

VoluntaryActionIslington

Dear Colleagues

The future of Voluntary Action Islington

Voluntary Action Islington brings together local voluntary and community organisations to cooperate with each other and with local statutory agencies to reduce poverty and improve health and education. Historically we have provided a range of services to support this function, helped by financial support from the local authority and other statutory agencies.

However, as you will be aware, we have had to reduce the scale of our activities significantly in the past few months, as a significant amount of project funding has come to an end alongside additional cuts in funding from statutory agencies.

You may also be aware that Islington Council has recently taken a decision to review its future funding of third sector support functions, including those that are currently provided by Voluntary Action Islington. We understand that this review will also consider which organisations should provide any services that the council does decide to fund in the future.

We believe that it is absolutely vital in the current economic and political environment for existing and emerging voluntary and community sector organisations to have access to high quality, proactive support, delivered by organisations that are independent of statutory sector bodies.

Therefore, in the very difficult circumstances that we and our members face today we want to make sure that the reduced funding that Voluntary Action Islington has is used to the best possible effect in terms of supporting voluntary and community organisations in the borough.

We also need to think about what being a member of Voluntary Action Islington should mean, going forward: what services should members receive free of charge and which would they be willing to pay for as statutory funding comes to an end; and what roles should members play in sustaining the future of the local voluntary sector and Voluntary Action Islington itself?

Over the summer period we will be carrying out a far-reaching review of the services we provide, which will be driven by the views of our members.

Over the next few weeks our trustees will be arranging to visit a representative sample of local organisations to discuss the position facing their services users and their organisation and the kinds of support they most need from Voluntary Action Islington. If you do not hear from us and would like an opportunity to talk our trustees then please email Mike Sherriff: mike.sherriff@vai.org.uk. We will not be able to visit every single organisation in the borough but will do our best to cover as many as possible.

In addition we are asking all our members to complete an on-line survey. Please do visit our website and complete the survey at:

Voluntary**Action**Islington

www.surveymonkey.com/s/VAl_services_review

We would also like our members to tell the council about their experiences of the services provided by Voluntary Action Islington. Some of the elected members we speak to claim that they only ever hear negative stories about Voluntary Action Islington. Whilst we acknowledge we are not perfect (who is?) and that there is always room for improvement, we know that many organisations have benefited from the help we provide, whether it be in terms of training, help with fundraising, capacity building or volunteer brokerage. If you are one of those organisations please tell councillors and council officers what you think when you speak or write to them.

Remember that Voluntary Action Islington is *your* organisation, so please help us to make sure the council makes its decisions on the basis of facts and not fiction.

Please also note that we are still currently providing a volunteer brokerage service, capacity building support which prioritises support for small groups, help with managing community buildings, hosting forums and networks and opportunities for networking.

Also, as specialist projects have come to an end we have put many of the resources that were developed on our web site : www.vai.org.uk

Please do not hesitate to contact us with feedback about services provided by Voluntary Action Islington that you have used.

We look forward to hearing from you

Yours sincerely



Mike Sherriff
Chief Executive



Andy Murphy
Chair