Company No. 01913555
Charity No. 291890

Voluntary Action Islington Limited

(A company limited by guarantee)

Annual Report & Financial Statements

31 March 2026

Voluntary Action Islington Limited

Trustees' Annual Report

For the year ended 31 March 2026

REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Registered charity name	Voluntary Action Islington Limited
Charity registration number	291890
Company registration number	01913555
Registered Office	200a Pentonville Road London N1 9JP

Board of Trustees

The trustees who served the charity during the period and up to the date of this report were as follows:

Ali Jabeen
Anjna Khurana (appointed 25 June 2025)
Craig Burgess (Interim Chair)
Daniel Belay Gessesse (appointed 25 June 2025)
Emma Victoria Hutchins (Chair – resigned 6 Nov 2025)
Jorge Llorens (Treasurer)
Ken Hettiarachi (Vice Chair)
Ken Penton (appointed 25 June 2025)
Kevin Turner (resigned 3 February 2026)
Kiran Prasad (appointed 25 June 2025)
Madeleine Gascoigne (resigned 24 March 2026)
Santa Gascoigne

Chief Executive Officer and Company Secretary	Navinder Kaur
Independent Examiners	Goldwins Chartered Accountants 75 Maygrove Road West Hampstead London NW6 2EG
Bankers	Unity Trust Bank plc 9 Brindley Place Birmingham B1 2HB

Voluntary Action Islington Limited

Trustees' Annual Report

For the year ended 31 March 2026

The trustees, who are also the directors for the purpose of company law, have pleasure in presenting their report and the financial statements for the charity for the year ended 31st March 2026.

The trustees confirm that the financial statements comply with current statutory requirements, the memorandum and articles of association and the Statement of Recommended Practice- Accounting and Reporting by Charities: SORP applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with FRS 102.

PURPOSE AND AIMS: Our charity's purpose as set out in the objects contained in the Memorandum of Association is to:

a) Promote any charitable purpose primarily but not exclusively for the benefit of the community in the London Borough of Islington, hereinafter called "the area of benefit" and in particular the advancement of education, the furtherance of health and the relief of poverty, distress and sickness
b) Promote and organise cooperation in achievement of the above purposes and to that end to bring together representatives of not-for-profit organisations and statutory authorities engaged in the furtherance of the above purposes within the area of benefit

In the past year the staff and trustees reviewed VAI's mission, vision, values and aims and this annual report reflects these strategic changes.

OUR VISION: A thriving Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) sector in Islington; enriching people's lives and building stronger communities.

OUR MISSION: To strengthen Islington's VCFSE sector to deliver services effectively and sustainably to promote social justice.

OUR VALUES

- **Collaborative:** building partnerships and co-designing solutions
- **Effective:** creative, energetic and responsive
- **Inclusive:** promoting the importance of equity, equality, diversity and inclusion
- **Positive:** tackling challenges by building on strengths
- **With Integrity:** honest, professional and respectful

OUR STRATEGIC AIMS 2024-2027

1. To support the development, effectiveness and sustainability of Islington's Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise Sector
2. To enable and strengthen volunteering, social action and community resilience
3. To facilitate stronger partnership working across Islington's Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise sector to influence policy, decision-making and system growth
4. To run VAI responsibly, effectively and efficiently as a model of good practice

We are an accredited Living Wage Employer and aim to be an equal opportunities employer.

PUBLIC BENEFIT

During the year the trustees have considered section 17 of the Charities Act 2011 and Charity Commission guidance on public benefit. We have sought to ensure that the charity is fulfilling its charitable purpose to benefit the public by focussing on some of the most pressing social issues in the borough, including Inequality, Poverty, Community Safety and Health

OUR CORE ACTIVITIES

Voluntary Action Islington (VAI) has been at the heart of Islington's sector for 55 years. We support local community groups, charities, community groups, faith organisations & social enterprises, while also working closely with residents and statutory partners.

We have built strong trusted relationships, extensive local knowledge and a clear and in-depth understanding of the challenges many people in our borough face, and how the voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) sector supports them. Today, we have over 500 registered members and regularly share information with more than 800 through our VAI email-newsgroup. The VCFSE sector continues to demonstrate resilience, creativity and determination in the face of unprecedented challenges, and this is what drives us to remain so committed to our local VCFSE sector and residents.

OUR 3-YEAR STRATEGY 2024-2027

In September '24, we launched our new strategy, capturing what Islington's VCFSE sector have told us over time about what they need from us during these unpredictable and challenging times and in response we laid out how we would support the sector.

We are now just halfway through delivering against this strategy, and we have come a long way, with substantial achievements and much more to do to support the sector. We will begin the process of developing our new 3-year strategy in early 2027, reflecting on our achievements, what worked well and what did not work as expected and what should be different in the next strategy.

As NCVO articulated clearly in their 'The Road Ahead' report, the sector is facing ongoing economic uncertainty, difficult funding landscapes and evolving political priorities requiring us to rethink how we operate, collaborate and advocate for change. The sector is operating in a perfect storm, with funding harder to secure, at a time when the sector is trying to keep up with the unprecedented rise in the demand for services.

We bring our strategic aims to life through our core services. We continued to provide:

- Capacity building and organisational development support to residents (setting up or already running groups), community groups, specialist charities and social enterprises to develop staff and volunteer skills, increase organisational effectiveness, resilience and sustainability.

- Volunteering support through our NAVCA accredited Volunteer Centre, a front-line service helping residents to find volunteering roles and supporting volunteer involving organisations (VIOs). For residents, volunteering builds confidence, and a sense of belonging while giving local charities the vital support they need.
- Representation, and advocacy: we represented the sector on Islington council-led boards and partnerships and the North Central London (NCL) VCSE Alliance.
- Opportunities to strengthen collaboration and partnership working within the sector as well as with other sectors including Islington council and NHS partners.
- Community space: through our Resource Centre, we continued to provide affordable co-working and meeting space, creating a supportive environment where groups can operate from, deliver some of their services, and collaborate with others.

MEMBERSHIP, COMMUNICATIONS AND SERVICES

Our membership consists of 511 local VCFSE sector organisations. Going forward we will be reviewing our membership offer and will work on improving our offer to our members. All our services are currently delivered free of charge.

VAI NEWSGROUP

We continued to provide an email news group service through which we bring to the attention of members relevant information. Members use this service to promote their local activities, and Islington council colleagues also disseminated information through this platform.

VAI's Google Newsgroup membership is made up of 886 local groups/organisations and statutory partners who use the platform to disseminate / receive information about their services. In 2025-26, 661 news emails were shared using this platform.

We circulated funding updates, and local community events and services as well as news from Islington Council via all our messaging platforms

WEBSITE

Our website continues to be an important source of information for news relevant to the sector including good practice resources for organisations. During the year we started work on developing a new website, having consulted with the sector around accessibility, navigation and resources needed. The new website will be launched in the late Summer of 2026.

SOCIAL MEDIA

- 3493 Twitter followers (VAI account)
- 2521 Twitter followers (Volunteer Centre account)
- 1265 Instagram followers (Volunteer Centre)
- 620 LinkedIn followers

2025-26 VOLUNTARY ACTION ISLINGTON HIGHLIGHTS

LBI / VCFSE STRATEGY

12 facilitated workshops for **114** attendees, delivered with London Met

FUNDRAISING SUPPORT

2908 Funding Toolkit Searches

£194K secured with VAI fundraising support

38 funding and useful information updates

372 Islington organisations registered on the Funding Toolkit

2 Funding Booklets of 118 funders created and circulated

POLICY AND COLLABORATION

127 attendees at **2** VCFSE Leaders' Collaborative Events

13 Advisory Group meetings with VCFSE Leaders

VAI represented the VCFSE at a range of LBI and NCL led Boards and Partnerships

Actively represented the VCFSE sector in shaping the development of the Neighbourhood Model

CAPACITY BUILDING

202 requests for organisational development support

45 community groups that were new to VAI supported with

- Governance structures
- Fundraising
- Policies/Procedures

11 training sessions held

326 in attendance

Training held with Cripplegate, National Lottery and National London Waste Authority

VOLUNTEERING

922 new volunteers registered

114 Volunteering Involving Organisations registered

220 new volunteering opportunities promoted

200 attended the Volunteer of The Year Awards (VOYA)

188 VOYA nominations, 5 categories and Chiann Wright became our Volunteer of the Year

5 Volunteering Fairs with **401** residents and **63** local organisations

MEMBER COMMUNICATION

511 registered members

886 local organisations and statutory partners disseminating/ receiving information via our Newsgroup

661 Newsgroup sector updates

EVIDENCE ISLINGTON

117 responded to the Training Needs Assessment, with 94 attending workshops

THRIVING RESOURCE CENTRE

140 organisations hosted within our Resource Centre with affordable desk and room hire

"The Islington Toolkit is invaluable to me as a manager of a small charity. It's the primary way I find new funders." Sunnyside Community Garden Centre

STRATEGIC AIM 1: TO SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT, EFFECTIVENESS AND SUSTAINABILITY OF ISLINGTON'S VCFSE

We continued to strengthen the capacity, confidence, and effectiveness of local voluntary and community sector organisations.

HOW RESIDENTS AND ORGANISATIONS ACCESS OUR SERVICES

Residents and organisations approach us for support via

- VAI's newsgroup, events, networks and word of mouth
- Community signposting: referrals from other voluntary and community sector organisations, our Volunteer Centre, word of mouth and local forums.
- Referrals from our partners: the Big Alliance; Cripplegate/Islington Giving; Local Initiatives Funding (LIF) team; local councillors; Islington Council's Neighbourhoods and Voluntary and Community Sector Partnership Team and other Council departments.

ONE TO ONE SESSIONS PROVIDING TAILORED ADVICE AND GUIDANCE

During this reporting period **we supported 74 unique organisations and residents,** primarily through one-to-one support delivered in person and online. This included 11 organisations receiving Islington council core grant funding.

We worked with some groups on a short-term basis, whilst others benefited from longer term targeted support to help them build robust foundations, strengthen their organisational capacity and develop sustainable services.

The figure of 74 represents the number of unique organisations and residents supported rather than the volume of support provided. Many accessed support on multiple occasions and, where needed, received additional assistance by email. **In total we delivered 202 support sessions and instances of substantive support.** This total includes one-to-one sessions, delivered in person and online, typically lasting up to 60 minutes depending on the organisation's needs and capacity. Substantive support also included desk-based research to respond to queries, review of funding applications, and feedback on policies and other organisational documents.

The main areas of support provided through one-to-one sessions included:

1. **Legal structures**: Advice on establishing charities and community groups, registering as a charity or company limited by guarantee, setting up a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) or Community Interest Company (CIC), and changing existing organisational structures. Residents accounted for 21% of all support requests, with some seeking advice on establishing organisations to deliver community services.
2. **Business planning:** Support to develop and strengthen business plans and establish clear direction for organisational development.

3. **Review of organisational policies:** The main areas of support requested by organisations have focused on the development, review and updating of EDI, Data Protection and Safeguarding policies. Requests were received from both newly established and well-established organisations seeking guidance to ensure their policies are appropriate to their organisational needs and responsibilities. To support this work policy templates have been developed and made available on our website. Additional support has been provided to grassroots and newly registered organisations, particularly trustees who have requested guidance on their roles, responsibilities, and the procedures necessary to ensure effective governance and safeguarding. This support includes reviewing existing organisational policies, identifying areas for improvement, and signposting organisations to relevant guidance, resources, and training opportunities.
4. **Funding applications:** Reviewing funding applications and providing feedback to strengthen applications and improve funding prospects. We have signposted organisations to the Islington Funding Toolkit.
5. **Financial management:** Advice on financial management including accounts, budgeting and financial planning.
6. **Measuring impact:** Guidance on using data, case studies and other evidence to demonstrate outcomes and communicate the impact of organisation's work
7. **Volunteering:** responding to requests for volunteers and providing guidance on volunteer-related needs. Organisations looking for further and more detailed information about volunteer management, recruiting and retention have been signposted to our Volunteer Centre.

Reporting these figures separately provides a clearer picture of both the reach of our service and the level of support delivered. The number of unique organisations and residents demonstrates the breadth of our reach, while the total of **202 support** sessions and instances of substantive support reflects the continued engagement, time and expertise required to respond to individual needs. Together, these figures demonstrate VAI's role in helping local organisations and residents build their capacity, strengthen their foundations and deliver services within their communities.

Dates	Number of sessions	Number of residents/organisations
Apr – Jun 2025	39 sessions (in person and online) 48 instances of support via email	25 organisations 23 residents/organisations new to VAI
Jul - Sept 2025	22 sessions (in person and online) 39 instances of support via email	13 organisations 9 residents/organisations new to VAI
Oct– Dec 2025	7 sessions (in person and online) 12 orgs supported via email	18 organisations 5 residents/organisations new to VAI
Jan -Mar 2026	17 organisations supported via email	18 organisations supported 6 residents/organisations new to VAI

CHARITY GOVERNANCE CODE

Strengthening Charity Governance and Organisational Capacity

We have embedded the **Charity Governance Code** into our one-to-one support sessions and capacity-building training. The Code provides a framework for identifying governance-related support needs and helping organisations strengthen their governance practices, leadership and organisational foundations.

We use the Charity Governance Code to inform and assess the support provided to organisations attending our one-to-one sessions and training. By incorporating its principles into our capacity-building work, we aim to ensure that organisations are well equipped to govern effectively, make informed decisions, manage risks and deliver their services responsible.

Although the Charity Governance Code is voluntary, we encourage organisations to use it as a framework for reviewing and strengthening their governance practices. We embed its principles into our one-to-one support and capacity-building training to help organisations identify areas for development, strengthen accountability and ensure they are well equipped to govern effectively and deliver their services.

The figures below reflect the support provided to organisations using the then seven principles of the Charity Governance Code. Although the revised Code was published on 3 November 2025, the figures below were recorded using the previous version. The new Code introduced the Foundation principle, which emphasises trustees' responsibility to invest the necessary time and care in understanding their charity, their responsibilities and their legal duties.

To support trustees' understanding of these areas, we organised an initial training session, **'The Role and Responsibilities of Trustees'** in collaboration with PWW Solicitors while awaiting further guidance and resources on the revised Code. Participants explored trustees' legal duties, good governance, common challenges faced by charity boards, and practical ways to strengthen decision-making and protect their organisations. These areas were also addressed through our one-to-one support, although they were not recorded as a separate category under the Foundation principle. **Looking ahead to the next reporting period, starting in April 2026,** we will develop peer-led Charity Governance Code discussion sessions exploring each of the revised Code's eight principles.

These sessions will enable organisations to share experiences, discuss governance challenges and learn from one another. We will also incorporate relevant guidance and resources into our workshops, discussions, and one-to-one support to help organisations understand and apply the principles in practice.
In the table below, we have grouped organisations supported according to their size and assessed against the then seven principles of the Charity Governance Code. This provides an overview of how our support has contributed to strengthening governance across organisations of different sizes and stages of development.

Type	Micro	Small	Medium	Other
Organisational Purpose	63	33	10	
Leadership	50	53	42	5
Ethics and Culture	73	43	20	
Decision Making Risk and Control	76	62	49	5
Board Effectiveness	93	56	30	2
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	39	28	13	
Openness and accountability	63	66	60	5

PRACTICAL SKILLS TRAINING

Practical Skills Training

Alongside one-to-one support, VAI delivered practical, skills-focused training in partnership with other organisations to help voluntary and community organisations develop their knowledge and skills. The sessions provided opportunities for shared learning, the exchange of ideas and stronger connections across the sector.

During the reporting period, **326 people participated in our training sessions, with 90% reporting increased knowledge or confidence in applying what they had learnt, based on participant feedback.**

Networking and partnership working were also encouraged through our training, events and one-to-one support. We advised organisations looking to establish or expand their activities to research existing services, identify opportunities for collaboration and consider how to avoid duplication in meeting local needs.

To help organisations develop their networks and explore the benefits of working together, we produced a *Tips for Networking and Partnership* booklet. We also invited a local organisation to share its experience of partnership working and the outcomes achieved.

Through these activities, VAI supported organisations to strengthen their skills, learn from others and explore opportunities to work collaboratively in responding to the needs of their communities.

Themes	Dates & Delivery Partner/s	Number of organisations attended
Peer-to-Peer Fundraising Support Groups These support groups created a trusted space for organisations to share experiences, learn from each other and explore collaboration. Every session includes time for networking. These discussions have helped participants approach fundraising with greater confidence and identify partnership opportunities.		
Delivered in-house	April 2025 (session 1)	7
	May 2025 (session 2)	Replaced by the Meet the Funder – see below
	Sept 2025 (session 3)	6
	Jan 2026 – NLCF and NL Waste Authority	38
	March 2026 (session 4)	13
Introduction to Project Management Through this training, participants developed practical skills and confidence in planning, managing and delivering projects effectively. The training covered stakeholder engagement, defining project objectives and scope, measuring outcomes, developing realistic project plans, managing teams and volunteers, and identifying and mitigating risks. Participants also shared experiences and gained practical tools and resources to apply their learning within their organisations.		
Delivered by VAI Associate Volunteer	April 2025 (2 sessions)	20
	September 2025 (2 sessions)	21
Introduction to Accounting for Charities and CICs The training helped participants develop their understanding of financial management, including keeping accurate financial records, understanding annual accounts and preparing budgets. It provided practical knowledge to help small charities and Community Interest Companies (CICs) manage their finances effectively, make informed financial decisions and meet their financial reporting responsibilities. Participants were also provided with a range of practical resources and templates to support them in applying what they had learnt and managing their organisations' finances more effectively.		
Delivered by Community Plus Accounting	May 2025	69 organisations registered to attend (online)
'Meet the Funder' and free Customer Relationship Management (CRM) Tool and AI Fundraising Platform Workshop Participants gained a better understanding of funders' priorities and practical tips for developing stronger funding applications. The event also introduced free customer relationship management (CRM) systems and AI tools to support digital fundraising and help organisations manage their fundraising activities more efficiently. Opportunities to connect with funders and peer organisations encouraged knowledge-sharing and partnership working, helping participants explore ways to		

strengthen their fundraising approaches and support the sustainability of their community work.		
June 2025 - National Lottery Community Fund, Local Initiatives Fund, Cripplegate, PLINTH (CRM and AI fundraising)		75 organisations registered to attend (in person)
Evidencing your impact and partnership working for small organisations This session provided a platform for small organisations to explore how to measure impact and work together. To sustain new connections, participants received a short guidance resource with practical tips on developing and maintaining effective partnerships		
June 2025 - LBI Evidence Islington		69 organisations registered to attend
The Role and Responsibilities of Trustees Participants developed a better understanding of trustees' legal duties and responsibilities, the principles of good governance and how to manage common challenges faced by charity boards. Delivered by PWW Solicitors, the session provided practical guidance on protecting both trustees and their organisations, strengthening decision-making and supporting effective governance. Participants also had the opportunity to ask questions relevant to their organisations, helping them feel better informed and equipped to carry out their governance responsibilities.		
Delivered by Pothecary Witham Weld Solicitors	March 2026	39 organisations registered to attend
Improving access to funding opportunities Access to funding is essential to the sustainability and development of VCFSE organisations. During the reporting period, VAI helped organisations identify relevant funding opportunities and strengthen their applications through accessible information, practical resources and tailored advice. We produced two updated funding booklets, bringing together a range of funding opportunities in one place to help local organisations identify suitable sources of funding more easily. We also collated and shared more than 35 funding updates via our news group throughout the year, providing organisations with regular information about available opportunities. Feedback from organisations highlighted the value of these updates in supporting their funding searches To help organisations research funding opportunities independently, we signposted them to the **Islington Funding Toolkit**, funded by Islington Council. This free, searchable database brings together local, regional, national and international funding opportunities, allowing organisations to search by funding type, area of work or beneficiary group. By encouraging organisations to use this resource, we helped them access funding information free of charge, identify suitable opportunities and plan for future funding applications. Alongside these resources, we reviewed funding applications and provided constructive feedback to help organisations strengthen their proposals. Where		

appropriate, we also advised groups on how to address gaps in their applications and prepare for future funding opportunities. Together, these activities helped organisations access relevant funding information, develop their fundraising knowledge and improve their ability to identify and pursue opportunities to support their work in local communities.		
Funding booklet (updated versions)	Apr and Oct 2025	To all members and newsgroup
Funding updates	At least twice per month	To all members and newsgroup
Funding Toolkit: raising awareness of this Islington council funded resource	April 25 – March 26	**372 Islington organisations registered** on the Funding Toolkit portal **10,285 visits to the portal during this period**

Partnerships and Collaborative Working

VAI works with local funders, infrastructure organisations and other partners to improve access to resources, advice and opportunities for VCFSE. By building and maintaining these relationships, we aim to ensure that local organisations can benefit from a wider range of support and make the most of the resources available to them.

We continued to work with local funding partners, including Cripplegate Foundation and Islington Giving, to support the needs of the local VCFSE sector and help organisations access relevant funding opportunities and support. These relationships help us understand local priorities and connect organisations with resources that can strengthen their work.

Our arrangement with Russell-Cooke continued to provide voluntary and community organisations with access to free 20-minute legal advice, helping them address legal queries and access specialist guidance.

Through these partnerships, VAI helps organisations access expertise, resources and opportunities beyond its own direct support. This collaborative approach strengthens the support available to the sector and helps local organisations make informed decisions, address challenges and build their capacity to deliver services to their communities.

NEW INITIATIVES

LBI EVIDENCE ISLINGTON

At the start of the year, we began to work more closely with LBI Evidence Islington, starting with a Training Needs Assessment to ascertain the level of interest in developing skills in community research and demonstrating and evidencing impact of VCFSE organisations. Over the summer, we received over 100 responses to the Training Needs Assessment survey, which was co-designed with the support of our LBI Evidence Islington colleagues.

Over a third of respondents were from organisations with an annual income of £25-500k, and 14% under £10k. Most common services delivered: care services including advice, health and wellbeing, family support, and community and neighbourhood support e.g. community centres, food banks, and advice, information and guidance.

There was overwhelming interest in networks/partnerships for sharing evidence with other VCFSE organisations, Islington council and universities. There was a similar level of interest in collaborating on research projects, with 83% wanting to partner with VCFSE organisations, 71% with Islington council, and 58% with universities.

There was consensus around the needs for networking/collaboration, centralised systems or shared platforms, and training, tools and support to strengthen research partnerships.

Perceived benefits of sharing data and insights:

- Improved services and targeting support
- Community empowerment and engagement
- Funding and policy influence

Support organisations need to share their research/insight more widely or make use of external research mostly related to legal and logistical barriers to data sharing, accessing research and a lack of infrastructure for this. Capacity and resource issues were another common theme.

Based on the feedback received, we will be developing a new capacity building programme with the support of the LBI Evidence Islington team in the following areas:

1. Capacity building to strengthen skills, motivation and knowledge to generate and use research data. Drop-in sessions, workshops, resources and research support will be provided
2. Data & Insights platform to help normalise the use and sharing of routine data, enabling organisations to use data in service design, making improvements and improving decision-making

3. Research partnerships with VCS & universities, empowering VCS and council colleagues to shape and engage research priorities through partnerships and co-design and co-lead bids for research and evaluation funding

OUR REACH: WHO WE ARE SUPPORTING

We supported the following types of groups and organisations with capacity building over the year:

Type	Amount
Micro organisations (Income under £10,000)	160 instances of support
Small organisations (Income between £10,000 - £100,000)	133 instances of support
Medium organisations (Income between £100,000 - £1m)	124 instances of support
Other: 2 large organisations (Income £1m plus)	10 instances of support
Total	**427 instances of support**

Case Study: Turning a Vision into a Growing Organisation

Voluntary Action Islington (VAI) works closely with local organisations to help them turn ideas into reality. This case study illustrates how tailored guidance and practical support helped a group establish their organisation, overcome initial barriers, and begin delivering impactful services in Islington.

When Melaine and her team from Long Story Short CIC, first considered starting their organisation, they had the passion and a vision to offer creative writing workshops to support wellbeing. However, they were unsure which legal structure would suit their plans and could not access funding or partnerships.

"We had so many ideas, but we were completely stuck at the first hurdle. We didn't know if we should be a charity, a CIC, or something else. Without a formal organisation, we couldn't apply for funding or build partnerships. It was frustrating because we were ready to help, but we couldn't move forward," said **Melaine, Director and Co-Founder of Long Story Short CIC.**

"With support from VAI, our team explored different legal structures and decided to register as a Community Interest Company, which aligned with our mission. VAI also provided practical guidance on setting up a bank account, securing a postal address, and accessing discounted spaces for meetings and workshops. This guidance was clear, practical, and incredibly encouraging. What once felt overwhelming became manageable and even empowering," Melaine added.
During the summer, the organisation delivered its first community project in partnership with Whittington Community Centre. Over ten weeks, participants explored various

creative writing genres, culminating in a printed publication now preserved in the Islington Archive.

"It was a huge success and a proud moment for us. We have already reapplied for funding to continue our collaboration into the new year. We are no longer just an idea. We are ready for what comes next," Melaine said.

VAI continued to provide guidance as the organisation grows. This included advice on strengthening governance and board oversight, exploring additional partnerships to expand reach and impact, and applying for appropriate funding streams to sustain and scale their creative writing workshops.

Through this ongoing support, Long Story Short CIC is now building sustainable operations while continuing to deliver meaningful outcomes for the community.

Case Study: VAI Peer to Peer Funding Support Group – Building Confidence, Collaboration and Funding success

The need for practical, accessible fundraising support has been a consistent theme in our work with local charities and CICs. Many organisations told us they lacked clarity on funder expectations, found application processes challenging, and were often working in isolation without opportunities to learn from peers or build connections.

In response, we developed the Peer-to-Peer Funding Support Group as a facilitated but participant-led space where organisations could share experiences, build confidence, and strengthen their fundraising practice together. What began as a small initiative with low attendance has, over six sessions, grown into a well-attended and trusted space. Participation has steadily increased, with many organisations returning regularly and engaging more openly each time. Confidence has grown alongside this, with participants increasingly contributing, asking questions, and applying learning directly to live funding bids.

The sessions have evolved from information-sharing into active, practical learning environments. Organisations are now using the space to work through real funding challenges together, such as how to evidence need, demonstrate community involvement, and approach co-production. As one participant shared: "Attending the Peer-to-Peer sessions gave me insight into what funders require and some very useful information around the right sources to use for statistical evidence and data. It made me consider more broadly potential partnerships and I made one new connection." **Director, The Bridging the Green**.

Bringing funders into the sessions as participants has further strengthened this learning, created open and honest dialogue and helped to clarify funding processes. This has led to tangible outcomes. One organisation reflected "I've been to three of the peer-to-peer sessions. The session where funders were invited was also useful to get first-hand feedback from the National Lottery team and the London Waste Authority. We recently heard that we had received a £20,000 grant from them, and we also received Aviva matching for Crowdfunder. Overall, I find the sessions useful, and I

always come away knowing something I did not know when I went in." **Islington Climate Centre.**

Following this feedback, the organisation also confirmed that they successfully secured an Awards for All grant from the National Lottery of £20,000.

Beyond fundraising skills, the sessions are creating a stronger sense of connection across the sector. Organisations are increasingly staying after sessions to continue conversations, share experiences, and explore opportunities to work together. This has led to practical collaboration, including organisations sharing space to deliver projects and supporting smaller groups to access venues and partnerships. There is also increased sharing of resources, knowledge, and opportunities, particularly around co-production, lived experience, and new funding approaches such as corporate partnerships and local initiatives.

Participants have highlighted the value of the practical, peer-led approach: "Excellent bid writing session providing insightful perspectives and innovative tips. More hands-on, practical training sessions would be particularly useful." **Senior Development Manager, Grants & Impact, Hillside Clubhouse.**

Follow-up engagement has reinforced this progress, with participants continuing to exchange resources, offer support, and express interest in presenting their work and developing partnerships in future sessions. As reflected after a recent session, "It was a fantastic and engaging discussion… great to see so many organisations openly sharing experiences and ideas, helping me feel part of a bigger network of organisations." **CEO, Home-start Camden & Islington.**

Through this work, organisations are moving from working in isolation towards greater confidence, collaboration, and shared learning. The VAI Peer-to-Peer Support Group is not only strengthening fundraising skills but is helping to build a more connected, supportive, and resilient voluntary sector in Islington.

"Since our one-to-one session, we have started to look into the funding sources you suggested and have been exploring suitable opportunities for our organisation. We have also had a number of successful funding applications, which has helped us continue and develop our work. The advice you gave us on where to find funding and how to approach applications has been very helpful and has given us a clearer direction moving forward." **Faisa Ahmed, Director, Galbur Foundation.**

STRATEGIC AIM 2: TO ENABLE AND STRENGTHEN VOLUNTEERING, SOCIAL ACTION AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

VOLUNTEER CENTRE SERVICES

Through our NAVCA nationally accredited Volunteer Centre, we ensure that Islington residents have access to a wide range of opportunities to make a difference in the area where they live, study or work through volunteering and/or social action.

VOLUNTEER BROKERAGE / MATCHING SUPPORT SERVICE

We continued to provide borough-wide volunteer brokerage services for residents and Volunteer Involving Organisations (VIOs) including

- Community Outreach with drop-in sessions provided by a team of Community Volunteering Advisors.
- Drop-in days on Mondays and Wednesdays conducted by a team of Community Volunteering Advisors
- Ongoing Team Kinetic customisation to provide a more accessible and effective online volunteer brokerage platform
- Working with VIOs to create volunteering roles and opportunities and uploading additional resources onto Team Kinetic.
- Raising awareness amongst VIOs of different EDI adjustments whilst recruiting and managing volunteers

Dates	Number of sessions	No of new volunteers / organisations signed up on our new platform
April – September 2025	**Outreach held at 7 events** / organisations e.g. Asylum Seekers project (Union Chapel), Progression Day (Adult Community Learning) and various food hubs like Cook for Good, Copenhagen Street.	**468 new volunteers signed up** on the new platform Team Kinetic (TK)
	117 volunteering opportunities available during reporting period	**114 new organisations registered**
Monthly newsletter sent to over 2000 residents re volunteering opportunities and the new platform & **monthly newsletter sent to 400 VIOs**		
Oct – March 2026	**Outreach held at 11 events /** organisations e.g. Residents Get Involved (LBI), Let's Talk (Age UK), Volunteering in the Community (Adult Community Learning), London Metropolitan University – Jobs and Volunteering Fair, Islington People's Rights, and various local community events.	**454 new volunteers signed up** on the new platform Team Kinetic (TK)

	161 volunteering opportunities available during reporting period	**24 new organisations registered**
	39 x 1:1 sessions with organisations	
Monthly newsletter sent to over 2000 residents re volunteering opportunities and the new platform & **monthly newsletter sent to 200 VIOs**		

PROVIDING ACCESS TO BEST PRACTICE RESOURCES FOR VOLUNTEER MANAGERS

Launch of our new Team Kinetic Volunteering Platform

We provided access to best practice resources to Volunteer Managers working within Volunteer Involving Organisations (VIOs). In April 2025, we launched our new Team Kinetic Volunteering Platform, which hosts additional resources for organisations working with volunteers.

VOLUNTEERING FAIRS

We continued to deliver volunteering fairs in the community in partnership with Volunteer Centre Camden (VCC) and Islington Council colleagues. 4 Volunteer fairs were held across the year with VCC:

April 2025 – January 2026	No of residents attending	No of Volunteer Involving Organisations (VIOs) attending
9 April 2025 (in person)	110	23
18 June 2025 (in person)	80	11
21 October 2025 (in person)	76	11
28 January 2026	55	9
25 March 2026	80	9

VOLUNTEER CENTRE WORKING COLLABORATIVELY

LBI Adult Community Learning (ACL) referrals

We are working in partnership with the ACL to increase referrals. We attend their progression days and have run various training session taking place at VAI:

- Volunteering in the Community, 3 Oct – 12 Dec 2025 (in-person)
- Employment Skills, Getting Work-Ready, 16 Jan – 13 Feb 2026 (in-person)
- Employment Skills, Getting Work-Ready, 27 Feb – 27 Mar 2026 (in-person)

OUR REACH

The number of residents we supported over the year

Total number registered over the last 12 months	922
Aged 16-24	188
Aged 25-64	698
Aged 65+	36
How many were from BAMER communities	570
How many were from the disabled community	137
Gender based registrations	63% Female 35% Male

The number of Volunteer Involving Organisations (VIOs) we supported over the year

Organisations supported to offer active volunteering opportunities over the last 12 months	173

The profile of the Volunteer Involving Organisations (VIOs) supported and the demographic profile of some of the communities they support

	Black and Global Majority	Disabled	LGBQT	Young People	Older People
16 Micro	3	10	2	8	7
21 Small	10	16	8	13	9
33 Medium	22	31	6	17	20
32 Large	11	37	6	28	14

CASE STUDY – Yari (name has been changed)

Yari, a local resident, was referred to us by her Wellbeing Coach from LBI's Bright Lives Service. Yari was experiencing depression, panic attacks, and a long break from employment. With a background in accessing mental health support, she wanted to reconnect with her community but lacked confidence after many years out of work.

After exploring her interests, Yari was placed at the Light Project Community Centre, supporting the Food Hub and reception. She began volunteering one day a week and gradually increased to three as her confidence grew. Her warmth, reliability, and lived experience made her a valued member of the team. She stated that, "Zena (the volunteer manager) has always been flexible and goes out of her way to help and get

me settled."

Volunteering helped Yari rebuild her communication skills and confidence, "Working in the community centre, you deal with a lot of people from a diverse community which has boosted my confidence and connection in the community."

Motivated to progress, she enrolled on Adult Learning courses to improve her IT and English. During an assessment, she was diagnosed with dyslexia. Although initially overwhelmed, supportive conversations with VAI staff helped her understand her learning needs and access the right adjustments. This empowered her to continue her studies with renewed self-belief.

Today, Yari volunteers weekly and attends English classes at her local library. She reports feeling less isolated, more connected, and more confident: "Before, I didn't go out of the house and didn't even know there was a community centre locally. Volunteering has built my confidence, and I've made friends who go on walks with me."

Yari is now preparing to shadow her Wellbeing Coach and pursue formal training, aiming to use her lived experience to support residents facing mental health challenges. She expressed her gratitude: "Thank you VAI for putting me in touch with this great opportunity. You believed in me and supported me. You are my coach and mentor."

Through volunteering, Yari has rebuilt her confidence, reduced her isolation, and taken meaningful steps toward her goal of becoming a Wellbeing Coach, demonstrating how the right support and opportunities can transform lives and strengthen communities

NEW INITIATIVES

COST OF LIVING SUPPORT: VCS PILOT PROGRAMME

Outreach to residents using Food Aid Provision: funded by Islington Council's Cost of Living (CoL) Support VCS Pilot Programme, delivered in partnership with Help on Your Doorstep (HOYD), Manor Gardens Welfare Trust, and Octopus Community Network

Key objectives:

- Increased engagement and access to support from those members of the community most at risk
- Co-produced and co-delivered easily accessible integrated pathways to both remedial and preventative services and activities – with 600 residents experiencing food insecurity receiving support to address social, economic and wellbeing issues; 150 residents with language barriers accessing support to reduce their debts and/or arrears; 15 community organisers and change makers recruited; 30 food aid users recruited and placed as volunteers in community settings

- Capacity for residents, volunteers and practitioners to tackle poverty, improve quality and life and increase resilience

This funding enabled VAI to undertake intensive outreach into Food Aid Hubs, bringing volunteering opportunities to residents directly within the Food Aid Hub Network. This also included increasing the capacity of Food Aid Hubs through the recruitment of residents accessing / not accessing food aid and want to support the food aid sector.

With residents accessing food aid support, our aim has been to improve their overall health and wellbeing by developing their confidence and skills through their volunteering experience, and through wrap around holistic support. We used the 5 Ways to Wellbeing Outcomes Framework to demonstrate distance travelled and the impact of volunteering on those using food aid provision.

We worked alongside our CoL delivery partners and our partnership with HOYD included outreach to 6 Food Aid Hubs, working with a team of Food Aid Hub Volunteer Facilitators (London Met students as part of their 70-hour work placements) to support referrals process.

Outcomes

We are very proud of what we achieved over the year, with the programme officially coming to an end at the end of July 25. During the 12 months:

- 107 residents relying on food aid provision registered to volunteer from a total of 261 residents engaged overall
- 67 residents had volunteer placement interviews, with 33 placed as volunteers within Food Aid settings (29) and the rest within other community organisations
- 59 residents accessed other services including HOYD for benefit and PIP assessments, and other services supported them with their debt and rent arrears, legal advice, and Islington Adult Community Learning to improve their literacy and digital skills, as well as taking up short courses around mental health and wellbeing offered by the Recovery College and Manor Gardens to get help with translation.
- 6 food aid facilitators were recruited (3 students from London Metropolitan University) of which 1 left after finding work
- 7 volunteers were supported into work

Local Wellbeing Networks (North, Central, South Islington)

The second element of our CoL funded programme was to continue the Local Wellbeing Networks, increasing the engagement and connectedness between Food Aid providers and the wider range of support services for residents. Our key achievements over the year included the following:

- 20 LWN meetings held, including a borough wide joint session
- Establishment of a LWN Advisory Group and four thematic subgroups (Employability, Financial Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing, the Environment).

- Over 215 organisations and residents engaged across North, Central, and South Islington.
- Establishment of targeted campaigns on mental health, financial wellbeing, employment, and the environment.
- Development of a mental health toolkit in partnership with Islington Public Health and a community garden project.
- Strong partnerships with food aid providers, statutory services, VCFSEs, and residents, with Food aid providers making up 15% of attendees; 26% of organisations attending support food aid providers; and 53% of meeting attendees are (also) Islington residents

CRIPPLEGATE / ISLINGTON GIVING – FOOD FUND PROJECT (12-month project from September 2025 – August 2026)

The Cripplegate Food Fund project originated in early 2025 following the Islington Food Partnership and Islington Giving Round 4 Food Fund grants, which supported 18 local food aid providers. As part of this funding process, organisations identified significant volunteer training needs across areas such as safeguarding, food safety, and inclusion.

Voluntary Action Islington (VAI), as the borough's accredited Volunteer Centre, was commissioned to design a training programme in response. The programme aims to strengthen volunteer capacity and support more sustainable and supportive community food provision across the borough.

We built upon the work with food aid providers as part of our Cost-of-Living programme through which we worked more closely with Islington's Food Aid provider's network to promote volunteering to residents accessing food aid.

Over the year, the Food Aid providers network told us about the complexity of issues residents accessing food aid provision face, and what additional support services residents need and these include: debt / benefit advice, education / training, employment support, housing advice / support, language support, legal advice, social wellbeing activities / support to reduce social

Over 12 months, we delivered / will deliver a comprehensive, accessible training programme to strengthen volunteer capacity, service delivery and volunteer retention and wellbeing.

Date	Training Theme	Delivered by
2 Oct 2025	Trauma Informed Practice	VAI staff
9-10 Oct 2025	Mental Health First Aid	Grassroots
19-20 Nov 2025	Mental Health First Aid	Grassroots
3 Oct–12 Dec 2025	Volunteering in the Community/Employability Skills	LBI Adult Community Learning
14 Jan–11 Feb 2026	Basic Food Hygiene (Level 1)	LBI Adult Community Learning
16 Jan–13 Feb 2026	Employment Skills, Getting Work-Ready	LBI Adult Community Learning
26 Jan 2026	Active Signposting	VAI staff
29 Jan 2026	Trauma Informed Practice	VAI staff
4 Feb 2026	Volunteer Recruitment (for staff)	VAI staff
27 Feb-27 Mar 2026	Employment Skills, Getting Work-Ready	LBI Adult Community Learning
21 April 2026 (to be delivered)	Trauma Informed Practice	VAI staff
22 April – 20 May 2026 (to be delivered)	Basic Food Hygiene	LBI Adult Community Learning
23 April 2026 (to be delivered)	De-escalation / Conflict Resolution	Crux
24 April – 22 May 2026 (to be delivered)	Employment Skills, Getting Work-Ready	LBI Adult Community Learning
8 May 2026 (to be delivered)	Safeguarding Awareness	LBI Safeguarding Lead
12 May 2026 (to be delivered)	Volunteer Recruitment (for staff)	VAI staff
13 May 2026	De-escalation / Conflict Resolution	Crux
5 June – 3 July 2026 (to be delivered)	Customer Service	LBI Adult Community Learning
13 July 2026 (to be delivered)	Safeguarding Awareness	LBI Safeguarding Lead
12 August 2026 (to be delivered)	De-escalation / Conflict Resolution	Crux

EXPANDING OUR VOLUNTEERING SERVICES

VOLUNTEERING TOGETHER FOR HEALTH

Funded by the City Bridge Foundation (Volunteer Plus Network, until August 25) and the NHS (from July '24 for 3 years), bringing together Volunteer Centres in Barnet, Camden, Enfield, Haringey and Islington and supported by London Plus.

Our collective priorities:

- Equality of access: building diversity of our volunteering population, focusing on current gaps: young people, young carers and working with inclusion health communities including asylum seekers. Support volunteering through our Core20PLUS population groups that are part of NHS England's strategy to reduce health inequalities across the UK. Core20 Plus communities refers to the most deprived 20% of the national population based on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) and additional population groups who experience worse-than-average health access, outcomes or experiences and may not captured by deprivation alone. They include ethnic minority communities, inclusion health groups such as vulnerable migrants, people with learning disabilities and autistic people, young carers, looked after children and care leavers.
- Improving volunteer experience: increasing access to volunteering and helping people find the right volunteering opportunity through a single place to search for NHS roles; creating flexible volunteering roles; creating/supporting best practice volunteer recruitment and management.
- Volunteering into work - developing pathways from volunteering into work-supporting current work in this space, including the WorkWell Partnership and Volunteer to Careers.

Our collective outcomes include developing a system-wide integration of volunteer services across North Central London including providers of primary, secondary and tertiary health services to:

- Increase volunteering levels and diversity. Build diversity of our volunteering population, focusing on current gaps: young people, young carers, and working with inclusion health communities including asylum seekers.
- Improve the volunteer experience through volunteer management good practice
- Increase access to volunteering and help people find the right volunteering opportunity through a single place to search for NHS roles; creation of flexible volunteering roles; create/support best practice volunteer recruitment/management
- Embed volunteering in priority health and social care workstreams (e.g. how volunteering can support prevention)
- Meet need of NHS Charities / Trusts Volunteer Programmes
- Sharing of innovative volunteering approaches via our established Network
- Increasing involvement of volunteers in decision-making
- Developing pathways from volunteering into work including WorkWell and Volunteer to Career

ANNUAL VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARDS AND AGM – 6 NOVEMBER 2025

We hosted our annual Islington Volunteer of the Year Awards celebration at the Great Hall, London Metropolitan University. It was a wonderful event celebrating Islington volunteers. **We had 180 nominations put forward by organisations, with 200 attendees on the day.** Our guest speakers included: Victoria Lawson, CEO, Islington Council and Mayor of Islington, Cllr Jason Jackson

Our Volunteer of the Year Awards were again sponsored by Doubletree by Hilton Islington, who provided the prizes, and we had local media coverage, raising the profile of volunteering locally. The awards were announced by the Mayor of Islington, Cllr Jason Jackson. The winners were:

Category	Winner	Organisation
Older Volunteer of the Year 60+	Friday Bayo Osa Emmanuel	Say it Loud Club
Young Volunteer of the Year 16-25	Sarah Drouazi	Minority Matters
Volunteer of the Year 26-60	Chiann Wright	Hillside Clubhouse
Volunteering Team of the Year	Arachne Women's Support Welfare Advice Volunteer Team	
Pat Haynes Memorial Trustee of the Year	Barbara Ford	The Parent House

OUR VOLUNTEERS AND STUDENT PLACEMENTS

In addition to our trustees, VAI had teams of volunteers assisting us in delivering some of our core activities. In total we had 16 residents volunteering with us and supporting the

- Running of our Resource Centre
- Assisting with our Volunteer Centre resident brokerage / matching service
- Delivering vital capacity building / organisational development support,
- Local Wellbeing Network meetings and events
- Cost-of-Living outreach programme
- Staff away day

Volunteer Centre Community Volunteering Advisors	**Nisreen Abou Henda** **Marlene Lall** **Yosef Mesfin** **Richard Manson** **Tynan Parker** **Larysa Koltsova** **Nadia Gordon**
These volunteers arranged face-to-face meetings with potential volunteers, supported the Volunteer Fairs and through outreach promoted volunteering	

opportunities across Islington. By volunteering for VAI, the volunteers gained valuable experience and skills, developed more confidence and self-esteem.
VAI Resource Centre **Maria Georgiou, Amy Lakwera, Katarzyna (Kat) Leczycka** supported our Resource Centre operations.
VCFSE Capacity building and organisational development **Joyce Florell** has been volunteering alongside our VCFSE Development Manager and providing support to local community groups and charities. **Richard Singleton** (Volunteer Associate, Project Management) has delivered project management sessions to colleagues from across our community groups and charity sector.
Local Wellbeing Networks **Nadia Gordon and Clara Nolan** supported the delivery of our monthly Local Wellbeing Network meetings and events in the Central, North, and South of Islington
VAI Governance **Ed O'Connor and Naomi Lever** (Volunteer Associates) facilitated a half-day session with staff, focusing on a review of 2024-25 and our achievements against our strategy; looking ahead including ideas on how we could develop a more effective business model between now and 2027.

We are extremely grateful for all the help and support that our volunteers have provided over the year.

STRATEGIC AIM 3: TO FACILITATE STRONGER PARTNERSHIP WORKING ACROSS THE VCFSE TO INFLUCENCE LOCAL POLICY, DECISION-MAKING AND SYSTEM GROWTH

VCFSE ADVISORY GROUP CONVENED BY VAI

We continued to work closely with our Advisory Group made up of the following organisations and networks from across the borough: Age UK Islington, Brickworks Community Centre, Cloudesley, Cripplegate, Healthwatch Islington, Help on Your Doorstep, Citizens Advice Islington, Hillside Clubhouse, IBAA, Islington Faiths Forum, Islington Mind, Islington Refugee and Migrant Forum, KWEMO, Manor Gardens Welfare Trust, Nafsiyat Intercultural Therapy Centre, Octopus Community Network, St Lukes Community Centre, Stuart Low Trust, The Peel. We extended an invitation to ADHD Action Network to join the group.

Our CEO facilitated / contributed to 13 Advisory Group meetings focusing on:

16 & 30 April 2025	Council restructure: move of LBI Community Partnerships Team into Adult Health and Social Care
7 July 2025	Developing a sector-led blueprint for improved voluntary and community sector (VCS) coordination, governance, and engagement in Islington.
7 August 2025	LBI / VCFSE Strategy
10 September 2025	Developing Islington's Neighbourhood Model of Health and Care
11 September	• LBI VCFSE Strategy • Anti-hate crime safety guidance for VCS staff and volunteers • Neighborhood Model of Health and Care • VCFSE representation and engagement model
14 October 2025	New LBI Crisis and Resilience Fund: developing priorities for the Islington Scheme
16 October 2025	• Neighbourhood Model • Islington Council's Scrutiny Committee: Supporting Islington's Residents to Financial Resilience • Thriving Places (led by Mutual Ventures)
20 November 2025	LBI / VCFSE Strategy workshop
3 December 2025	Islington Council; Peer Challenge organised by Local Government Association
11 December 2025	• Advisory Group ToR • Neighbourhood Model of Health and Care • LBI Core Grant programme • Local elections
20 January 2026	Advisory Group current challenges; defining shared purpose
04 March 2026	Terms of Reference and next steps

LBI / VCFSE Strategy- Creating a more equal Islington

Over the spring and summer of 2025 (May to July), VAI and London Metropolitan University were tasked to facilitate 12 workshops with VCFSE organisations to explore how to harness the strengths of the VCFSE and Islington council services so that together they can make a bigger difference to Islington residents and how to do so against a backdrop of continuing and deepening austerity and uncertainty.

We themed the sessions around sub-sectors and delivered the following workshops across the Community Centre Network, London Met University and online:

Workshops	Dates
Advocacy, Advice & Guidance (Including Housing & Homelessness)	21 May
Environment & Sustainability	22 May
Islington VCFSE Leaders Collaborative (touchpoint/check in for progress on the Strategy)	12 June
Children, Young People & Family Services	25 June
Community Centres (Including Food Aid)	26 June
LBI Grant Funded & Commissioned Organisations	2 July
VAI Advisory Group	3 July
Community Development, Empowerment & Resilience (Including Volunteering & Social Action)	8 July
Community Safety	9 July
Arts & Culture	10 July
Mental & Physical Health	16 July
Infrastructure & Network Support	17 July

What was the **most striking about the findings is the fact that the same issues and challenges came up in every workshop**. That is not to say that everyone agreed on everything, each organisation has different drivers and interests. Nevertheless, the fact that the same themes recurred time and again suggests that these views are widely and deeply held and therefore need to be acknowledged in the strategy.

A Shared Ambition: this strategy is an opportunity to strengthen the relationship between the council and the VCFSE sector, so that together we can make a bigger impact, delivering the change Islington residents want and need: improving services and increasing opportunity for local people, particularly those from underserved and marginalised communities.

Our vision: Islington Council and the VCFSE sector have a shared ambition: to improve the lives and well-being of Islington's residents, create thriving communities and ensure everyone can live happy, healthy and fulfilled lives. By strengthening our partnership and collaborating more effectively we can harness our respective strengths and assets to create a more equal future for Islington and improve outcomes for local

people. The challenges we face cannot be solved by the council or the VCFSE alone. The work on this strategy commits us to working in equal partnership, sharing our vision and aligning our actions to make a real and tangible difference to people's lives.

Our aim is to work together to:

- reduce poverty and inequality and prevent illness in Islington, with a focus on early intervention, prevention and the wider determinants of health;
- build services around people and place to ensure residents receive the right support at the right time, particularly those who are currently marginalised and underserved;
- enable people to participate in their community and have a say in decisions that affect their lives and neighbourhoods.

Creating the conditions and building the blocks for a strong strategic partnership

A Strategy Oversight Group was set up bringing together senior council officers and leaders of key VCFSE organisations (from VAI-hosted Advisory Group) to provide strategic leadership and accountability, this includes:

- early strategic conversations, sharing information, power and decision-making;
- agreeing a shared vision and priorities for the partnership, with clear outcomes for joint action;
- reducing barriers to and creating opportunities for partnership working beyond the group itself; and
- regular review, learning about what works and how to strengthen and improve partnership over time.

The VCFS Strategy Oversight Group is the starting point for engagement, achieving our shared ambition will mean:

- Reaching out to VCFSE organisations across the borough, particularly those from and working with the most marginalised communities,
- giving them a voice and a say in the development of the strategy and its workstreams;
- building active networks based on shared identity and purpose.

For more detailed information about the strategy please click on this link to our website Islington VCFSE Strategy & Local Resources - Voluntary Action Islington

Over the coming year we will work with colleagues from across the sectors to develop a programme that will support delivery of the VCFSE Strategy by developing and testing a clearer, more inclusive and more equitable way for the Council and the VCFSE to work together as strategic partners, while co-developing a practical VCFSE Strategy delivery plan and supporting implementation of a small number of agreed priorities.

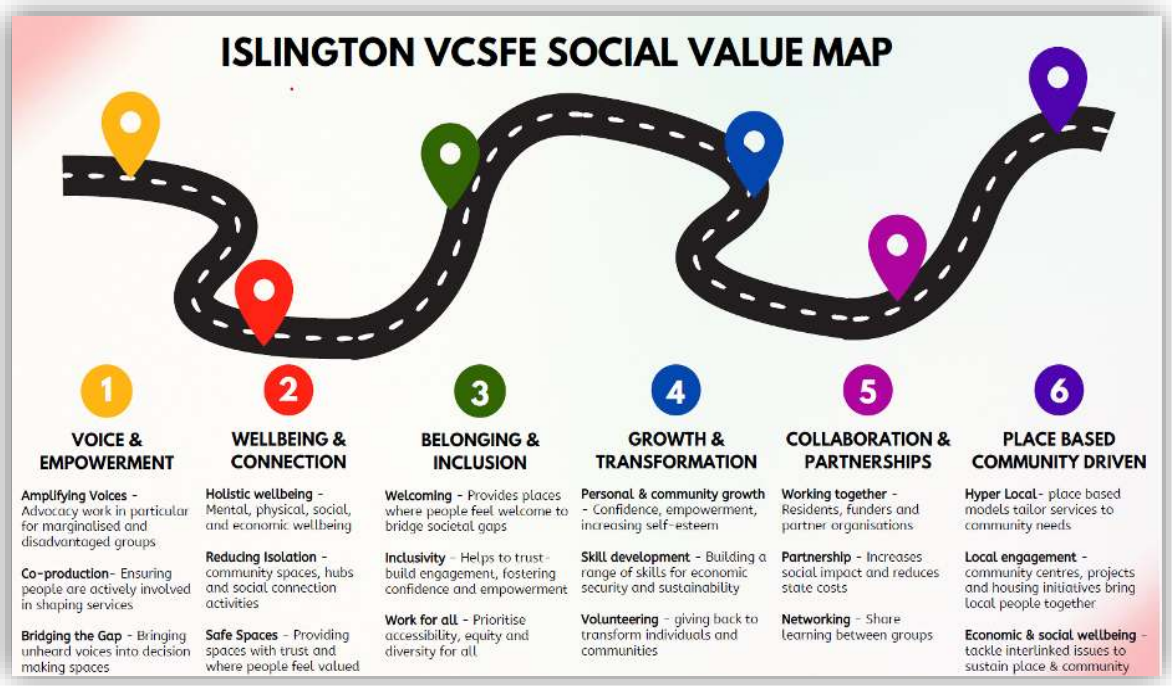
OUR ANNUAL CONFERENCE – 12 JUNE 2025 LONDON MET UNIVERSITY

The role and value of the VCFSE over the last 50 years (based on NCVO's The Road Ahead report)	**Dr Ellen Bennett,** Senior Lecturer & Postgraduate Research Tutor, Sheffield Business School **Dr Beth Patmore,** Associate Professor in Public Service Innovation, Nottingham Trent University
Social Value of Islington's VCFSE (part 2)	**Dr Ellen Bennett & Dr Beth Patmore**
VCFSE evidence and research needs and how the LBI Evidence Islington programme can support evidence use across the sector (update)	**Tsigereda Tekletsadik,** VCFSE Development Manager, VAI **Cliff Joseph,** Community Development Manager – Local Wellbeing Networks, VAI
By 2030, what would make us a stronger sector, and how can we make greater impact: • What will we have achieved • What obstacles will we have overcome • What are the practical things we need to do to get there **Call to action: what would your organisation like to help drive forward**	**Dr Belinda Pratten,** Course Lead, BSc Leadership in Communities, Co-lead, Charities and Social Enterprise Clinic, London Metropolitan University **Islington VCFSE Leaders Collaborative Members**

After our conference, we followed up with an Islington VCFSE Leaders Collaborative event on the 18 November 2025 (online), to provide an update on work following the conference. We covered the following agenda items:

- LBI Evidence Islington – Sabrina Jantuah, LBI, Evidence Islington presented the results from the Training Needs Assessment that took place over the summer
- LBI/VCFSE strategy – Dr Belinda Pratten presented the feedback from what VCFSE groups told us they would like to see to strengthen partnership working between the council and VCFSE organisations
- Social Value – Dr Beth Patmore and Dr Ellen Bennett collated all the feedback from the VCFSE and devised a framework describing VCFSE social value.

We are extremely grateful to our colleagues Dr Ellen Bennett, Dr Beth Patmore and Dr Belinda Pratten, all of whom are so dedicated to the VCFSE and went above and beyond to support VAI and the sector. The social value road map overleaf was created by Dr Ellen Bennett and Dr Beth Patmore and was based on what the sector told us.



LOCAL REPRESENTATION

We continue to play a key strategic role in many borough-wide and neighbourhood initiatives that are focused on bringing about positive change for local people and communities

Our CEO represented the VCFSE at the following LBI board and partnerships:

- Bright Lives Alliance Partnership
- Cost of Living Board (now the Tackling Poverty Steering Group)
- Evidence Islington Strategic Delivery Board
- Islington Borough Partnership (focusing on the Integration of Health & Social Care and the development of the Neighbourhood Model of Health and Care
- Islington Neighbourhood Health Steering Group

NORTH CENTRAL LONDON REPRESENTATION

Our CEO represented Islington's VCFSE at the following North Central London (NCL) boards and partnerships:

- NCL VCSE Alliance – which includes Council's for Voluntary Services (CVSs) and service providers from Barnet, Camden, Enfield, Haringey, Islington
- VAI's Business Development Manager has been representing VAI at London Plus's Council for Voluntary Services (CVS) Director's Network monthly meetings.

STRATEGIC AIM 4: TO RUN VAI RESPONSIBLY, EFFECTIVELY AND EFFICIENTLY AS A MODEL OF GOOD PRACTICE

STAFF AND VOLUNTEER TEAM

Our most important assets are our people, and we ensure that we invest in them and their professional development. We have put in place opportunities to access comprehensive training opportunities, with regular reviews of their learning and training needs.

OUR GOVERNANCE

We have a solid governance structure with trustees with diverse experience and skills. During the year we:

- Carried out a Trustee skills and diversity audit
- Recruited 4 new trustees to bring skills and experiences to the board where we had gaps.
- Created a new HR and Remuneration Subcommittee to oversee the revision of our HR policies and procedures

IMPROVING OUR INTERNAL INFRASTRUCTURE TO IMPROVE THE WAY WE WORK WITH AND SUPPORT ISLINGTON'S VCFSE SECTOR

With thanks to the National Lottery for funding to develop our infrastructure, we have continued to develop 3 large projects which will in turn help our VCFSE sector membership. Our Chief Operating Officer has been working on the following:

- Developing the first phase of a new Beacon CRM: streamline processes, centralise information and improve communication. We had initially embarked on developing a Salesforce CRM, but we found it to not be viable for VAI, but we took the learning and applied it to developing a Beacon CRM system instead
- New Website: development of the new website is underway, with good progress being made by our preferred supplier
- New Volunteering Platform Team Kinetic: completed in previous year

ORGANISATIONAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- We carried out an audit of all VAI policies including identifying gaps
- We are working on creating a plan to update and address gaps identified

OPERATING A THRIVING RESOURCE CENTRE

Our Resource Centre continues to generate funds to support the development of the local VCFSE and provides a model of co-location and efficient use of resources. During the year, we continued to provide desk and room hire facilities to charities and community groups.

At the end of the financial year, we had 39 desk spaces occupied by 13 charitable organisations in total. We are very pleased to announce that Cloudesley, a local funder joined us in June 2025.

We carried out a phase of improvements to the Resource Centre to improve the working environment for hosted organisations and those using our conference and meeting room facilities, adding new meeting rooms, and glass doors to aid noise reduction. The large meeting rooms were painted at no cost to us by Structure Tone as part of their CSR commitments.

OUR ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

The trustees review, on a quarterly basis, progress made in delivering services that we are implementing to achieve outcomes in our strategic plan. This review is undertaken at the same time as our quarterly financial review. In addition, regular reports are produced for each of our funders and evaluations are undertaken as projects come to an end. The main beneficiaries of our services are VCFSE organisations providing services and activities in the London Borough of Islington and individuals interested in volunteering in the borough.

KEY PROJECTS AND HOW THESE WERE FUNDED

Our main sources of income are grants from statutory bodies and charitable trusts and foundations, together with rental income generated from our Resource Centre. The breakdown of our funding from statutory bodies and charitable trusts and foundations during this year:

Funder / income stream	Type of grant and for what services	£ Contribution
Islington Council	Core Grant – capacity building / organisational development	£40,000
	Core Grant – Volunteer Centre services	£35,000
	Evidence Islington	£23,280
	VCS Representation Model	£15,000
	Young Islington	£5,000
	LBI / VCFSE Strategy	£45,702
North Central London Integrated Care Board	NCL VCS Alliance: to represent Islington	£5,850
Cripplegate / Islington Giving Food Fund	Outreach to Food Aid Providers Network to promote volunteering	£27,526
NHS England via London Plus and Volunteer Centre Camden	To develop volunteering infrastructure to support residents to access volunteering opportunities within the NHS	£46,437

FINANCIAL REVIEW 2026

The Statement of Financial Activities shows annual net expenditure (an annual net loss) before gains on investments of £27,606 (2025: £56,676 loss). That comprised a surplus of £651 on restricted funds (2025: £16,814 loss) and a loss of £28,257 on unrestricted funds (2025: £39,862 loss). The loss on unrestricted funds was the effective operating loss for the year. Although a loss was recorded, this was a planned and managed outcome, resulting from the release of designated funds to undertake office refurbishment works. The loss had been anticipated by the Board and was marginally lower than budgeted.

After incorporating the annual £19,887 gain in investment values (2025: £5,509 gain), total net expenditure (the annual loss) reduced to £7,719 (2025: £51,167 loss), which represents a significant improvement.

Annual income increased from £502,780 to £565,209 in 2025-26. Voluntary Action Islington's Resource Centre generated the largest source of income, as it has done in recent years. The London Borough of Islington (LBI) continued to support VAI's core activities under the Strategic Borough-wide Partners and Strategic Volunteering Partners (capacity building and volunteering grants). LBI also contributed additional income totalling £88,982 to support the VCFSE to engage in council-led initiatives, with the support of VAI.

At the year end all funds totalled £297,490 (2025: £305,209) of which £264,729 (2025: £273,099) were unrestricted. General funds, which are the free reserves of the charity, totalled £185,642 (2025: £189,473).

Further to the decision made by trustees in September 2015, Voluntary Action Services, the subsidiary trading company established by Voluntary Action Islington in 2013 remains a dormant company.

RESERVES

On 31 March 2026, Voluntary Action Islington held unrestricted funds totalling £264,729 (2025: £273,099).

The free reserves (those unrestricted funds that have not been designated for specific purposes) totalled £185,642 (2025: £189,473). The reserves policy requires a balance of free reserves equivalent to no less than 3 months (25%) of annual expenditure. The current balance of £185,642 is equivalent to 30% (2025: 32%) of annual budgeted expenditure and is therefore compliant with the policy.

Funds have been designated from reserves for specific purposes where costs are not incurred on an annual basis. At year end those funds totalled £79,087 (2025: £83,626), designations having been made to invest in building improvements and to support future relocation from the Resource Centre, including managing the cost of dilapidations.

In addition to its unrestricted funds the charity held £32,761 of restricted funds (2025: £32,110), the use of which is restricted by funders to specific activities to support VAI's members and develop the voluntary sector in Islington.

INVESTMENT POLICY AND PERFORMANCE

This year, Voluntary Action Islington implemented the investment policy as agreed in October 2022. The objectives of the policy:

- To use free reserves to produce the best financial return within an acceptable level of risk
- When there are opportunities to do so to invest a proportion of our reserves in the development of new products and services where we assess that it is realistic that these will generate funds to sustain themselves or when, by investing in products and services delivered by our subsidiary trading company, we assess that this investment could produce a long-term income stream for Voluntary Action Islington
- When there are opportunities to do so we will seek investment opportunities that further our charitable objectives, whilst at the same time producing a financial return

VAI's listed investments continued to generate valuable income throughout the year in line with the investment policy. Investment values increased from £152,985 to £158,494 during the year resulting in annual unrealised increase of £19,887 (2025: £5,509). The investments continue to be held with the expectation that values will rise in the future, as they have done for the current year to date.

GOING CONCERN

The trustees consider that there are no material uncertainties about Voluntary Action Islington Limited's ability to continue as a going concern.

RISK MANAGEMENT

The Trustees adopt a structured approach to risk appraisal and mitigation as part of the charity's ongoing development and governance responsibilities. The VAI Risk Register is reviewed on a quarterly basis to ensure that documented risks are monitored, emerging risks are identified promptly, and appropriate mitigating actions are in place.

The Trustees recognise that effective risk management is essential to safeguard the charity's assets, reputation, and ability to deliver its objectives. Risks are assessed according to their likelihood and potential impact, with priority given to those rated highest. Mitigating actions are regularly monitored and updated to reflect changes in the external environment and the charity's operations.

VAI's major risks at present are:

- Fundraising returns - The fundraising environment remains challenging, which may impact income generation. We are actively pursuing diversified funding streams and increasing the number of funding applications.
- Capacity and use of resources, including tangible fixed assets – Staffing levels, resource allocation, and the effective management of tangible fixed assets are closely monitored to ensure the charity can meet its objectives. Staff and trustees review staff capacity, resource deployment, and asset utilisation to maximise efficiency and long-term sustainability.
- IT and disaster recovery – Robust systems and procedures are in place to minimise the risk of IT failures or data breaches. We have cyber insurance, and a disaster recovery plan is being developed.
- Inflation and increases in our Resource Centre operating costs (annual repairs and maintenance, building upgrades and service charges) have risen considerably and continue to rise year on year, and this is creating pressures on our budgets, and reserves. We are pursuing capital funding from a range of sources to help mitigate these pressures. Maintaining appropriate levels of premises designated funds is also a decision that the Trustees made during the year. Regular budget monitoring, prioritising essential repairs, and reviewing supplier costs are the additional measures taken to mitigate major risks.

The Trustees are satisfied that appropriate systems and processes are in place to manage these risks and to support the long-term sustainability of the charity. The main factors likely to affect the financial performance of the Charity are a reduction in demand for our desk and room hire provision to VCFSE sector organisations, and a loss of funding. We mitigate these risks by improving the facilities at the Resource Centre. We plan to maintain our financial resources by careful financial management and by continuing to provide excellent public benefit in conjunction with our partners and seeking funding for our projects and charitable services to the local VCFSE sector.

We have ensured continuity in our Resource Centre provision by negotiating a new 15-year lease from October 2024.

PLANS FOR FUTURE PERIODS

We are committed to continuing as an independent organisation bringing together civil society in Islington and representing the interests of local VCFSE organisations to the main statutory agencies. We will continue to participate in Islington-led boards that influence how Islington Council plan and make decisions that impact on communities, particularly at a local level, as well as North Central London.

We will continue to work with VCFSE sector organisations to help diversify funding and other support. We will encourage collaboration and joint funding bids, which include smaller local organisations in service delivery. As part of this approach, we will continue to work with the VCFSE sector by providing networking and partnership opportunities. We will continue to work with other local, regional and national organisations that provide capacity building and organisational support to their

membership and continue to work with and explore how our collective efforts can be made more strategic.

We plan to continue to support the effective management of volunteers and to support organisations through a mix of one-to-one support and training workshops.

We will continue to make applications for grants and to submit tenders for contracts, which are related to our core functions.

Our Resource Centre is an important community asset for local VCFSE sector organisations and will continue to be an important source of income supporting our core offer to local organisations. We reinvest all the income generated into the community through our services. We will continue to take account of our environmental impact in our management of this facility.

Our website and social media are well used resources, and we are committed to continuing to develop the use of these facilities over the coming period.

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The charity is constituted as a company limited by guarantee and is therefore governed by a memorandum and articles of association. This was last amended in November 2013. The provisions of the governing document have been complied with during the year under review.

The trustees serve on a Board of Trustees. They consist of at least three and not more than 12 individuals, all of whom must be authorised representatives of organisations or an individual member. Each Trustee shall retire from office at the end of three years commencing from the date of his or her appointment. A retiring Trustee may be reappointed but a Trustee who has served for nine years in total must take a break from office and may not be reappointed until the anniversary of the commencement of his or her break from office.

At the end of the year, there were 8 trustees with plans to recruit 4 further trustees. The trustees keep under review gaps in experience and expertise represented on the board, and during the past year a skills audit of current trustees was carried out. Induction meetings are organised for trustees to brief them about the work of the charity and trustees attend occasional conferences and courses to keep up to date about relevant developments.

The charity is organised through the Board of Trustees to whom the Chief Executive is answerable, through the Chair. The Chair, Vice Chair and Treasurer are appointed from amongst the trustees at the first meeting after the AGM. These officers serve for a period of one year.

The Chief Executive is responsible for the management of staff in 3 core functions: Volunteer Centre, Resource Centre and capacity building and organisational development. The CEO and staff have responsibility for specific areas of work and

reporting to funders. The Chief Executive is not legally a director for the purposes of company or charitable law. The Charity is a member of the National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA), and NCVO. These memberships provide information and resources that help us to assist voluntary and community organisations serving the community in Islington.

The Charity has a subsidiary trading company, Voluntary Action Services Limited (VAS). This is a private company limited by share capital and wholly owned by Voluntary Action Islington. To date VAS has only traded in online learning courses. At its meeting on 9th September 2016 the trustees decided that this company should cease trading on 30th September 2016 and should be retained as a dormant company, for potential future trading. Emma Hutchins remains a director of both companies. As VAS is currently dormant, there are no plans as yet to appoint new Directors.

Several of the trustees of Voluntary Action Islington are employed by or trustees of local voluntary organisations that are members of Voluntary Action Islington. These organisations benefit from the services of Voluntary Action Islington. A register of trustee interests is maintained and was updated during the year. Any potential conflict of interest is declared at the beginning of each trustee's meeting.
The charity's staff, including management personnel, are paid on the national NJC pay scale. The pay of the Chief Executive is set by the trustees, who take account of the performance of the Chief Executive; the complexity, scale of responsibilities and expected level of external influence of the Chief Executive role; an assessment of current Chief Executive pay levels within the charity sector; comparisons with the pay levels of other CVS Chief Executives in London; the salary range of an equivalent officer within the local authority; and the overall financial position of the organisation.

STATEMENT OF THE TRUSTEES' REPONSIBILITIES

The trustees (who are also the directors of Voluntary Action Islington Ltd for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the Trustees Annual Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charitable company for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards and statements of recommended practice have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statement
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in operation

The trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. The trustees are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

The trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the corporate and financial information included on the charitable company's website. Legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

Members of the charity guarantee to contribute an amount not exceeding £10 to the assets of the charity in the event of winding up. The total number of such guarantees on 31st March 2026 was 568. The trustees are members of the charity, but this entitles them only to voting rights. The trustees have no beneficial interest in the charity.

STATEMENT AS TO THE DISCLOSURE TO OUR INDEPENDENT EXAMINERS

In so far as the trustees are aware:

- there is no relevant information of which the charitable company's independent assessor is unaware; and
- the trustees have taken all steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the independent assessor is aware of that information

INDEPENDENT EXAMINERS

Goldwins Ltd were re-appointed as the Independent Examiners of the charitable company during the year and have expressed their willingness to continue in that capacity.

The trustees' annual report has been approved by the trustees on 26 October 2026 and signed on their behalf by:

Navinder Kaur
Company Secretary

Registered office:
200a Pentonville Road
London N1 9JP

Independent examiner's report

To the members of Voluntary Action Islington Limited

For the year ended 31 March 2026

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of the Company for the year ended 31 March 2026.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity's trustees of the Company (and also its directors for the purposes of company law) you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 ('the 2006 Act').

Having satisfied myself that the accounts of the Company are not required to be audited under Part 16 of the 2006 Act and are eligible for independent examination, I report in respect of my examination of your charity's accounts as carried out under section 145 of the Charities Act 2011 ('the 2011 Act'). In carrying out my examination I have followed the Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5) (b) of the 2011 Act.

Independent examiner's statement

Since the Company's gross income exceeded £250,000, I confirm that I am qualified to undertake the examination because I am a member of the ICAEW, which is one of the listed bodies.

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the Company as required by section 386 of the 2006 Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records; or
3. the accounts do not comply with the accounting requirements of section 396 of the 2006 Act other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination; or
4. the accounts have not been prepared in accordance with the methods and principles of the Statement of Recommended Practice for accounting and reporting by charities applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102).

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Kalman Deutsch

Kalman Deutsch ACA
Goldwins
Chartered accountants
75 Maygrove Road
West Hampstead
London NW6 2EG

29 October 2026

Voluntary Action Islington Limited

Statement of financial activities (incorporating an income and expenditure account)

For the year ended 31 March 2026

	Note	Restricted £	Unrestricted £	**2026 Total £**	Restricted £	Unrestricted £	2025 Total £
Income from:							
Donations and legacies	2	-	76,690	**76,690**	-	99,691	99,691
Charitable activities	3						
Community Development		23,280	-	**23,280**	47,089	-	47,089
Member Services and Support		65,702	-	**65,702**	500	-	500
Sector Development and Volunteering		82,813	305,828	**388,641**	54,064	290,721	344,785
Investments		-	10,896	**10,896**	-	10,715	10,715
Total income		171,795	393,414	**565,209**	101,653	401,127	502,780
Expenditure on:							
Charitable activities							
Community Development		34,147	6,391	**40,538**	42,419	5,821	48,240
Member Services and Support		61,913	26,157	**88,070**	1,000	65,248	66,248
Sector Development and Volunteering		75,084	389,123	**464,207**	75,048	369,920	444,968
Total expenditure	4	171,144	421,671	**592,815**	118,467	440,989	559,456
Net (expenditure) income before net gains (losses) on investments		651	(28,257)	**(27,606)**	(16,814)	(39,862)	(56,676)
Net gains (losses) on investments	9	-	19,887	**19,887**	-	5,509	5,509
Net (expenditure) income for the year	7	651	(8,370)	**(7,719)**	(16,814)	(34,353)	(51,167)
Transfers between funds		-	-	**-**	-	-	-
Net movement in funds		651	(8,370)	**(7,719)**	(16,814)	(34,353)	(51,167)
Reconciliation of funds:							
Total funds brought forward		32,110	273,099	**305,209**	48,924	307,452	356,376
Total funds carried forward	14	32,761	264,729	**297,490**	32,110	273,099	305,209

All of the above results are derived from continuing activities. There were no other recognised gains or losses other than those stated above. Movements in funds are disclosed in note 14 to the financial statements.

The notes on pages 44 to 58 form part of these financial statements.

Voluntary Action Islington Limited (Limited by guarantee)

Balance sheet

Company No. 01913555

As at 31 March 2026

	Note	**2026** **£**	2025 £
Fixed assets			
Tangible assets	8	**33,087**	11,626
Investments	9	**178,382**	159,253
		211,469	170,879
Current assets			
Debtors	10	**26,825**	32,615
Cash at bank and in hand		**107,249**	147,543
		134,074	180,158
Liabilities			
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	11	**(48,053)**	(45,828)
Net current assets		**86,021**	134,330
Net assets	13	**297,490**	305,209
Funds	14		
Restricted funds		**32,761**	32,110
Unrestricted funds:			
Designated funds		**79,087**	83,626
General funds		**185,642**	189,473
Total funds		**297,490**	305,209

These accounts have been prepared in accordance with the special provisions of Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.

For the year ended 31 March 2026 the company was entitled to exemption under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.

No members have required the company to obtain an audit of its accounts for the year in question in accordance with section 476 of the Companies Act 2006.

The directors acknowledge their responsibility for complying with the requirements of the Act with respect to accounting records and for the preparation of accounts.

Approved by the trustees on 22 September 2026 and signed on their behalf by:

Jorge Llorens
Treasurer

Craig Burgess
Chair

The notes on pages 44 to 58 form part of these financial statements.

Voluntary Action Islington Limited

Statement of cash flows

For the year ended 31 March 2026

	Note	**2026**	**2026**	2025	2025
		£	**£**	£	£
Net cash provided by (used in) operating activities	15		**(17,783)**		(73,759)
Cash flows from investing activities:					
Dividends from investments		**10,896**		10,715	
Sale (purchase) of fixed assets		**(34,165)**		(13,210)	
Sale (purchase) of investments		**-**		-	
Cash provided by (used in) investing activities			**(23,269)**		(2,495)
Change in cash and cash equivalents in the year			**(41,052)**		(76,254)
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year			**148,301**		224,555
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year	16		**107,249**		148,301

1 Accounting policies

1a Basis of preparation

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) - (Charities SORP FRS 102), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) and the Companies Act 2006.

Voluntary Action Islington meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS 102. Assets and liabilities are initially recognised at historical cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy or note.

1b Going Concern

The trustees consider that there are no material uncertainties regarding the Charity's ability to continue as a going concern.

No key judgements have been made by the charitable company which have a significant effect on the accounts.

The trustees do not consider that there are any sources of estimation uncertainty at the reporting date that have a significant risk of causing a material adjustment to the carrying amounts of assets and liabilities within the next reporting period.

1c Income

Income, including income from government and other grants, whether ‘capital’ grants or ‘revenue’ grants, is recognised when the charity has entitlement to the funds, any performance conditions attached to the income have been met, it is probable that the income will be received and that the amount can be measured reliably.

Grants are credited to incoming resources when they are receivable as the charity's own money, unless they are for activities that relate to a specific future period, in which case they are deferred to that period.

Income received under contracts for services which cross over the year end are recognised in the financial statements in line with the percentage of completion of the contract at the year end.

Income received in advance of the provision of a specified service is deferred until the criteria for income recognition are met.

Distributions from listed investments are included when receivable and the amount can be measured reliably by the charity; this is normally the date on which the holding is first quoted ex dividend or the end date of the period for which it is accrued as notified by the fund manager.

1d Fund accounting

Unrestricted funds are available to spend on activities that further any of the purposes of the charity. Designated funds are unrestricted funds of the charity which the trustees have decided at their discretion to set aside to use for a specific purpose. Restricted funds are donations which the donor has specified are to be solely used for particular areas of the charity’s work or for specific projects being undertaken by the charity.

1. Accounting policies (continued)

1e Expenditure and irrecoverable VAT

Expenditure is recognised once there is a legal or constructive obligation to make a payment to a third party, it is probable that settlement will be required and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably. Expenditure is classified under the following activity headings:

- Costs of raising funds comprise of trading costs and the costs incurred by the charitable company in inducing third parties to make voluntary contributions to it, as well as the cost of any activities with a fundraising purpose.
- Expenditure on charitable activities includes the costs of services and support to members and developing volunteering and the local voluntary sector undertaken to further the purposes of the charity and their associated support costs.

Irrecoverable VAT is charged as a cost against the activity for which the expenditure was incurred.

1f Allocation of support costs

Resources expended are allocated to the particular activity where the cost relates directly to that activity. However, where costs cannot be directly attributed, they have been allocated to activities on a basis consistent with their use of resources.

Premises are allocated proportionate to floor space occupied by each activity as follows:

Community Development	1.1%
Member Services and Support	2.8%
Sector Development and Volunteering	95.2%
Support costs	0.9%
Governance costs	0.0%

Other costs of administration are allocated per capita VAI staff and other occupants of the Resource Centre as follows:

Community Development	2.5%
Member Services and Support	6.3%
Sector Development and Volunteering	89.4%
Support costs	1.8%
Governance costs	0.1%

Support and governance costs are re-allocated to each of the activities on the following basis which is an estimate, based on staff time, of the amount attributable to each activity:

Community Development	7.3%
Member Services and Support	18.7%
Sector Development and Volunteering	74.0%

Governance costs are the costs associated with the governance arrangements of the charity. These costs are associated with constitutional and statutory requirements and include any costs associated with the strategic management of the charity's activities.

1g Operating leases

Rentals payable under operating leases, where substantially all the risks and rewards of ownership remain with the lessor, are charged to the statement of financial activities on a straight line basis over the length of the lease.

1. Accounting policies (continued)

1h Tangible fixed assets

Items of equipment are capitalised where the purchase price exceeds £2,000. Depreciation costs are allocated to activities on the basis of the use of the related assets in those activities. Assets are reviewed for impairment if circumstances indicate their carrying value may exceed their net realisable value and value in use.

Depreciation is provided on a straight-line basis at rates calculated to write down the cost of each asset to its estimated residual value over its expected useful life. The depreciation rates in use are as follows:

Furniture, Fixtures and Equipment	4 years
Leasehold property	The lesser of 15 years or the remaining lease term

1i Listed investments

Investments are a form of basic financial instrument and are initially recognised at their transaction value and subsequently measured at their fair value as at the balance sheet date using the closing quoted market price. Any change in fair value will be recognised in the statement of financial activities.

1j Debtors

Trade and other debtors are recognised at the settlement amount due after any trade discount offered. Prepayments are valued at the amount prepaid net of any trade discounts due.

1k Cash at bank and in hand

Cash at bank and cash in hand includes cash and short term highly liquid investments with a short maturity of three months or less from the date of acquisition or opening of the deposit or similar account.

1l Creditors and provisions

Creditors and provisions are recognised where the charity has a present obligation resulting from a past event that will probably result in the transfer of funds to a third party and the amount due to settle the obligation can be measured or estimated reliably. Creditors and provisions are normally recognised at their settlement amount after allowing for any trade discounts due.

2 Income from donations and legacies

	Restricted	Unrestricted	**2026 Total**	2025 Total
	£	£	**£**	£
London Borough of Islington	-	75,000	**75,000**	75,000
Islington Mayor - Charity of the Year	-	-	**-**	22,578
Other grants and similar income, under £5,000 each	-	1,690	**1,690**	2,113
	-	76,690	**76,690**	99,691

Voluntary Action Islington benefit from a Section 106 Agreement that provides accommodation at a peppercorn rent. As it is not possible to put an accurate value to this, it has not been recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities.

3 Income from charitable activities

	Restricted	Unrestricted	**2026 Total**	2025 Total
	£	£	**£**	£
London Borough of Islington				
Evidence Islington	23,280	-	**23,280**	-
Local Wellbeing Networks	-	-	**-**	47,089
Sub-total for Community Development	23,280	-	**23,280**	47,089

	Restricted	Unrestricted	**2026 Total**	2025 Total
	£	£	**£**	£
London Borough of Islington				
VCS representation model	15,000	-	**15,000**	-
Young Islington	5,000	-	**5,000**	-
London Borough of Islington via London Metropolitan University				
VCS Strategy	45,702	-	**45,702**	-
Donations and similar income, under £10,000 each	-	-	**-**	500
Sub-total for Member Services and Support	65,702	-	**65,702**	500

	Restricted	Unrestricted	**2026 Total**	2025 Total
	£	£	**£**	£
Community resource and other service income	-	305,468	**305,468**	272,242
Islington Giving via Cripplegate Foundation				
Food Fund Capacity Building	27,526	-	**27,526**	-
The National Lottery Community Fund				
Strengthening Islington's Voluntary and Community Sector	-	-	**-**	30,000
NHS England via London Plus and Volunteer Centre Camden				
Volunteering for Health Core Partnership	46,437	-	**46,437**	19,031
Donations and similar income, under £10,000 each	8,850	360	**9,210**	23,512
Sub-total for Sector Development and Volunteering	82,813	305,828	**388,641**	344,785
Total income from charitable activities	171,795	305,828	**477,623**	392,374

4 Analysis of expenditure

4a Current year

	Charitable activities			Governance costs	Support costs	**2026 Total**	2025 Total
	Community Development £	Member Services and Support £	Sector Development and Volunteering £	£	£	**£**	£
Staff costs (note 5)	31,740	67,741	245,144	1,915	26,294	**372,834**	350,193
Agency staff	75	-	480	93	20,408	**21,056**	21,371
Other staff costs	178	492	1,410	8	130	**2,218**	2,181
Direct activity costs	582	240	25,116	-	-	**25,938**	13,396
Premises	956	2,433	83,940	43	739	**88,111**	94,811
Depreciation	-	-	-	-	12,704	**12,704**	4,891
Admin and ICT	1,395	2,790	51,194	48	1,625	**57,052**	56,360
Compliance	-	-	-	8,904	3,998	**12,902**	16,253
	34,926	73,696	407,284	11,011	65,898	**592,815**	559,456
Governance costs	980	2,511	7,520	(11,011)	-	**-**	-
Support Costs	4,632	11,863	49,403	-	(65,898)	**-**	-
Total expenditure 2026	40,538	88,070	464,207	-	-	**592,815**	559,456

5b Prior year

Direct expenditure	40,945	55,148	393,685	14,104	55,574	**559,456**
Support and governance costs allocated	7,295	11,100	51,283	(14,104)	(55,574)	**-**
Total expenditure 2025	48,240	66,248	444,968	-	-	**559,456**

Support and governance costs have been allocated on the basis of staff hours engaged in each activity (note 1f).
Of the total expenditure, £421,671 was unrestricted (2025: £440,989) and £171,144 was restricted (2025: £118,467).

5 Analysis of staff costs, trustee remuneration and expenses and key management

Staff costs were as follows:

	2026	2025
	£	£
Salaries and wages	**321,449**	307,832
Redundancy and termination costs	**2,797**	-
Social security costs	**30,363**	25,693
Employer's contribution to defined contribution pension schemes	**18,225**	16,668
	372,834	350,193
Agency costs	**21,056**	20,371
	393,890	370,564

One employee received employee benefits (excluding employer pension) between £60,000 and £69,999 during the year (2025: No employee).

The total employee benefits including pension contributions and employer's national insurance of the key management personnel were £67,009 (2025: £59,892).

The charity trustees were not paid or received any other benefits from employment with the charity in the year (2025 £nil). No charity trustee received payment for professional or other services supplied to the charity in the year (2025: £nil) and no trustees were reimbursed expenses (2025: none).

Staff numbers:

The average number of employees (head count based on number of staff employed) during the year was 10 (2025: 9).

The average number of employees (full time equivalent) during the year and by activity was as follows:

	2026	2025
	No.	No.
Community Development	**0.6**	0.8
Member Services and Support	**1.6**	1.2
Sector Development and Volunteering	**4.9**	5.0
Support and governance	**0.5**	0.5
	7.6	7.5

6 Taxation

The charitable company is exempt from corporation tax as all its income is charitable and is applied for charitable purposes.

7 Net income (expenditure) for the year

This is stated after charging:

	2026	2025
	£	£
Depreciation	**12,704**	4,891
Board of Trustees - indemnity insurance	**911**	889
Operating lease charges	**19,902**	22,395
Independent Examiner's remuneration	**3,800**	3,300

8 Tangible fixed assets

	Furniture, Fixtures and Equipment	Leasehold property	**2026 Total**
	£	£	**£**
Cost			
At 1 April 2025	100,203	129,160	**229,363**
Additions in year	34,165	-	**34,165**
Disposals in year	(3,566)	-	**(3,566)**
At 31 March 2026	130,802	129,160	**259,962**
Depreciation			
At 1 April 2025	88,577	129,160	**217,737**
Charge for the year	12,704	-	**12,704**
Eliminated on disposal	(3,566)	-	**(3,566)**
At 31 March 2026	97,715	129,160	**226,875**
Net book value			
At 31 March 2026	**33,087**	**-**	**33,087**
At 31 March 2025	11,626	-	11,626

All of the above assets are used for charitable purposes.

9 Fixed asset investments

	2026	2025
	£	£
Listed investments (note 9a)	**178,381**	159,252
Investment in subsidiary company (note 9b)	**1**	1
	178,382	159,253

9a Listed investments

	2026	2025
	£	£
Analysis of movement of investments		
Market value at start of year	**158,494**	152,985
Disposals at market value	**-**	-
Realised gains / (losses)	**-**	-
Unrealised gains / (losses)	**19,887**	5,509
Market value at year end	**178,381**	158,494
Cash instruments and cash held for reinvestment	**-**	758
Fair value at year end	**178,381**	159,252
Historical cost	**157,841**	158,599

The investments comprise two UK Common Investment Funds.

9b Investment in subsidiary company

VAI beneficially owns the entire share capital of Voluntary Action Services Limited (a company limited by share capital, company no. 8612449 (England and Wales)), through which VAI's commercial trading previously took place. In September 2016 the decision was taken to suspend trading through the company. The company remained dormant at 31 March 2026.

The share capital and reserves of the subsidiary are not material and therefore no consolidated accounts have been prepared. Disclosure is confined to this note to the accounts.

	2026	2025
	£	£
Investment in Voluntary Action Services Ltd at cost	**1**	1

At 31 March 2026 VAI held one share of £1, being the entire share capital of the trading company.

Relevant financial information regarding Voluntary Action Services Ltd is as follows:

	2026	2025
	£	£
Assets	**1**	1
Liabilities	**-**	-
Total funds	**1**	1

10 Debtors

	2026	2025
	£	£
Trade debtors	**13,262**	18,941
Other debtors	**1,676**	2,277
Prepayments	**11,887**	11,397
	26,825	32,615

11 Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	2026	2025
	£	£
Tax and social security costs	**7,892**	7,242
Trade creditors	**19,711**	28,929
Other creditors	**-**	732
Accruals	**9,440**	8,075
Deferred income (note 11)	**11,010**	850
	48,053	45,828

Deferred income

	2026	2025
	£	£
Balance at the beginning of the year	**850**	760
Amount released to income in the year	**(850)**	(760)
Amount deferred in the year	**11,010**	850
Balance at the end of the year	**11,010**	850

Deferred income comprises various Resource Centre income and one grant received in advance (2025: Resource Centre income received in advance).

12 Related party transactions

Craig Burgess was both a trustee of VAI and Chief Operating Officer of City Year at various times in both 2025-26 and 2024-25. City Year paid VAI rental and other charges of £18,146 in 2025-26 and £21,188 in 2024-25.

No donations outside the normal course of business and no restricted donations were received from related parties in the period. (2024-25: None received)

13 Analysis of group net assets between funds

13a Current year

	Restricted funds £	Designated funds £	General funds £	**Total funds £**
Tangible fixed assets	-	33,087	-	**33,087**
Investment assets	-	36,000	142,382	**178,382**
Net current assets	32,761	10,000	43,260	**86,021**
Net assets at 31 March 2026	32,761	79,087	185,642	**297,490**

13b Prior year

	Restricted £	Designated £	General £	**Total £**
Tangible fixed assets	-	11,626	-	**11,626**
Investment assets	-	36,000	123,253	**159,253**
Net current assets	32,110	36,000	66,220	**134,330**
Net assets at 31 March 2025	32,110	83,626	189,473	**305,209**

14 Movements in funds

14a Current year

	At the start of the year £	Incoming and gains £	Outgoing and losses £	Transfers £	**At the end of the year £**
Restricted funds:					
Children and Young People's Voluntary Sector Forum	1,509	-	-	-	**1,509**
Food Fund Capacity Building	-	27,526	(13,223)	-	**14,303**
LBI Evidence Islington	-	23,280	(23,280)	-	**-**
Local Wellbeing Network	10,867	-	(10,867)	-	**-**
Strengthening Islington's VCFSE sector	19,734	-	(17,054)	-	**2,680**
NCL VCSE alliance	-	5,850	(5,850)	-	**-**
VCS Strategy partnership	-	45,702	(45,702)	-	**-**
VCS Representation model	-	15,000	(15,000)	-	**-**
Trailblazers	-	3,000	(1,500)	-	**1,500**
Volunteering for Health	-	46,437	(37,457)	-	**8,980**
Young Islington	-	5,000	(1,211)	-	**3,789**
Total restricted funds	32,110	171,795	(171,144)	-	**32,761**
Unrestricted funds:					
Designated funds:					
Building improvements	36,000	-	(5,224)	(20,776)	**10,000**
Relocation	36,000	-	-	-	**36,000**
Fixed assets	11,626	-	(12,704)	34,165	**33,087**
Total designated funds	83,626	-	(17,928)	13,389	**79,087**
General funds	189,473	413,301	(403,743)	(13,389)	**185,642**
Total unrestricted funds	273,099	413,301	(421,671)	-	**264,729**
Total funds	305,209	585,096	(592,815)	-	**297,490**

14 Movements in funds (continued)

14b Prior year

	At the start of the year £	Incoming and gains £	Outgoing and losses £	Transfers £	**At the end of the year £**
Restricted funds:					
Children and Young People's Voluntary Sector Forum	2,009	-	(500)	-	**1,509**
Conferences and events	-	533	(533)	-	**-**
Enabling Volunteering for Migrants	-	5,000	(5,000)		**-**
Local Wellbeing Network	6,197	47,089	(42,419)	-	**10,867**
Strengthening Islington's VCFSE sector	40,718	30,000	(50,984)	-	**19,734**
Volunteering for Health	-	19,031	(19,031)		**-**
Total restricted funds	48,924	101,653	(118,467)	-	**32,110**
Unrestricted funds:					
Designated funds:					
Building improvements	25,000	-	(12,541)	23,541	**36,000**
ICT infrastructure development	4,000	-	-	(4,000)	**-**
Relocation	72,000	-	-	(36,000)	**36,000**
Fixed assets	3,307	-	(4,891)	13,210	**11,626**
Total designated funds	104,307	-	(17,432)	(3,249)	**83,626**
General funds	203,145	406,636	(423,557)	3,249	**189,473**
Total unrestricted funds	307,452	406,636	(440,989)	-	**273,099**
Total funds	356,376	508,289	(559,456)	-	**305,209**

14c Movements in funds (continued)

Purpose of restricted funds

Children and Young People's Voluntary Sector Forum	Funds provided by the London Borough of Islington to support activities by the Children's Voluntary Sector Forum.
Conferences and events	Contributions from supporters towards the costs of the VCFSE conference held in partnership with London Met University and LBI and other smaller thematic events.
Enabling Volunteering for Migrants and Refugees	To promote and enable volunteering for asylum seekers in Islington.
Food Fund Capacity Building	To deliver a training programme to staff and volunteers working across Islington's VCFSE Food Aid Network.
LBI Evidence Islington	To engage Islington's VCFSE in LBI's Evidence Islington initiative, including a Training Needs Assessment.
Local Wellbeing Network	As part of Islington Council's Cost of Living Programme, VAI have been funded to continue to deliver Local Wellbeing Networks, to improve resident access to holistic services by increasing collaboration between Food Aid providers and local services.
NCL VCSE alliance	To represent Islington's VCFSE at the NCL VCSE Alliance, and sub groups of NCL's Integrated Care Board (ICB).
Strengthening Community Resilience in Islington	To increase community preparedness for emergencies, funded by GLA and London Communities Emergencies Partnership. Funds distributed via London Plus.
Strengthening Islington's VCFSE sector	To improve VAI's internal infrastructure in order to collaborate with our local VCFSE sector more effectively. Funded by the National Lottery Communities Fund.
VCS Strategy partnership	To engage Islington's VCFSE in the development and implementation of Islington Council's new VCFSE strategy.
VCS Representation model	To widen VCFSE representation across Islington Council led boards and partnerships and develop a model of good practice.
Trailblazers	To strengthen relationships between Islington's VCFSE and LBI's emergency planning teams, and Borough Resilience Forum.
Volunteering for Health	To deliver a system-wide volunteer infrastructure, build diversity of our volunteering population, increase access to volunteering and support volunteering into work.

14c Movements in funds (continued)

Young Islington	To support Islington's VCFSE to engage with and benefit from LBI's Local Youth Transformation Pathfinder (LYTP) programme.

Purpose of designated funds

Building improvements	A fund to be used to improve VAI's Resource Centre so that it remains an up to date facility that is attractive and welcoming venue to local charities and community organisations.
ICT infrastructure development	A fund to invest in essential improvements to the ICT infrastructure of the Resource Centre. Discontinued in 2025.
Relocation	A fund to be built up over the 15 years of the current premises lease so that VAI is in a position to manage its liabilities, and to seek alternative premises if required, at the end of the lease in October 2039.
Fixed assets	To cover the future depreciation of Voluntary Action Islington's fixed assets originally paid for from unrestricted funds.

15 Reconciliation of net income / (expenditure) to net cash flow from operating activities

	2026	2025
	£	£
Net movement in funds for the reporting period (as per the statement of financial activities)	**(7,719)**	(51,167)
Depreciation	**12,704**	4,891
Interest, rent and dividends from investments	**(10,896)**	(10,715)
(Gains) / losses on investments	**(19,887)**	(5,509)
(Increase) / decrease in debtors	**5,790**	(2,463)
Increase / (decrease) in creditors	**2,225**	(8,796)
Net cash provided by / (used in) operating activities	**(17,783)**	(73,759)

16 Analysis of cash and cash equivalents

	At 1 April 2025	Cash flows	Other changes	**At 31 March 2026**
			£	£
Cash at bank and in hand	147,543	(40,294)	-	**107,249**
Cash held by investment managers	758	(758)	-	**-**
Total cash and cash equivalents	148,301	(41,052)	-	**107,249**

17 Operating lease commitments

The charity's total future minimum lease payments under non-cancellable operating leases is as follows for each of the following periods

	Equipment	
	2026	2025
	£	£
Less than one year	**19,622**	19,622
One to five years	**21,377**	40,999
Over five years	**-**	-
	40,999	60,621

18 Contingent liability

Under the terms of the lease for its current premises Voluntary Action Islington is liable for the costs of restoring the property to its original condition, including removal of all fixtures and fittings, if so required by the landlord when yielding up the property at the end of the lease term. The current lease expires in October 2039. The extent of the works that will be required and the consequent cost cannot reasonably be estimated at this time and so no provision has been made for this in the accounts.

19 Company limited by guarantee

Voluntary Action Islington is a company limited by guarantee and accordingly does not have a share capital.

Every member of the company undertakes to contribute such amount as may be required not exceeding £10 to the assets of the charitable company in the event of its being wound up while he or she is a member, or within one year after he or she ceases to be a member.