

Voluntary Action Islington-hosted Advisory Group

Terms of Reference

1. Overview / Objectives

Voluntary Action Islington-hosted Advisory Group brings together senior representatives from Islington's voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise sector (VCFSE), and includes local organisations, networks and funders.

The Group is convened and hosted by VAI to:

- Provide a strategic voice for the VCFSE sector by supporting alignment of sector priorities and enabling the sector to take collective action through strategic influence.
- Support consultation between Islington's VCFSE, the local authority, and NHS partners, ensuring meaningful consultation and engagement of the VCFSE.
- Support system leadership to influence system wide working through effective representation, engagement and service design.
- Strengthen collaboration and partnership working between the VCFSE, statutory agencies, and local communities.
- Promote understanding of the sector's contribution, operating context and collective impact.
- Support sector development, sustainability, evidence building and investment.
- Provide peer-to-peer support; build mutuality and solidarity.

2. Vision

An empowered and collaborative VCFSE sector that influences systems, champions community voice and drives positive change so that every resident can thrive.

3. Aims / purpose / scope

The Advisory Group will:

- Provide strategic leadership and advocacy
- Represent and promote the interest of the VCFSE sector, influencing local priorities and system change
- Enable co-ordination, collaboration and partnership working
- Strengthen relationships between the VCFSE sector, local authority, NHS and other stakeholders
- Facilitate communication and information sharing

- Act as a two-way conduit between the Advisory Group and the wider VCFSE sector
- Drive sector development and sustainability by supporting collective action, evidence building and investment in the sector

4. Values

The Advisory Group will operate in line with the following values:

- Resident-focused
- Collaboration and partnership
- Inclusivity and representation
- Transparency and accountability
- Trust and mutual respect

5. Collective responsibilities

The Advisory Group will:

- Advise on sector priorities identify emerging needs and opportunities
- Strengthen partnerships with statutory and system stakeholders
- Champion inclusivity, ensuring diverse community voices are represented including resident lived experience, to ensure that services are designed and delivered more effectively
- Support capacity building across organisations and workforce
- Promote coordination and transparency across the sector and between sectors
- Monitor impact and provide feedback for continuous improvement
- Support system leadership to address shared challenges

6. Membership and recruitment of new members

6.1 Composition

Membership will include

- Senior leaders from a diverse range of specialist VCFSE organisations (small, medium and large)
- Representatives from borough-wide networks and local funders
- Active representation across key subsectors that are underrepresented e.g. specialist BAME, disability and children & young people's organisations
- A maximum of 20 organisations/networks, with balanced membership and equal representation from subsectors

Membership will reflect diversity in:

- Geography
- Organisation size and focus
- Skills, experience and community representation

6.2 Expectations of members

Members are expected to:

- Regularly attend monthly meetings
- Contribute to working groups and development activities
- Share expertise and sector insight
- Act as a communication link with others within their organisation/network
- Be constructive in helping to make decisions to move things forward by identifying what aligns us and what we collectively want to change for the benefit of residents and the VCFSE
- Adhere to agreed principles as per clause 9.2 below

6.3 Terms of membership

- Appointed for a two-year term (renewable)
- Membership will be reviewed regularly to ensure balance and representation

6.4 Recruitment of members

New members will be recruited through:

- Identification of gaps and based on equality
- Open expressions of interest
- Recommendations from Advisory Group members

VAI staff and board members may attend at an ex-officio capacity

7 Structure and coordination

7.1 Role of VAI

VAI will:

- Convene and host meetings
- Support agenda-setting
- Monitor progress and actions
- Provide administrative support

Decisions made by members are advisory in nature and do not carry binding authority over VAI operations. The Advisory Group does not sit within any formal governance structure.

Statutory partners and other stakeholders will be invited to attend meetings where relevant.

There is an option to exclude funders during closed sessions where required.

7.2 Chairing

- The Advisory Group will be chaired (or co-chaired) by a member
- Chair(s) will be appointed annually through nomination and agreement
- Chair(s) will help set agendas, facilitate discussion and agree action points, which are noted in the minutes

7.3 Working groups

- Established priority areas to progress
- Defined by purpose, membership, timeframe and reporting arrangements
- May include external participants where appropriate

7.4 Wider sector engagement

The Advisory Group will:

- Engage the wider VCFSE sector through events and networks
- Seek feedback and mandate via sector-wide forums
- Ensure effective communication of priorities and plans

7.5 Representation

- Members will represent the Advisory Group externally
- Feedback from external meetings should be shared with the Group

8. Meetings

- Held monthly (with additional meetings as required)
- Quorum: One third of members present
- Minutes recorded and shared

9. Decision-making

9.1 Nature of decisions

- The Advisory Group provides advice and recommendations only
- Decisions are non-binding

9.2 Principles

Decision-making will be:

- Consensus-based
- Transparent
- Inclusive
- Evidence-driven

9.3 Process

- Agenda items circulated in advance
- Open discussion facilitated by the Chair
- Consensus sought wherever possible
- Voting used where necessary (simple majority)
- Decisions recorded in minutes
- Urgent decisions may be taken via email

9.4 Conflict of Interest

- Members must declare conflicts of interest particularly around funding
- Members must not vote where there is a conflict of interest

10 Code of Conduct

10.1 Respect and professionalism

Members will:

- Act respectfully and professionally
- Engage in constructive discussion
- Act coherently / speak with one voice about the sector when liaising / engaging with external stakeholders

10.2 Confidentiality

- Sensitive information must not be shared externally without agreement

10.3 Accountability

Members will:

- Attend and participate actively
- Represent both their organisation and the wider sector

10.4 Integrity

Members must:

- Act in the best interests of the sector and the community
- Declare and manage conflicts of interest
- Be respectful and coherent

10.5 Compliance

- Breaches may result in review of membership
- Persistent breaches may lead to removal

11. Reporting

- Members representing the sector at statutory partnerships, boards, steering group and working groups must provide updates when necessary / relevant
- An annual summary of activity will be published
- Monitor impact, reviewing outcomes and feedback for improvement

12. Review

- These Terms of Reference will be reviewed every two years to ensure they remain relevant and effective

Strategic priorities 2026-27

The Advisory Group will focus on:

- Demonstrating the collective impact of the VCFSE sector
- Contributing to the development of Islington's Neighbourhood Health Model
- Securing investment in the VCFSE sector

Current Membership

Name	Organisation/network	Name	Organisation /network
tbc	St Luke's Community Centre	Melanie Griffiths	Cloudesley
Adrian Ford	Hillside Clubhouse	Mulat Haregot	Islington BAMER Advice Alliance
Colin Adams	Brickworks and Vice Chair, Octopus Community Network	Paddy Radcliffe	The Peel
Hekate Papadaki	Manor Gardens Welfare Trust	Roz Miller	Islington Faiths Forum
Jeanette Daly-Mathias	Islington Citizens Advice Bureau	tbc	Age UK Islington
Julie Parish	Octopus Community Network	tbc	Cripplegate Foundation and Islington Giving
Ken Kanu	Help on Your Doorstep	Sawsan Salim	Kurdish and Middle Eastern Women's Organisation (KWEMO)
Laura Saksena	Healthwatch Islington	Sigal Avni	Islington Mind
Mark Gilham	Stuart Low Trust	Yasin Ahmed	Nafsiyat Intercultural Therapy Centre
Mebrahtu Russom	Islington Refugee and Migrant Forum		