward	107,709	213,036	320,745
Total funds carried forward	69,884	289,192	359,076
BALANCE SHEET (fund balances) at 31 MARCH 2023			
Restricted funds			69,884
Unrestricted funds			
Designated funds			107,463
General funds			181,729
Total unrestricted funds			289,192
TOTAL FUNDS			359,076





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