





VAC'S MISSION IS:

'TO WORK WITH LOCAL
RESIDENTS AND KEY
ORGANISATIONS TO DEVELOP
AND SUPPORT A VIBRANT CIVIL
SOCIETY THAT UNDERPINS A HIGH
QUALITY OF LIFE IN CAMDEN AND
THE SURROUNDING AREAS.'

CHAIR'S MESSAGE



Voluntary Action Camden (VAC) is about supporting people and organisations to have the confidence to respond effectively to the challenges that we all now face. VAC supports people in acquiring new skills and puts individuals and organisations in touch with each other so that we can all share experience and knowledge. Today, with the emphasis on outcomes, impact and collaboration, VAC is working with people across different sectors to develop the skills and approaches that we need over the next few years if we are going to remain strong and effective.

What I am particularly excited about is the work VAC is doing in communities. This ranges from our renewed emphasis on preventative work, peer mentoring, health advocacy and community planning, through to neighbourhood forums, community land trusts and supporting the development of new community based services. I think VAC's work, with some excellent partners, has been very impressive and I am sure this area will continue to be a high priority in the future.

VAC continues to provide the more traditional forms of support ranging from training and support on the roles and responsibilities of trustees, how to manage accounts, how to achieve best practice in the development of staff and volunteers through to how to raise income effectively using a number of established and more recent tools such as crowd funding. VAC also has an important leadership and voice role for the sector. It is no longer good enough to simply say that the sector is good value for money. We are in a climate where everyone has to demonstrate value and impact. VAC has been taking this approach forward and is now well placed to act as an informed ambassador for voluntary and community activity.

The quality of VAC's staff, volunteers and trustees is very high. They have an in depth understanding and knowledge of the sector and have also moved with the times. The organisation is very aware of and responds quickly and flexibly to new developments. The quality of the team, along with VAC's extensive networks, has been fundamental to success. VAC is definitely not settled into a groove; it's picking up new things as it goes along and leading them to some extent as well. People ask me how VAC can do this with such limited resources. That's where volunteers become so important. I'm a big supporter of volunteering. It hugely benefits the organisation and it hugely benefits the individual if it's done properly.

Coupled with the quality of the team and the networks, what has made VAC stand out is its ability to build strong relationships with key people from within communities and across sectors. VAC's ability to develop relationships with Camden's emerging communities and other stakeholders is not a static activity. Face-to-face contact makes a huge difference; there are emerging communities and shifts in existing communities that VAC needs to know about to be able to bring their concerns forward.

My vision for VAC is that it continues to be a beacon of excellence in supporting and developing a really good voluntary and community sector. That's what I want it to be and it displays that in all sorts of different ways. My hope would be that in the future VAC would have effective, secure premises, talented staff team, a strong executive committee, a significant pool of volunteers and a reputation as the 'go to place' for individual and organisations that want to get something done!

SUE WILBY

ABOUT US

VAC has its roots in the pioneering philanthropy of the nineteenth century and traces its origins back to the Charity Organisations Society of 1860 and the pioneering work of nineteenth century Hampstead philanthropists. At the turn of the last century the Hampstead system was widely recognised as a pioneer of cooperation between municipalities and the voluntary sector and was also pioneering in acting as a coordinating body for a plethora of overlapping organisations, democratically setting common policies and organising the implementation of policies in a coherent way. Broadened to be Camden-wide in 1965 to coincide with the creation of the London Borough of Camden, the Camden Council for Social Service gradually became VAC. The name was changed to VAC in 1983 and it took on the full council for voluntary service role in 1990.

Today VAC continues to build on these firm foundations. The organisation – whilst focusing on work in the London Borough of Camden – also works across Greater London providing bespoke and specialist services. VAC's mission is: 'To work with local residents and key organisations to develop and support a vibrant civil society that underpins a high quality of life in Camden and the surrounding areas.'

VAC has achieved significant successes in delivering a range of services and activities for civil society organisations both within Camden and across other boroughs. To illustrate success VAC has to demonstrate the impact of its work. In this annual report we set out our key areas of work and seek to demonstrate the impact that this has on civil society – individuals, organisations and communities.

“ At the turn of the last century the Hampstead system was widely recognised as a pioneer of cooperation between municipalities

ENABLING PEOPLE TO DO WHAT THEY WANT TO DO

Direct Support

Our development work behind the scenes with civil society organisations (CSOs) allows them to do what they do best – their own work. Whether it's setting up a new group, governance, financial or business planning, payroll & accounts, income generation, human resources, ICT support or communications. Last year we helped support over three hundred CSOs to develop their potential and become more effective and sustainable.

BUSINESS

8 organisations supported to produce a detailed business plan.
Targeted work with 10 play providers to develop new business models.

HUMAN RESOURCES AND EMPLOYMENT

43 Camden groups received in-depth support on a range of HR issues.

5 went on to receive HR training on Employment Law Updates and 6 joined up to VAC's Target HR project for further in-depth support.

FINANCE

10 new organisations signed up to the Community Accountancy Project.

Over 65 organisations signed up to the Salary Administration Service.

Successfully dealt with over 400 finance enquiries from more than 96 different CSOs.

STRUCTURES AND GOVERNANCE

48 organisations helped to identify the most suitable structure to meet their operational needs, and recruit and train an effective management committee to improve their governance practices.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

23 BMER organisations received advice and support to implement an appropriate Quality Assurance system.



INCOME GENERATION

33 Camden-based organisations received support and advice in fundraising and income generation and in some cases direct assistance to apply for funding.

12 organisations we supported to apply for the Innovation Fund were all successful in their applications. Through our Transforming Local Infrastructure

Partnership work with the London Community Foundation, a further 17 Camden-based groups received a total of 24 grants totalling £319,860

We asked several organisations we worked closely with last year to tell us how our development support impacted on the organisation and its service users. Here are their stories:

Kiasuka Kiakanda, Congolese Community Youth and Development

We started this organisation, The Congolese Youth Development, working with young children. I heard about VAC because I live in Camden and all the other organisations knew about this place. When you set up a new group we knew about VAC from other people as well. People working with a Slovakian organisation knew about VAC and said they could tell us what to do and what not to do and they give you training if you want to get better governance and how to work as an organisation. They could tell us how an organisation works. When you set up your organisation VAC will work with you, like a partnership. So they will tell you which documents you need, which document you don't have – so they help you.

VAC is a big organisation. They have all different types of services.

If VAC is not there, many organisations will be having problems. VAC helps new groups and existing groups as well.

Jane Lee, South Hampstead and Kilburn Community Partnership (SHAK)

I started working with VAC in the last five years. We've always known they were there but we've tended to be spinning round in circles to make sure we keep things going. So in the last five years we've got quite a lot of support from them because the more staff you have the more problems you have, and this is where VAC has been great.

The HR support we got was most helpful. VAC was always on the other end of the phone and always comes back to us. They have this capacity to simplify issues that seem overwhelmingly complex and talk us through finding a solution to it – and we wouldn't be able to get that support from anywhere else.

It's made sure we've followed exactly the right procedure and followed all the correct laws regarding staffing and it's made sure we haven't ended up in trouble (which could easily happen), because the laws are very complex and longwinded and VAC have the capacity to simplify it all and talk us around all the loopholes.

It means that our staff has been OK, and if the staff are OK then the project runs really well – and that's extremely important. I don't have a HR department, we're a charity here and it's very difficult to be expert in everything. So, we learn as we go along, and VAC has been a huge asset. I don't think we could have gone on so long without problems if VAC hadn't stepped in when we've asked them to.

Vicky Fox, Doorstep Homeless Families Project

Last year VAC talked with us about developing a five year strategic business plan to help make the transition from receiving core funding to being financially independent. We lost 100 per cent of our funding in 2011 which decimated the staff team, all the redundancy notices were issued and then at the eleventh hour we were able to raise the amount we lost, but only for one year.

We felt getting a business plan was absolutely crucial. We had to look at every possible scenario in the climate of cuts and income changes and changes to benefits. VAC led us through and facilitated the process of putting a business plan together. It was invaluable help and that process involved all the staff, every member of the management committee, all our service users, our partners and all the volunteers. We would not have had sufficient expertise to have done it all by ourselves. We needed that input and guidance. So by the end of that we were all really clear about what we were doing, why we were doing it, what the value of it was, and where we needed to go and how to get there.

And then we got some more support from VAC's financial department. To complete the business plan we needed five years of financial planning. So it was a dual input: the facilitation of drawing up the plan but also the financial information we needed to support the plan. And it's an on-going relationship. Recently I submitted a funding application that required an external referee – someone who knows the work, knows the organisation but is not actually involved in it. And once again VAC has been able to provide that for us.

Their help with the business plan has put us in a much stronger position to put our case to funders. It's really useful to have the plan because it strengthens our case and demonstrates to people that we're a professional organisation, that we know what we're doing and know our strengths. We know how we want to develop and what our ambitions are, and that is reassuring to funders and shows that we looked at everything and are not just dreaming, that we have a strategic vision of what we are trying to do.



INCOME GENERATION

Jonathan Montgomery, Queen's Crescent Community Centre

Active Communities came about when I got an email about using the support of VAC to try and access the fund successfully. So we went along to the VAC training, and the one-on-one follow up.

Being able to speak with someone in relation to our bid was really helpful, and being able to refine it and improve it.

We were successful to the tune of twenty three thousand pounds over two years. VAC's involvement was a real benefit, particular the one-to-one support. It was excellent. It allows us to go and sketch out our idea, refine it and then bounce it off someone to see if we're on the right lines or not.

The ideas were forming in my head about what I wanted to do. It's having that bouncing board to able to refine the application that was important. That one-to-one support made an impact.



FINANCIAL ADVICE AND FINANCIAL PLANNING

We support groups to manage their finances in the most efficient and cost effective ways so that they can focus on their own good work.

Through our Community Accountancy Project we helped groups to:

- improve their financial control and decision-making skills
- increase their understanding of good accounting practices
- skill-up a designated finance 'lead' for their organisation
- ensure compliance with Charity Commission and other statutory bodies' requirements.

Some organisations prefer to administer their payroll out of house. Last year we helped another 65 organisations to do this through our Salary Administration Service.

“ VAC does our payroll which is a great help to us because for small charity organisations it's such a time consuming task. To have that particular aspect taken off our back is an enormous thing”.

Vicky Fox, Doorstep Homeless Families Project

“ In terms of the workshops I attended, it was helpful to go through step by step of what the funder funded and what they didn't, and to have a focus. It was a good opportunity to read sample forms to get a better understanding of how to complete the application form”.

Community Organisation, NW6

“ VAC does our salaries and they have done for more than twenty years. We took advantage of that because it would be labour saving and they had a specialism in that sort of thing. We need to know if everything we're doing is legal – if our PAYE is legal, our taxes etc. – and VAC informs us of all the changes that are coming”.

Louise Gates, Calthorpe Project



ENABLING PEOPLE TO GET THE SKILLS THEY WANT AND NEED

Working in partnership with the Mary Ward Adult Education Centre

TRAINING

Our training services empower and nurture an organisation's most valuable resource – its people. We offer a wide range of accredited and non-accredited training opportunities to enable those involved in civil society to fully realise their potential and enhance the services their organisation provides.

TRAINING

Over 83 non-accredited courses and seminars delivered, including starting up social enterprises and small businesses through to business finance.

Over 10 programmes of accredited training with courses in: Project Management, Governance, Operational Management in the Voluntary and Community Sector and in Mental Health and Youth Mental Health First Aid.

Over 800 individuals and 400 organisations received training in the last financial year.

The feedback shows that people attending our training programme have used what they have learnt to significantly improve their organisation's ability to respond effectively to the changing environment and become more sustainable.

“

Various members of the team and me as well, have used their training on things like fundraising, how to make award bids, management training and other things. That side of the VAC organisation is very good as well. Any of the training I've been on has been good. There's training available for our trustees as well”.

Community Organisation, NW5

“

Ultimately [the support] must be making a difference especially the training we've done with them; it has a knock on effect. The better supported our people are, the better support we can give to our service users”.

“The training has been for a broad range of activities, delivering services and so on but also many organisational aspects and legal requirements”.

“VAC has also provided various relevant training which has enabled us to be kept up to speed with all the changes that have happened over the years”.

Community Organisation, NW3

“

The training has been good. VAC has been providing training for a long time, fees for members are very reasonable and we use the rooms at VAC for meetings, they make those available, I'm here every six weeks”.

Arif Rahman, Crossroads Care

PATHWAYS TO EMPLOYMENT

Through volunteering, peer mentoring and our links to civil society, service providers and local business, we enable opportunities for paid work and offer an effective support network for the Voluntary and Community Sector workforce.

Last year we ran several 'Volunteering to Paid Employment' courses which were well attended and resulted in three volunteers securing paid work.

We ourselves recruited several volunteers to support staff and our member organisations, and we've trained Royal Society for Public Health 'health advocates' to gather intelligence in the community to improve local health services.

Volunteering at VAC has not only been beneficial for volunteers, who gain experience in the work place and develop new skills, but it also supports staff with valuable mentoring and professional development. In some cases this has enabled VAC to diversify and pursue areas of work not usually associated with a council for voluntary service but which are key to engaging with new policy areas e.g. neighbourhood planning, land trusts, loan funding and impact bonds. This also fills a gap where there is no local community based support – the alternative for local communities would be through the unaffordable private 'for profit' sector.



VAC Volunteer

I was made redundant and my world just crashed around me. The process was drawn out and it eroded my self-confidence and ability to recognise my workplace skills and experience. I had an important job, was very busy and worked long hours. I came to VAC and felt that my contribution was appreciated and I had a purpose and didn't feel on the scrapheap. That turned things around for me and gave me confidence and I started getting interviews. The main change was that if you've got that air about you, that you've got no confidence, then people don't have confidence in you.

PEER MENTORING

Over the last year we have been developing a number of peer mentoring initiatives. This includes a European project with five partners called, 'How to Educate Learners through Peer-Mentoring' (part of the Lifelong Learning Programme), and a project on Mental Health Peer Mentoring.

We trained twenty three individuals on the Peer Mentoring and Coaching Programme with seven peer mentors now delivering mentoring sessions on governance, strategic planning and financial management, and a further twenty four peer mentors now delivering sessions with peers on mental health awareness raising and the management of human resources.

Shani Williams from the Terence Higgins Trust talks about how she utilised VAC's Peer Mentoring training to support a project on improving sexual awareness amongst young people.

I've been in contact with VAC about getting the word out about my project. I thought we would start by linking in with the local organisations because they're on the ground and know about other projects as well. So when I heard about VAC offering a coaching and mentoring training course I thought that would be perfect because a big element of what we're doing is peer mentoring.

Before I did that course I didn't really have a good idea about what I wanted the peer mentors to do. So the VAC training gave me very specific ideas about what I could ask the young person to do [and] if someone asked me the difference between coaching and peer mentoring I could tell them now.

We're actually developing a workshop on peer mentoring and going out and with that in schools. Instead of just giving out information we can now say, look this is what peer mentoring is and you can actually go out and do it in your schools and youth clubs. So the VAC training has taken this idea that was floating around in my head and made it real and something we can sell.

It can only enrich the work because there is this bank of experience and knowledge that I'm unaware of because I'm so new to this area. There's this massive network that I'm now a small part of and that's really helpful, that there's this central organisation that's specific to Camden that I can link in with. The only way to tap into the local communities is to do it through the local communities rather than a mass, blanket advertising campaign.

VAC is very effective and I think using them will help me understand the needs of the community as well. With VAC the links are already there, the expertise has already been identified, the ground work has already been done.



**ENABLING PEOPLE
TO ACCESS RESOURCES
AND SAVE MONEY.**

We provide access to meeting rooms, office space, equipment and hot-desking facilities and support the sharing of 'back room services' and bulk purchase.

2321 room bookings made by Camden groups and local stakeholders.
446 hours use of our hot-desk facilities by local groups. (*£50/month lowest rate for desk on Office Genie, Oct 2013)

“ The hot-desking is also photocopying and telephone as well as the computer. Before the hot desk we couldn't get in touch with different organisations. So we can call people outside now. It's a change, a big change”

Small Community Organisation, NW6

“ We use the meeting rooms, we've just found out we can use their franking machine which has meant a big savings for us. We just started using that about four to eight weeks ago and that's really going well”.

Tenant at VAC



“ VAC informed us that as a charity we didn't have to pay full VAT which we didn't know. So we're getting a refund. One of the reasons our electricity was so high was the VAT issue. We've had around £2000 credit, which was nice.

We're also looking to take part in anything that we can where bulk purchasing makes things cheaper.... If we could reduce our regular expenses like that over a year we would save an absolute fortune”.

Louise Gates, Calthorpe Project

BULK PURCHASE
20 CSOs supported to access savings on electricity, gas and insurance through the Joint-Purchasing Network.

ENABLING PEOPLE TO BUILD HEALTHY AND SAFE COMMUNITIES

MENTAL HEALTH

We help bring mental health awareness into all Camden communities improving the capacity for communities to deal with mental health issues.

The Mental Health Project supports communities to promote and raise awareness of mental health and wellbeing; and to influence commissioners and providers of services.

Training sessions were delivered to community members on psychosis, depression, challenging stigma and discrimination, and the cultural perspective on mental health. The Mental Health First Aid training continues to be very popular and is often oversubscribed.

The Bangladeshi Mental Health & Wellbeing Forum (BMHWF) has been key in facilitating dialogue between commissioners and communities and assisted in addressing concerns around the re-commissioning of services. The Mental Health Information & Networking Sessions enable the exchange of information and discussion. Participants have the opportunity for informal discussions with the presenters. VAC is a regular attendee of Camden Mental Health User Involvement Service Steering Group and Camden Borough User Group meetings and continues to outreach to more communities in Camden.

During the year ten local people were recruited and trained as mental health peer mentors. They are now working with black and minority ethnic communities to increase their understanding of mental health and pilot new ways of working.

TRAINING SESSIONS OPEN TO ALL:

An Introduction to Personality Disorders
Stigma & Mental Health
Mental Health First Aid
60 people attended representing 34 organisations.

TRAINING SESSIONS DELIVERED IN-HOUSE:

Mental Health First Aid
Peace of Mind (Understanding depression)
Religious & Cultural Perspectives on Mental Health
Stigma & Mental Health
66 people trained representing 11 organisations

“The impact of VAC has been to give me the information I need to give back to my team so we can do our work, which is exactly what I wanted. We couldn't have found all that in one place anywhere else, not to that degree”.

Paul Larkin, NHS Mental Health Intensive Outreach Team

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN IN THE COMMUNITY

This year our Community Partnership Advisor Project, (CPAP) funded by the Camden Council Children's Safeguarding Board, has delivered child protection and safeguarding training to 180 individuals representing 19 different Black, Minority Ethnic and Refugee communities across Camden.

We have developed trust and a strong working relationship with communities around the issues of safeguarding children and harmful traditions. Throughout the year the 'Protecting Children in our Community' training sessions for local community organisations, faith groups and supplementary schools have been an important area of work.

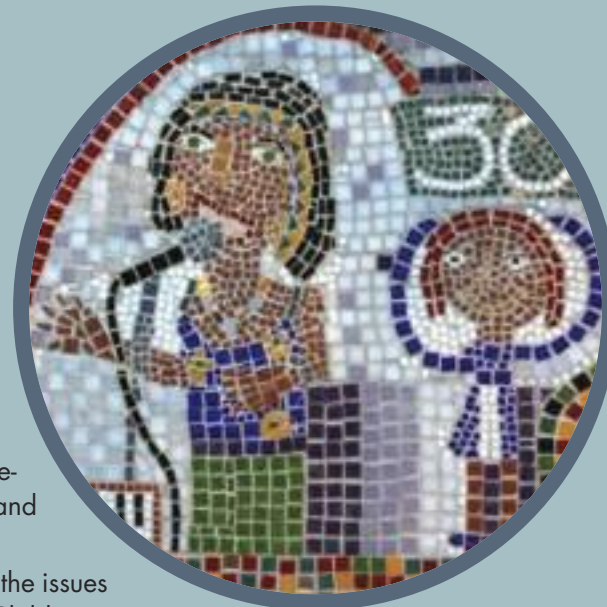
By demystifying the different roles of Family Services, Social Work, the Metropolitan Police and Children's Services, we've facilitated a better understanding of the services available to safeguarding children. We have also increased the knowledge of UK laws and regulations and demonstrated why certain practices are seen as harmful or abusive to children. The awareness on how community groups can help protect their own children has been increased and by identifying key people within target groups we've developed child protection policies, procedures and vetting systems that reflect their communities' aspirations.

"UK laws are not there to punish my culture and belief but to protect my child too... even from certain practice/s that I never thought would be harmful" A training participant.

"Learning from other cultures is always a gain but it also helping us why harmful certain practices get excused" Staff member from statutory body

"I got access to BME community and faith groups through this Project that I would otherwise struggle to gain access" Staff member from statutory body

ASHA-KIN DUALE, COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP ADVISER.





COMMUNITY SAFETY

The Camden Community Police Consultative Group (CCPCG) is a community-led forum that has been at the forefront of police and community engagement in Camden for over twenty five years. They have a borough-wide remit to hold the police and wider Community Safety Partnership to account.

"VAC has access to emerging groups. When there are changes of demographics they're the first to see it. I work with established groups. Neighbourhood groups, tenants all rock solid, been there years. What VAC is good at is if there is new crime associated to a new community they can give me access to those communities and I can start reflecting their concerns. Their grass roots work in those communities is very useful. The groups I work with the police struggle to talk to and the groups VAC work with I struggle to talk to. So with VAC's help we can break down barriers".

PETER WARD

ENABLING PEOPLE, COMMUNITIES AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS TO KEEP UP TO DATE, CONNECT AND WORK TOGETHER

Communications: Newsletter, Website and Social Media We have helped individuals and organisations respond to change, share resources and explore new ways of working through our network of communications and policy briefings.



Over 34,050 hits to VAC and OneCamden websites
83.3% of those surveyed said the VAC website was a useful resource for keeping abreast of news, emerging trends, policy and relevant resources.

169 Facebook Likes,
209 Twitter followers
225 organisations signposted internally or externally to sources of information, advice and guidance

Over 2,533 subscribers reached by our weekly newsletter, which covers news from VAC and the sector, policy updates, funding opportunities, VAC events, training, other events, jobs and opportunities and offers to the sector.

85.6% of readers said the e-bulletin was a useful resource. 80% saw improvements in knowledge through accessing information in the e-bulletin. 80% felt the bulletin gave them a clear description of news and emerging trends across the sector in Camden and felt better able to respond to and make the most of opportunities in Camden as a result.

“One thing that VAC does so well is the newsletter. It is the one newsletter I make sure I read. It’s really good; it just has a wealth of information. Everyone here is very busy so I go through it and highlight what someone might need to know and send it on. And we advertise our services through the newsletter as well”.

Community Organisation,
Kentish Town

Networks We bring together local residents and civil society organisations to help identify and tackle local issues of shared concern.

“ VAC provides various forums and those have been helpful and supportive because you get to meet other people in the field – people we wouldn’t have got to meet otherwise. We’ve been able to support one another and the forums have also been a good place to influence and allow us to raise issues and give us a voice and articulate what our needs are.”

Doorstep Homeless Families Project



679 subscribers to the Mental Health Network

262 subscribers to the Bangladeshi Mental Health Network

83 Camden individuals and organisations subscribed to Somali Mental Health and Well-Being Forum

51 subscribers to the Community Centres Network

248 subscribers to the Camden Health Inequalities Engagement Hub

21 subscribers to the Community Nurseries Network

“ VAC helps puts us in a better position to deliver services. It’s a good resource for information and making us aware of changes as they happen and the forums allow us to raise issues and give us a voice and articulate what our needs are. That’s not an easy thing to get organisations and people to do”.

VAC Tenant

COLLABORATIVE WORKING

"The local voluntary community sector considers VAC a safe pair of hands. They've got the balance right between the advocacy role for the sector and a leadership role as well".

Gary Jones, Chief Executive. Age Concern Camden

During the year VAC led a very successful piece of work, Transforming Local Infrastructure. The partnership involved VAC, Disability in Camden, London Community Foundation and Volunteer Centre Camden. As a result of this collaboration 515 Civil Society Organisations received high quality support on new and innovative ways of working. 24 groups received funding from the Community Fund for Camden specific projects in 38 different grants which totalled approximately £390,000. 26 people attended a seminar on learning more about how to approach businesses and how to create a positive lasting relationship with them. All of the attendees rated the event good or excellent and that their confidence in approaching corporates was much improved. 127 people also signed up as volunteers and 44 people were placed as volunteers, and a few of them volunteered with more than one organisation. So in total, there were 55 volunteering opportunities brokered by the TLI partnership. TLI also developed a project that supported 6 Deaf people and 8 visually impaired people to become trustees.

During the year we also worked closely with Council colleagues to organise and run two provider forums for organisations working with children and families. The forums were attended by organisations from the public, private and civil society. Collaborative working across the sector to meet need was a key theme. We also worked with council colleagues in Culture and Environment to manage the grant aid process for community festivals and continue to explore how the arts, and in particularly the festivals, can become a central part of community life throughout the year.



Two key projects were also led by VAC during the year. Parenting Support Trail is a project through which mums, dads and other carers of children aged five and under were offered vouchers to access parenting support and classes. Over six hundred parents, including fathers, accessed the support and one parent commented that the sessions were really helpful as they were about discussing specific parenting issues and you did not feel alone. A small group of the parents kept in touch and now meet every Wednesday morning as a support group in a local library. 4G services arrived in 2013 enabling super-fast internet on mobile phones. It also had the side effect of disturbing a minority of people's existing Freeview TV services. VAC offered those affected support on how to fix this interference before it happens. The project was aimed at older people, people who are in receipt of disability allowances or people who are blind or partially sighted. Over fifty activities and services were visited through which information was disseminated. The project also provided over fifty one-to-one support meetings or 'conversations'.

VAC also led on a successful Big Lottery funded project Target HR. This is a cross-borough human resources (HR) project delivered in partnership with six other councils for voluntary service. Target HR offers in-depth support to forty five organisations per year to improve the HR policies, procedures, skills and knowledge. The project also engages thirty volunteers per year to work as 'champions' on HR issues within organisations.

'The advice has been consistently excellent, as have been the documents provided. The best thing is the way that the advisors from Target HR maintained a warm and pleasant approach which helps both staff and managers to feel relaxed while at the same time being extremely professional and delivering messages about what needs to be complied with on both sides. The support greatly exceeded my expectations and I have found it immensely reassuring.' Target HR user

COMPLEX FAMILIES

Lisa Clarke, Transformation Lead Complex Families

Camden, along with other authorities, has signed up to working with the national agenda where the government has highlighted certain triggers for families to be part of a cohort of 'troubled families'. Working with complex families with multiple needs, there are a number of different statutory and other agencies going into work with families, thus Camden has taken the learning from a systems thinking approach to inform coordination and delivery of services to complex families.

VAC is part of a stakeholder group and was instrumental in helping us to think about whether this is the right approach to take. I think the troubled family cohort are very much high up in terms of complexity of need so a lot of the services around them are statutory services. VAC has been around the table to help us say, okay – should the voluntary and community sector (VCS) be involved at this time, ensuring that VCS needs are included around the table.

I think the role of VAC has been to challenge us. We are restricted statutorily by our rules and regulations whereas the voluntary and community sector has a lot more opportunities to be creative and work in a different way with families. We want to be able to do that lower down the continuum of support so that when families come in the first time we establish a different relationship from the

start. So VAC are key to that, for example by setting up seminars to ensure that we spread this learning and think about next steps. They are also very keen to think about how we build community resilience. This is a time limited project and we want to make sure the learning is mainstreamed and influences future commissioning, that learning helps us to ensure that voluntary and community organisations or statutory sector can meet the need of the family.

We decided to work with VAC basically because of the level of expertise within the organisation. In terms of a stakeholder as representative of the voluntary and community sector, we know that information will be funnelled through appropriately. I suppose VAC have been key because some of the framework we've developed has come from us being introduced, having those seminars being organised through VAC and putting the right people in the room in the first place, and so those views have been incorporated into our framework about moving forward. So they have been a key partner in helping us to come together but also the testing back of when we should go back and who we should liaise with. It would have been much more difficult process to get the voluntary and community sector involved without VAC. We wouldn't have the expert thinking around the table to challenge... there would have been less learning fed in, we would have had a much smaller view.

Camden Community Researchers Enterprise
Matthew Upton, Camden Council



VAC comes up in Council conversations all the time – as in ‘how do we get the voluntary sector involved?’ So in this current case, Community Researchers, we decided to pay local people to do the research about what people think about the council and the services, instead of hiring an outside consultancy firm – going that way tells you the what, but it doesn’t tell you the why.

We thought if we spend X thousand pounds on doing survey work and paying an outside consultancy outside the borough, we would rather employ local people from inside the borough. We thought there was an opportunity to both improve access to jobs and make those young people’s lives better but also get better local insight.

So we came to VAC for a combination of advice – they’re very experienced, we’ve worked with [them] a lot – but also what has been challenging for us as a big organisation is we want a very flexible group of local people who can work when it suits them. So we wanted to work closely with VAC where they could employ the community researchers. The idea being we could almost run the project jointly. Compared to some of the organisations we’ve worked with in the past, it was almost a joy. It wasn’t like if we came to VAC we knew the answer would be yes. We just knew that VAC would be up for the idea if they liked it, up for thinking a bit differently. So it’s been really good so far.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING AND COMMUNITY FORUMS

Our support of effective community-led forums helps the development of neighbourhood resilience and assets like people, property and land.

This year’s work on neighbourhood planning focussed on Somers Town and has generated uptake from three other communities interested in our work in asset development and planning. Our support of neighbourhood forums has resulted in the emergence of working groups of volunteers pushing forward new approaches to addressing health issues, unemployment and community safety.

Underpinning neighbourhood forums is the aim of achieving community ownership of local assets through a neighbourhood land trust. Through our collaborations on estate management and planning faculties with Oxford Brookes University, we’ve empowered residents and widened their understanding of development pressures in their neighbourhood and how to use these to benefit the community. The work is on going with a projected land trust ‘setting up’ period of about 5 years.



Sarah Elie, Director of Somers Town Community Association



VAC was also looking at the Localism Act and had been in touch with Camden Council about doing a blueprint around neighbourhood planning. As a community organisation we were looking to support local people to have a greater understanding about planning

and how that has an impact on their lives and health etc. So we said we would go forward with that in December 2011 and without VAC we wouldn't be where we are now with it.

VAC worked tirelessly with us, they made the connection to a retired town planner who is also a volunteer for Planning Aid for London. We had no experience of that whatsoever. We set up a neighbourhood forum two months ago, it's formal now. It has its constitution and the forum and boundaries have now been accepted. The Forum also set up working groups where local people could grasp and connect with neighbourhood planning. For example, the Business Working group has been successful with Camden Council having asked us to deliver an employment and training project worth 120 thousand pounds over two years. So this partnership, originally created by a Neighbourhood Blueprint and Somers Town Community Association's decision to really affect change at a much higher level added to the partnership with VAC means we have drawn over £1million pounds for local residents. The local residents have been empowered. They're talking about setting up a development trust to manage the assets.

People are saying we can make a difference. People are sitting around the table on the same level. You've got the Property

Manager of the British Library sitting around a table with local residents saying, how can we address this? Before the local residents have felt they've turned their back to them. And give them their due, British Library and St. Pancras have come up trumps. We've got the Head of Advocacy attending meetings, head of public services from the Library coming to meetings, St Pancras offering training and placements, a bit of a hybrid project that they're leading on.

All the way through that process VAC has held our hand in understanding the complexities of the different policies, frameworks and agendas. We've had no knowledge of planning but it has such an impact on our residents in terms of health, their well-being. VAC has given us great support and been a great source of advice, guidance and expertise. We wouldn't be where we are today without VAC and I have no doubt about that whatsoever.



CAMDEN HEALTH INEQUALITIES ENGAGEMENT HUB

VAC has been recruiting and training local residents to become volunteer health mentors. The mentors work within communities to sign post people to existing services, work with GPs to develop community based services and collect intelligence that is fed into the decision making. During the year

- 22 volunteers have been recruited as Royal Society for Public Health (RSPH) trained 'health mentors' gathering intelligence to improve local health services.
- 182 people are now more aware of and involved in the delivery of health promotion and prevention.



William Roberts, NHS Camden Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)

The CCG has been working with VAC as a conduit to all the networks they've got, and to help us to engage and work with the voluntary sector. One of the things the voluntary sector has that statutory agencies don't have is that as well as being providers of care they are also advocates. So someone who can broker those relationships where you can get the soft intelligence but also managing the complexities of delivering to those people is quite a delicate balance.

So what we've been doing with the Health Inequalities Engagement is to build from the bottom up intelligence of Camden's communities and what they're needs are. The fact that they can link in and represent a wider community is useful. There is an element of honest brokering in using them. VAC's role is to co-ordinate the voluntary sector. VAC acts as an umbrella and that's potentially useful because you can bring in a lot of people under one banner. So it would be silly not to work with them.

We also wanted to understand what the needs of these populations are and hear the voices of seldom heard populations and we wanted to reach out to communities instead of telling communities what to do or running consultations. So to some extent we're not able to do that because what we are is a statutory organisation and we're not always trusted to do that. So the reason we work with VAC is that it would have an impact.

One of VAC's strengths is their stability and knowledge. They've been here a long time, they're well-known. They don't have a big turnover so people know them. Therefore you get the benefits of trust; you get the benefits of reach.

LOOKING AHEAD

The financial forecasts for public sector funding are looking very bleak and we know that further cuts in public spending will be made in the coming years. In many ways this increases the importance of civil society organisations. They will become even more important as a source of support to the resilience of individuals and communities.

Research is telling us that people feel isolated, that they lack a voice and there is a strain on their emotional wellbeing. VAC is about supporting people to have confidence to respond to the challenges that we are all going to face. As well as continuing to deliver the more traditional forms of support VAC will continue to work with people across different sectors to develop the skills and approaches that we will need to remain strong and sustainable.

Looking ahead, and in response to feedback from the people who live and work in Camden, VAC has identified the following priority areas for 2013/14.

Income generation to underpin sustainability

Collaborative working

Developing tools for and measuring outcomes and demonstrating impact

Strategic and business planning

New ways of working to underpin individual and community sustainability e.g. Community Land Trusts, social impact bonds

Health

Peer support

Developing relationships with businesses



In these fast changing times VAC will always retain its flexibility and willingness to try out new things. So if you have an idea or want to talk your ideas through with someone please do contact VAC on 020 7284 6550. Fax: 020 7284 6551. Email: info@vac.org.uk

Thank You.

VAC wishes to say a big thank you to all of our funders and to all of the people who have worked so hard to make 2012/2013 such a successful year. There are many challenges ahead but with your continued backing VAC will continue to provide high quality support to a vibrant and dynamic sector in Camden.

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

Statement from the executive committee

These summarised accounts contain information from both the Statement of Financial Activities and the Balance Sheet for the year ended 31 March 2013, but are not the full statutory report and accounts. The full financial statements were approved by the executive committee on 23 September 2013 and subsequently submitted to the Charity Commission and the Companies House. The auditor has issued an unmodified audit report on the full financial statements and on the consistency of the executive committee report with those financial statements. Their report on the full annual financial statements contained no statement under sections 498 (2) (a), 498 (2) (b) or 498 (3) of the Companies Act 2006.

Copies of the financial statements may be obtained from:
293 – 299 Kentish Town Road, London NW5 2TJ

Signed on behalf of the executive committee
Simone Hensby
Director
06 November 2013

Independent auditors' statement to the executive committee of Voluntary Action Camden

We have examined the summarised financial statement of Voluntary Action Camden which comprises the summary statement of financial activities and the summary balance sheet.

Respective responsibilities of executive committee and auditor

The executive committee is responsible for preparing the summary financial statement in accordance with applicable United Kingdom law and the recommendations of the charities SORP.

Our responsibility is to report to you our opinion on the consistency of the summary financial statement within the full financial statements and executive committee's annual report. We also read the other information contained in the annual report and its compliance with the relevant requirements of section 427 of the Companies Act 2006 and the regulations made thereunder.

Basis of opinion

We conducted our work in accordance with Bulletin 2008/3 issued by the Auditing Practices Board. Our report on the organisation's full annual financial statements describes the basis of our audit opinion on the financial statements and on the executive report.

Opinion

In our opinion the summarised financial statement is consistent with the full financial statements and the executive committee annual report of Voluntary Action Camden for the year ended 31 March 2013 and complies with the applicable requirements of section 427 of the Companies Act 2006, and the regulations made thereunder.

We have not considered the effects of any events between the date on which we signed our report on the full annual financial statements on 23 September 2013 and the date of this statement.

SAYER VINCENT
Chartered Accountants
Registered Auditors
8 Angel Gate
City Road
London
EC1V 2SJ
08 November 2013

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

For the year ended 31 March 2013

	Restricted	Unrestricted	2013 Total	2012 Total
	£	£	£	£
Incoming resources				
<i>Activities in furtherance of the charity's objects:</i>				
Capacity building	332,654	278,100	610,754	774,759
Information, co-ordination & partnerships	305,715	-	305,715	258,244
Promotion, policy & projects	101,288	-	101,288	154,370
<i>Activities to generate funds:</i>				
Lettings, room hire & service charges	-	125,589	125,589	133,881
Interest receivable	-	795	795	743
Total incoming resources	739,635	404,484	1,144,119	1,321,997
Resources expended				
<i>Charitable expenditure</i>				
Capacity building	544,641	252,763	797,404	600,902
Information, co-ordination & partnerships	226,119	-	226,119	295,770
Promotion, policy & projects	96,601	-	96,601	184,397
Governance costs	40,649	12,120	52,769	47,373
Total resources expended	908,010	264,883	1,172,893	1,128,443
Net (outgoing)/ incoming resources before gains & transfers	(168,375)	139,601	(28,774)	193,554
Transfers between funds	12,543	(12,543)	-	-
Net (outgoing)/incoming resources before recognised gains & losses & past service cost adjustment	(155,832)	127,058	(28,774)	193,554
FRS 17 adjustment regarding past service costs	-	-	-	-
Actuarial gains/(losses) on defined benefit pension scheme	-	(263,000)	(263,000)	(266,000)
Net movement in funds for the year	(155,832)	(135,942)	(291,774)	(62,446)
Reconciliation funds				
Total funds brought forward	267,981	(368,305)	(100,324)	(37,878)
Total funds carried forward	112,149	(504,247)	(392,098)	(100,324)

All of the above results are derived from continuing activities. There were no other recognised gains or losses other than those stated above.

BALANCE SHEET

For the year ended 31 March 2013

	Restricted	Unrestricted	2013 Total	2012 Total
	£	£	£	£
Fixed assets				
Tangible fixed assets	-	5,743	5,743	14,514
Current assets				
Debtors	49,773	196,523	246,296	138,596
Short term deposits	158,501	212,866	371,367	370,976
Cash at bank and in hand	-	250,549	250,549	277,580
	208,274	659,938	868,212	787,152
Liabilities				
Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year	(96,125)	(260,928)	(377,053)	(266,990)
Net current assets	112,149	379,010	491,159	520,162
Net assets excluding pension scheme liability	112,149	384,753	496,902	534,678
Defined benefit pension scheme liability	-	(889,000)	(889,000)	(635,000)
Net assets/(liabilities) including pension liability	112,149	(504,247)	(392,098)	(100,324)
Funds				
Restricted funds excluding pension liabilities	112,149	-	112,149	267,981
Unrestricted funds:				
Designated funds	-	81,721	81,721	81,721
General funds	-	303,032	303,032	18,974
Unrestricted income funds excluding pension liability	-	384,753	384,753	266,695
Pension reserve	-	(889,000)	(889,000)	(635,000)
Total funds	112,149	(504,247)	(392,098)	(100,324)

Approved by the executive committee on 23 September 2013 and signed on its behalf by:

Sue Wilby - Chair

Ralph Scott - Treasurer



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vac@vac.org.uk