

Annual Report



Voluntary**Action**Islington





Annual Report 2017-18

Introduction From The Chief Executive

This has been an exciting year for Voluntary Action Islington, as we started to develop our new strategic plan and prepared for change. During the summer, we carried out a review of our core capabilities and implemented an organisational restructure, that our trustees believed would position the organisation for future growth and development. This year, we developed a new Theory of Change map for the VAI, assessing our core objectives and activities, and we placed local communities at the very heart of our ambitions. We anticipate that this will enable us to measure the impact of our efforts in a more strategic way, and demonstrate the value of our work.

As funding for infrastructure support organisations continues to diminish, we have had to position ourselves to ensure that we are able to continue our support for the local voluntary and community sector. We will do this by working in partnership with local groups and ensuring that we all continue to grow together. Ultimately, our vision is of a vibrant civil society that drives local action and positive change for everyone in Islington.

In the meantime, VAI staff have continued to work hard and ensure that we deliver the highest standard of advice and support to our membership. This Annual Report highlights the ways in which VAI has supported the sector to achieve its goals in the past year.

Guljabeen Rahman, Chief Executive





Ensuring that our members are well informed about opportunities to sustain and develop their work

During the year our formal membership increased to 506. We have 3,057 followers on twitter, an increase of 12% over the year. The Volunteer Centre now has 1,883 followers, an increase of 21% by the end of the year. We now send out monthly newsletters, which had an average open rate of 29.4%. Our website provides a range of information and resources to assist with running an organisation. There were 29,768 visits to our website during the year, with an average of 2,481 visits each month.

We ensure that our members are well informed about funding opportunities, including opportunities to tender for local contracts, as soon as we are made aware of them. We have held two briefings during the year about funding opportunities

– one from the Big Lottery Fund and Cloudesley, attended by 60 people, and another from the Arts Council. As a result of both these briefings those attending indicated an increase in knowledge about the relevant funding sources.

We published a revised version of our Funding Booklet for local organisations in June and then in January, and updates were emailed throughout the year. We continued to provide advice about funding at our surgery sessions for local organisations. We continued to host the funding database “Open 4 Communities” with London Borough of Islington on our website and can be accessed by all VAI members. Over 177 groups are currently registered to use this, and they receive regular funding updates from the site.

“The Support from Voluntary Action Islington Capacity Building Essentials project has helped us to be able to secure more funding as we had 2 successful applications. The project helped us to develop a business plan and a fundraising strategy and these added more weight to our work, this is important and the support has been a strong guide for us.”

Wezenet Haile, CLSS

We now provide our members with information about, and access to, a wide range of sources of pro-bono support. This includes information on our website about sources of specialist and pro-bono help. We work with the BIG Alliance in Islington and others to provide expert advice on subjects such as financial planning and web design.

During the year we provided face to face support to 40 organisations, and telephone and email advice to 46 local organisations about running their organisation. This included advice about registering as a charity, funding, recruiting trustees and starting a charity.



Upper Street Association (USA) approached us for support with updating their constitution. They had applied to Veolia for match funding to carry out much needed repair works to the boundary wall of Compton Terrace Gardens; they had already secured funding from London Borough of Islington. USA had progressed to the second stage, however, Veolia couldn't consider their application further due to their constitution not meeting Veolia's requirements. We met with the trustees and supported them to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). As we successfully registered them with the Charity Commission in a very short period of time, we ensured that they met the deadlines set by Veolia.

"That was a great meeting this morning. Thank you for being so helpful with everything!"
Julia (Trustee)

"You were incredibly helpful and patient with us and we were so impressed by your extensive knowledge of the sector. Thank you so much for your support."

Joanie and Julia (Trustees)

Al-Asharaf Women and Children's Welfare Association has been operating in Islington for over 20 years and from Jean Stokes Community Centre since 2007. They run drop-in sessions on Wednesdays with a packed programme which includes Tai Chi, healthy lunch and workshops on topics like 'online safety for families'. The trustees approached us for support with developing their policies and procedures, increasing their funding and applying to register with the Charity Commission. They also asked if they could use VAI's address for correspondence, as they did not have access to a secure postbox at their usual premises. We supported the trustees to access funding from the Local Initiatives Fund and to submit the application to the Charity Commission, responding to the additional information requests. They also now have their own secure postbox at VAI.

"I wanted to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation for your continued support. It really means a lot. They replied to your own email, before we even sent the draft, extending the deadline to July 4th."

Mana Abbas (Trustee)

Taking a leading role in developing the voluntary sector and volunteering in Islington

Volunteers play a vital part in enabling local voluntary organisations to pursue their charitable purposes. Voluntary Action Islington is the accredited Volunteer Centre for Islington. We recruited volunteers online, at our twice weekly drop-ins and by running stalls and taking part in over 4 volunteering fairs and several community and local college events.



“Was very busy, so obviously well promoted which is great and made it worthwhile for me. Room set up was good and snacks were appreciated!”

“Very friendly staff and other orgs. Felt very welcome.”

“I wasn’t sure initially whether the location was a little tucked out of the way but to my surprise there was a good flow of visitors and definitely worth attending. Thank you.”

“I think the ‘match maker@ service is a very good idea. It’s good to see lots of people from the volunteer centre on hand to help.”

This year we received continuation funding to deliver a third year on our project funded by the City Bridge Trust, working with local organisations to improve their volunteer management and maximise the potential from volunteer involvement. There are 15 organisations on the programme at any time, and they benefit from advice and workshops covering subjects such as volunteer induction and supervision.



“At the start of the Strengthening Volunteering Project, Healthwatch Islington felt that they could significantly improve the way they recruited and inducted volunteers. Through participating in the Strengthening Volunteering Project’s training sessions, Healthwatch was encouraged to reassess the way the organisation approaches involving new volunteers. Healthwatch have now changed their practice and instead of accepting volunteer applications throughout the year, volunteers are now recruited into specific projects and roles where they then receive our induction training package of 3 sessions and any skills training required. Healthwatch are now also gathering more feedback from volunteers to help develop the organisation further.”

Jennifer Kent, Volunteer and Projects Manager

We continue to celebrate and promote volunteering. We have a section on our website with examples of the difference that volunteers are making to life in Islington. This year there were 54 entries to our Volunteer of the Year Awards and, including our Team category, over 200 volunteers were nominated in total. The 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 Voluntary Action Resource Centre on Pentonville Road provides a model of co-location and efficient use of resources. During the year several new organisations have started to rent desks at the centre and we continue with a full programme of bookings for meetings, conferences and training. We use a cloud system in order to reduce our electricity consumption and the detrimental impact on the environment. We have started to consider options for the long term, when the lease on our current premises comes to an end in October 2024.

Voluntary Action Islington encourages local organisations to collaborate with each other and with relevant statutory and private sector partners to improve local services. Well-established as a highlight of the borough's calendar, the Islington Voluntary Sector Conference in 2017 aimed to inspire charity and not-for-profit staff, trustees and volunteers, re-igniting their passion for campaigning. As usual, the event was organised through the partnership of Voluntary Action Islington, Islington Community Network and the London Borough of Islington. London Metropolitan University once again generously provided the venue.

Speakers gave an insight to campaigning policy and practice, from the national, through the regional and right down to grass-roots, street-level action.

During the year we co-hosted a networking event for trustees of local voluntary organisations with the council's VCS team. This year's event was hosted at the Town Hall and it recognised the valuable contribution of Trustees to the sector. We also hosted a CEO networking event to provide Directors and CEOs to network and share information. Mary Mason from Solace Women's Aid gave an inspiring presentation about the value of partnership working and offered some tips for how to make partnerships work.



Annual Environment Audit at Voluntary Action Islington

We audit our environmental impact each year and promote action to protect the environment with our members.

In our office, our electricity usage increased during the year from 81,370 in 2016/17 to 90,695 in 2017/2018, which is similar to our usage in the previous year. Our paper consumption has decreased; we used 265 reams of paper this year compared to 315 last year. We use paper which is FSC certified, meaning it comes from managed forests. Additionally we only use recyclable paper cups and Fairtrade coffee and tea.

For our staff, we encourage cycling and use of public transport and we have negotiated a deal for staff to access the cycle storage facility in a neighbouring building.

For our members we provide a model environment policy, an advice sheet and an environmental footprint form on our website.

Finance Summary for the year ended 31st March 2018

The details on the next page are a summary of information from the financial statements as independently audited by Goldwins Chartered Accountants, 75 Maygrove Road, West Hampstead, London, NW6 2EG.

This summary may not contain enough details to allow a full understanding of the financial affairs of Voluntary Action Islington. The full financial statements are available upon request from Voluntary Action Islington and can be downloaded from our website www.vai.org.uk

The financial statements are also submitted to the Registrar of Companies and the Charity Commission.

Bankers: Unity Trust Bank plc, Nine Brindley Place, Birmingham B1 2HB.



Statement of Financial Activities, year ended 31st March 2018

	Restricted funds	Unrestricted funds	Total
	£	£	£
Income from:			
Donations and legacies	-	82,835	82,835
Charitable activities			
Member Services and Support	20,000	-	20,000
Sector Development and Volunteering	75,975	261,991	337,966
Investments	-	14,681	14,681
Total income	95,975	359,507	455,482
Expenditure on:			
Charitable activities			
Member Services and Support	14,002	73,977	87,979
Sector Development and Volunteering	71,195	339,060	410,255
Total expenditure	85,197	413,037	498,234
Net income (expenditure) before net (losses) on investments	10,778	(53,530)	(42,752)
Net (losses) on investments	-	(1,948)	(1,948)
Net income (expenditure) for the year	10,778	(55,478)	(44,700)
Reconciliation of funds:			
Total funds brought forward	82,454	389,068	471,522
Total funds carried forward	93,232	333,590	426,822
BALANCE SHEET (fund balances) at 31 MARCH 2018			Total
Restricted funds			£ 93,232
Unrestricted funds			
Designated funds			119,922
General funds			213,668
Total unrestricted funds			333,590
TOTAL FUNDS			426,822



Voluntary Action Islington

www.vai.org.uk

Charity Number 291890

Company Limited by Guarantee Number 1913555

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