

Demonstrating Our Value



Voluntary Action Camden

ANNUAL REPORT 2013/2014

VAC's Mission

'To work with local residents, community groups and organisations to develop and support a vibrant civil society that underpins a high quality of life in Camden and the surrounding areas.'



Camden market graffiti art

VAC

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▶▶ Chair's Address

Welcome to VAC's Annual Report for 2013/2014. VAC has continued to work with a range of brilliant partners over the last year and we are looking forward to some positive and fruitful collaboration over the coming year. The climate for civil society organisations (CSOs) of all kinds continues to be a difficult one, with major pressures on all the resources we depend on, whether that is people's time and enthusiasm, affordable places to meet or hold an event or funds to provide services and support to those who need help.

At VAC we have been keen to find out what services and support are most valued by the many organisations we're in contact with and we've been looking at how we provide that support. Like everyone else, we have to try and find ways to do more with less and to test what we do against the impact our work has. Our objectives for the year have remained unchanged: supporting individuals and groups to get involved in civil society, developing ways of sharing good practice and resources and helping to coordinate diverse voices of individuals and organisations so that together we can have a positive impact on wider social agendas.

I continue to be very impressed by the quality of VAC's staff, volunteers and trustees. The Board has a range of skills and expertise that helps us provide both challenge and direction for the organisation. Staff and volunteers have shown repeatedly an ability to respond flexibly to new opportunities, a willingness to look at issues in fresh ways and a commitment to finding the best solutions to the many issues they encounter. Whilst a great deal can be provided through web-based resources (and we have made significant improvements to these over the past year), it is the face-to-face contact that we know is extremely valuable – putting someone in touch with a group or an individual who can help, linking one network to another over a shared issue or passing on details of new developments and opportunities to the sector as a whole. These are all crucial to VAC's success.

The challenges in the coming year are going to be big ones – for both small and large civil society organisations, for our statutory partners facing what to me are truly alarming levels of cuts in their resources and for many residents of Camden facing ever widening levels of inequality. At VAC we will do all we can to engage and support the work of the sector and, with our partners, promote the positive community values of a truly civil society.



►► About us



Bridge over Hampstead Heath



VAC has its roots in the pioneering philanthropy of the nineteenth century and traces its origins back to the Charity Organisation Society of 1860 and the pioneering work of the 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 and community sector and was also pioneering in acting as a coordinating body for a plethora of overlapping organisations. In 1965 the organisation took on a Camden wide remit, adopting the name Voluntary Action Camden (VAC) in 1983.

Today, VAC continues to build on these firm foundations, and in particular, the role of co-ordinating the work of people, communities and organisations across a wide spectrum of activities. Whilst VAC focusses its work on the London Borough of Camden it also works across Greater London in providing specialised and bespoke services.

More than 2,400 civil society organisations provide vital activities and services, create local job opportunities and enrich lives in Camden. At VAC we support these organisations so that local people and communities can continue to benefit from a thriving voluntary and community sector.

As a civil society organisation ourselves, VAC recognises the importance of securing a robust Quality Assurance Framework and has various quality marks to support the work it is delivering for Camden residents and organisations. In 2013/14, VAC renewed its Investors In People Quality Mark. This quality mark is for VAC to advance its performance through its team. It helped to improve performance and realised objectives through the management and development of the team. We have other quality marks, such as MATRIX, for giving information, advice and guidance as an education and training provider to the sector. We also have the NAVCA quality mark as an infrastructure organisation.



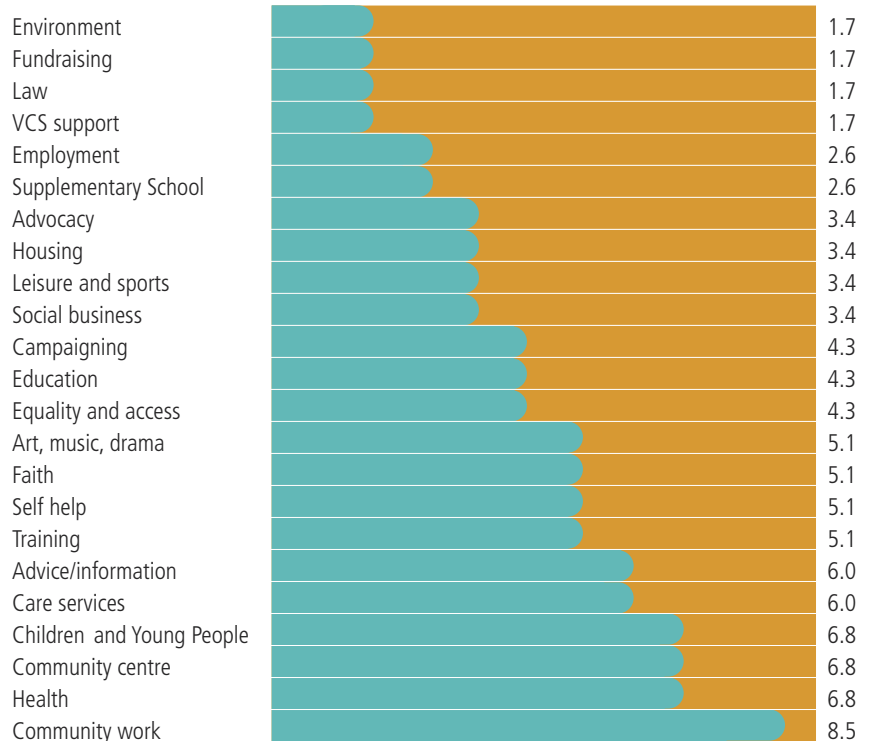


Focusing on Outcomes

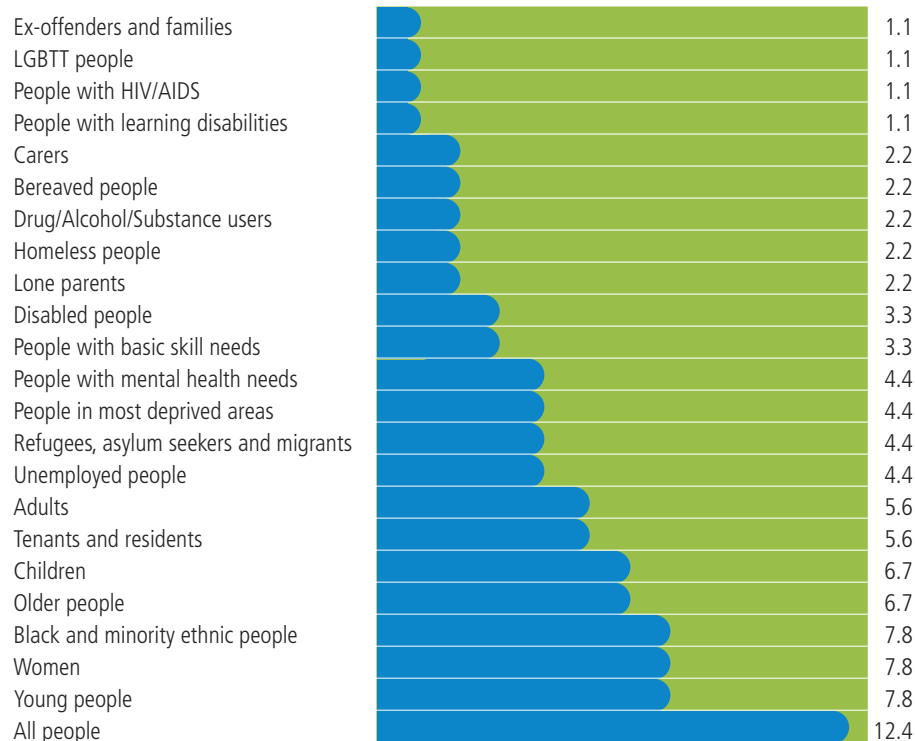
In 2013/2014 VAC provided direct support to individuals and organisations to do what they do best – making their own and their communities' aspirations a reality. VAC supported local residents, groups and organisations to achieve the outcomes that they set for themselves – to bring about a better quality of life and more sustainable communities in Camden.

Profile of services of the groups we work with and who their service users are:

Primary Services



Service Users



Delivering Outcomes

During the year VAC continued to deliver excellent free or low-cost organisational development and capacity building services to Camden groups. VAC supported over 330 groups with setting up, registering as a charity or company, governance matters, employment advice and income generation.

Business planning is also an essential task for new and existing groups alike to underpin sustainability and to continue to deliver outcomes for Camden residents. VAC provided tailored business planning support to 32 Camden groups, whether this was for the first time as the organisation set up, or for those established organisations looking to review their current plan in light of emerging trends and opportunities. This acted as a catalyst enabling people to think about strategic issues with an emphasis on forward planning and financial management.

Supporting Civil Society Organisations Focus on Outcomes

- | | | | |
|-----------|---|------------|--|
| 54 | organisations supported on governance, structures, registering a charity and setting up a group | 65 | organisations used the Salary Administration Service (payroll) |
| 84 | organisations advised on employment and human resources matters | 16 | organisations received accountancy support through the Community Accountancy Project |
| 32 | organisations helped with business planning support and support on setting up a social enterprise | 750 | finance queries |
| 28 | organisations received support on financial planning | 107 | organisations signposted to advice & support |
| 52 | organisations received advice on income generation and quality assurance | | |



CASE STUDY: BUSINESS PLANNING AND STRATEGIC AWAY DAY

We have an annual session every year where the board meets to review our business plan and update aspects of it, like the risk assessment / skills audit, depending on what the priority is at that time.

VAC has facilitated that for us twice, so trying to get the information from the board in terms of what we want to do, how we deal with anything we want to change, updating our mission statement etc. This was particularly useful for the board because of VAC's knowledge of Camden and the current environment. It provides a bigger picture of Camden. I think one of the biggest impacts for the board was that they got a lot more knowledge about the Camden situation generally, the economic climate, the financial climate, the funding climate, relationships and organisations within Camden. I think it definitely improved their knowledge of that, which helped them to make decisions more efficiently about our organisation and how it fits within that environment.

Lindsay Richardson, Director of Abbey Community Centre

CASE STUDY: VAC SERVICES

VAC was very helpful in our setting up because they advised on our corporate status and helped us to choose becoming a charitable incorporated organisation. We've also had a lot of help in human resources because we had to do everything from scratch, like design conditions of service and decide what should be our contract level. In our early stages, when we were developing our business plan, we got help around the models of business plans. We were able to talk to people in the sector and weigh up if this would work for us. We also use VAC's payroll service, which I think we get really good value from. The savings in manpower are significant. If we did it in house it would take eight times as long. It also means that I can feel confident that staff are getting the correct amount on the correct day.

It was also very important for us to be able to make contact with the right people in the sector. VAC were really, really helpful in pointing us in the right direction towards people to talk to, people in the community. Just saying, "have you spoken to such and such, you should be in contact with so and so," is a very helpful thing.

And also working out the kinds of programmes that VAC is currently running, they were able to bring us up to speed about the kinds of projects running in Camden that we should be concerned with and we should know about.

Francis Hasler, Director of Healthwatch Camden



CASE STUDY: REGISTERING AS A CHARITY

Our organisation has been set up about eight years. The idea of becoming a charity has come up regularly, but in the past we were always put off for various reasons. It became more pressing, however, after we secured £50K from a charitable fund that wanted assurances around our governance. So we decided to look into becoming a charity again. I had no idea where to start so I contacted VAC. The advice was invaluable because it made us realise that one of the options for us was to become a charitable incorporated organisation, a structure which enabled us to pay our group members for delivering certain work. So then we got help with developing the constitution. VAC looked over the application before I submitted it. The end result was that we got charitable status the first time running, so it's been brilliant!

Amy Anderson, Anybody UK



Target HR

45 organisations supported

36 trustee HR volunteers

7 London boroughs

Target HR provides free employment and human resources (HR) advice and support to small and medium-sized organisations working with marginalised communities, across the seven London boroughs. Securing advice at an early stage helped 45 organisations improve their practices, skills and knowledge. More complex and costly situations were often avoided enabling organisations to focus on securing key outcomes for their communities. An important benefit of Target HR was the involvement of trustees as Target HR volunteers – an experience that benefits the individual with the acquisition of new skills and the long term sustainability of organisations. In 2013/14, 36 trustees became Target HR volunteers.

“Your support is unique in that it is placed in the local context and able to use local experience to locate and guide us in accessing practical support and resources.”

Target HR Service User

Training Programme

Investing in people is one of the best ways to ensure that they are able to focus on and achieve outcomes. In 2013/14 VAC provided free or low-cost training to equip people to deliver services and to respond proactively to the demands of a very challenging environment.

50+ courses

680 individuals

200+ organisations

CASE STUDY: WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP TO DELIVER ADULT EDUCATION

We have worked together to develop a whole range of qualifications that we deliver in partnership with VAC. The Mary Ward Settlement provides the education and the expertise, liaises with the relative bodies, provides the quality assurance, and VAC provides us with specialist staff to teach those courses within the context of voluntary community organisations. We are also able to help with the funding of certain courses through our skills funding agencies funding. This means the courses are much more affordable for voluntary community organisations because they are at least part subsidised. Working in partnership with VAC has provided good networking opportunities for us, particularly for things like community outreach partners and looking for opportunities to work together with other organisations. This is very important for us as we are an adult education provider, a tiny college in some ways, and we want to focus at least a large portion of our work in employer engagement on voluntary and community organisations like ourselves. VAC have really helped us to fulfil that mission and keep us clear about what kind of training and learning opportunities the staff and volunteers of voluntary and community organisations require.

Suzanna Jackson, Warden of Mary Ward Settlement



"The main benefit for me was that it gave me a very good overview on business strategy and planning. It gave me a clear pathway on what I had to do in terms of setting up the company. It gave me the confidence to move forward."

Delegate Feedback

"If I hadn't got that advice we'd have to pay for it. And If I hadn't followed it, it would have ended up costing our organisation a lot of money."

Target HR Service User



"We did not need to worry about cost and could ask on a number of priority matters. Budget is not easily found for HR in a small organisation yet all the same HR difficulties remain and can have a far more adverse impact."

Target HR Service User

►► A Hub of Activity –Providing Greater Networking Opportunities and Costing Less

Shared Office Space and Services

8 tenants share office space

16 groups using hot-desk

373 hours of hot-desk time booked (an average saving of £5229)

1246 room bookings for training & meetings

582 tenant room bookings at reduced rate

Many individuals and communities need to have a base from which to work if they are going to be able to focus on achieving their chosen outcomes. In 2013/14, VAC provided access to hot desking for sixteen organisations for a total of 373.5 hours. Eight organisations also shared the office space and back-office facilities. They benefited from discounted rates on room hire and the use of VAC's equipment, which generated considerable savings to be reinvested back into achieving the organisation's outcomes. Tenants and individuals coming to training and meetings also tell us that VAC is a hub for civil society organisations, providing fantastic networking opportunities.

"We've managed to make direct contact with two of our target groups because they were in the building and we managed to nab them and say 'hello, do you want to come and talk with us later?' And they did!"

VAC Tenant

"Hot-Desking is very useful. I have a computer, but if I'm working alone I don't have the support I have here at VAC. If I don't understand something, someone here will always help me."

VAC hot-desk user

Communications

Communication is vital to enable working together and keeping abreast of the latest trends and opportunities for the sector. This year we have been working really hard to improve how we communicate with each other and the wider sector. This involved improving our use of social media and the redesign of our website, which is due to launch in December 2014.



"The VAC newsletter is the best resource that I've come across to let everyone know what's going on."

VAC service user

"I love the newsletter, I don't miss one! I find it very, very useful. One of our service-users found a job from the newsletter"

VAC service user

37,036

hits to VAC and One Camden websites

602

tweets, 447 followers, Klout score 43

3000+

subscribers to VAC newsletter

94.1%

say newsletter is a quality resource



Tackling Inequalities ►►►►

The population of the London Borough of Camden is 225,000. The difference in life expectancy for people living in the richest parts of the borough compared to those in more deprived wards is 13 years for men and 8 years for women. 24% of residents in Camden live within the 20% most deprived areas of England where there is an 83% higher prevalence of serious mental illness. People from a low socio- economic status, women, Black Minority Ethnic groups and people with long term conditions or disabilities are more likely to suffer from mental illness and 50% are more likely to have a long term health condition.

In 2013/14 the work that VAC did to support individuals and communities was central to tackling inequalities. VAC undertook targeted work focussing on mental health for Black, Minority Ethnic and Refugee (BMER) communities and seeking to improve the health and well being of communities as a whole.

Mental Health Community Development Project (MHCDWP)



Camden has the third highest prevalence of serious mental illness, significantly higher than the London and England average. There is widespread under-diagnosis and under-treatment of mental illness across the population. Prevalence is highest in Black or Black British communities (4.8% in men and 2.7% in women).

Investing in early intervention and focused mental health services helped to save money as well as improving people's lives. The MHCDWP worked to increase awareness of mental health services within BMER communities and how these services could be accessed. It did this by working with BMER communities, service providers and commissioners to identify and remove the barriers to accessing services. The project recruited local community members as mental health champions who, with the support of the community development workers, worked to reduce stigma, strengthen and widen local community service delivery and develop and support conversations between commissioners and communities to co-produce future services. MHCDWP also supported the Camden Mental Health User Involvement Service and the Camden Borough User Group to promote and organise a successful World Mental Health Day event.

"Camden has the highest level of mixed race people using the mental health services in England. A big challenge is when groups isolate themselves. There are a lot of historic and cultural expectations on men and women and how religion and mental health and medication are viewed. So it's very challenging."

NHS Mental Health Outreach Team



Maureen Brewster, Senior MHCDWP Worker at VAC with Dr Caz Sayer, Chair of Camden Clinical Commissioning Group (CCCG) at the CCCG's AGM

- 5 workshops covering: Mental health & Wellbeing, Depression, Understanding Dementia, Stress and the Workplace, Self-Advocacy were held: a total of 60 participants
- 9 sessions Mental Health First Aid training – 113 people
- 2 Bangladeshi Mental Health & Wellbeing Forum meetings – 28 people
- 2 Mental Health Information & Networking session – 44 people
- 19 trained mental health champions, 9 peer mentors attend the Mental Health First Aid Training and 7 attended the Coaching & Mentoring training





35 individuals representing 27 organisations attended BMER Mental Health Summit

38 mental health outreach sessions

8 Dementia friends sessions in Camden with 119 participants

650 organisations signed up to Mental Health newsletter

BMER communities have a wealth of mental health expertise that others can learn from. The BMER Mental Health Summit, held in September 2013, was attended by 35 community members, service providers, commissioners and decision makers. 79% of attendees were from BMER communities. People worked together to look at the mental health needs of communities, how current mental health services were working and to identify and agree actions to tackle inequality and gaps in service provision.



Delegates at the BMER Mental Health Summit

"There is no word for mental health in the Bengali language. There is no word for dementia.

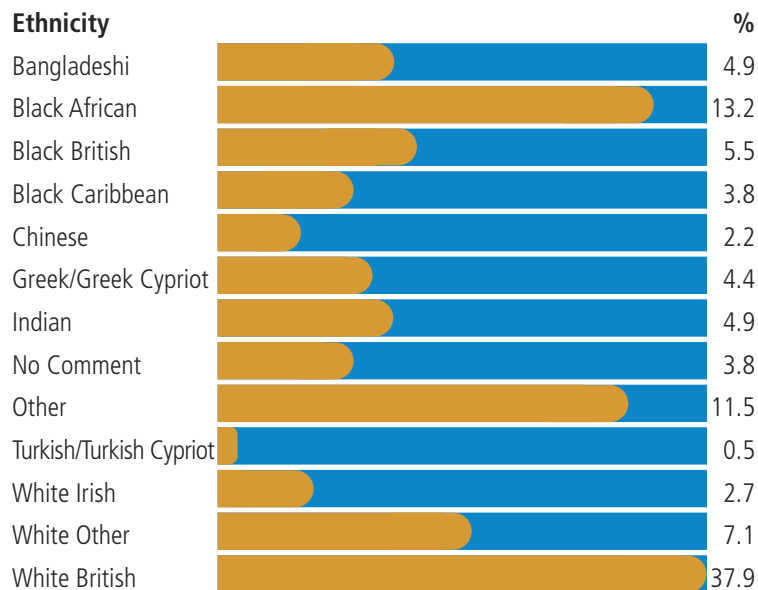
So how we went about addressing these issues was by working with VAC."
Crossroads Care CNL

"VAC has well established links and has connected me with various BMER groups. What struck me about working with VAC is how hard they work to establish those links. Certain BMER groups are really hard to engage with and I've been very impressed with what VAC has done to establish those connections."
VAC service user.

Health Inequalities Hub

VAC, in partnership with the Camden Clinical Commissioning Group (CCCG), lead on the development of the Health Inequalities Hub. Activity took place across the borough and it sought to tackle health inequality by piloting new ways in which the 'non clinical' demands on GP services could be met through the presence of volunteer health advocates and the signposting of people to local community based services. The project piloted new ways of working across the health service, the local authority and civil society and at the same time provided a conduit through which a two way communication loop could take place between local communities, the CCCG and commissioners. One of the long term ambitions of the project is to influence commissioning in favour of prevention and encourage the development of the health advocate role into 'co-commissioning' and participation in social prescribing.

To-date, VAC has recruited and trained 50 volunteer health advocates, 28 of whom were placed in eight GP surgeries and one Mosque in Camden. There are currently 16 volunteer health advocates providing the signposting service.



Community Health Advocates receiving certificates following RSPH Training



8 GP surgeries
 1 Mosque
 50 Volunteer Health Advocates received RSPH training to-date
 28 Volunteer Health Advocate placements
 16 Health Advocates currently signposting to services

"We have lots of patients at the practice who could use more advice about services. I think patients will become more aware that these services are on offer through the Health Advocacy Project."

Agnes Ngolo, Adelaide Medical Centre

Volunteers, many of whom speak community languages, gave at least two hours per week to the project. As well as signposting people to community activities and services, the health advocates worked with patients to complete questionnaires, which provided valuable intelligence for GP's and the CCG. During the year the project was constantly improving as it gradually became embedded in selected surgeries, with a view to rolling it out to all GP surgeries in Camden. Two volunteers secured paid work, capitalising on the skill and confidence obtained through being a health advocate volunteer. In the long term the vision is to link the experience of volunteering to pathways to paid employment in the NHS.



CASE STUDY: VOLUNTEERING AS A COMMUNITY HEALTH ADVOCATE

After we did the Royal Society of Public Health training we started to volunteer with VAC to link us with GP's, which we are keen to do because a lot of African people have problems accessing GP's as they find it difficult. So we're hoping that some of those issues can be addressed by this project and that we can better support our African clients who have health problems.

Its early days, but just the possibility of connecting with GP's is fantastic for us. It's going to help get people to access GP's instead of going to hospitals and A&E. It's an opportunity to work closely with GP's and find out what the challenges are in our community. We don't know the CCG but as VAC works in partnership with the CCG, we can inform the CCG through VAC. So we'll liaise with GP's and through VAC, to bridge between GP's and our community.

We're hoping that through this project, funders can see the importance that small organisations have in their communities and the impact they have on people in those communities, and I think that VAC can be that voice for us.

Chickwaba Oduka, Trustee of African Health Forum



The health advocates were also involved directly in community based projects. One volunteer delivered sermons including health messages as 'Islamic life styles'. The volunteer also planned to hold focus groups with Bengali men followed by an action plan to bring 'health services' into a Mosque. In Somers Town the community health advocate volunteers supported a working group pursuing air quality issues.

During the year community health advocates worked with Cancer UK and the City University to recruit and engage older women, members of the Bangladeshi population and lower social economic groups in the identification of the barriers to the early detection of cancer. In total, 114 Camden residents were involved in the research, the key finding of which was that communicating early stage cancer survival information could help to overcome key emotional barriers that delay people seeing their GP with potential cancer symptoms. These findings are now being used in a 'small c' early diagnosis campaign in Camden. This work is being taken forward by a number of community organisations. Campaign materials feature early stage cancer survival messages prominently e.g. '9 out of 10 women survive early stage breast cancer' and 'most people survive early stage cancer'.

114 Camden residents involved in community research





Early Intervention

Children and Young People

The government states that effective safeguarding of children can only be achieved by putting children at the centre of the system, and by every individual and agency playing their full part, working together to meet the needs of our most vulnerable children.

This year VAC has been involved in delivering very different partnership projects which are prime examples of the effectiveness of early intervention to help tackle inequality amongst local ethnic minority communities with regards to child safeguarding and improving educational attainment.

Child Safeguarding

The Community Partnership Project has been running since 2007 to address issues of child safeguarding amongst local BMER communities.

With a focus on early intervention through training, the Community Partnership Project builds a bridge between the statutory service providers, local BME communities and faith organisations as well as to the supplementary and weekend schools. This bridge enables

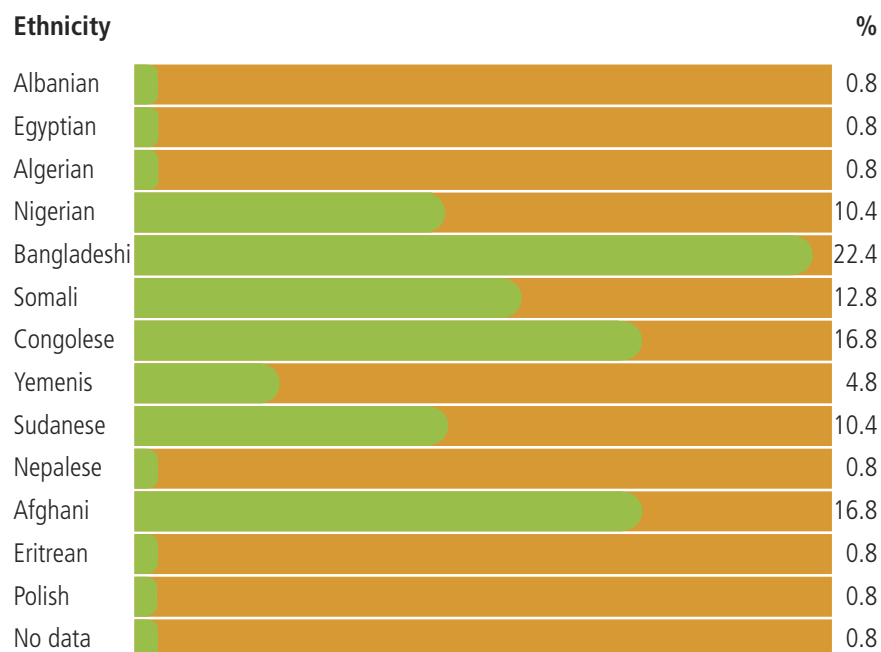
"Parents have found the training very useful and the information that has been provided helped them to understand the UK child protection and safeguarding laws better."

VAC Service User

"We have more awareness now, especially on how to approach appropriate organisations that deal with child abuse cases."

VAC Service User

Ethnic Profile of BMER groups supported:



communities to address issues of child safeguarding. In particular the project continues to tackle inequality by ensuring that BMER communities who come into contact with children are aware of child protection issues and UK law.

This year's partnership approach involved parents and carers from the targeted communities in the planning and delivery of child safeguarding training to help the understanding of what is involved and to build trust in the roles and responsibilities of social workers, health service providers, schools and the Metropolitan Police on issues of child protection.



The project has so far built a strong work relationship with:

62 BMER community and faith groups, supplementary schools and 1 theatre

995 participants attended the 70 training sessions on 'Protecting children in the community' since it began in 2007

125 participants this year, trained from local BMER and faith groups as well as from supplementary schools

9 organisations receive 121 support on safeguarding

Other safeguarding work involved capacity building of nine organisations by reviewing or setting up policies and procedure on child protection, vetting and barring systems, information on reporting incidents and the contact details and roles of relevant stakeholders. There were also front-line staff training sessions in the London Borough of Camden and the London Borough of Hackney on harmful practices e.g. FGM, abuses linked to beliefs.

Home School Link Project

Our Home School Link project involves two Home School Link Workers who work alongside school staff, parents and pupils as a cultural bridge between home and school in order to improve inequality in educational attainment of Bangladeshi and Congolese children.

The Home School Link workers have been working with staff from four different schools in Camden to raise awareness on issues affecting the pupils' achievement and help them develop strategies to address them. With parents, they have been enabling them to better support their children's learning through informative group workshops on the UK education system.

Focusing on key areas, such as improving language and truancy rates whilst mentoring children through group discussion on any issues surrounding their learning and developing ways to overcome barriers to achievement, has helped support pupils to reach their full potential.



CASE STUDY: HOME SCHOOL LINK

This initiative helps build education awareness for teachers, Bengali students and parents. Whilst some families are into the second and third generation, there are still those who have language barriers. Some families have problems with truancy and sometimes there are cultural issues which prevent teachers and students understanding shared problems. So this programme is to assist at bettering their children's education.



Most parents value me so much. They really appreciate that I'm here. To get that call from someone like me from a school saying their daughter's in or not in, they really appreciate that. It's like I'm protecting them somehow and they look forward to me ringing.

Our new initiative on attendance has seen attendance rise by five per cent. So that's really good. If Home School Link workers were not there to support these families then some students would be truanting and the staff wouldn't necessarily have known that things had got to a serious stage. I've been able to pick up on early warnings before it goes to extremes.

*Dilware Rashid, Home School Link Worker
for the Bengali Community*

937 parents from different community groups in Camden attended the parenting classes delivered by the approved providers.

82% would recommend parent classes to other parents

82% were satisfied or very satisfied with the parenting course.

Camden Carers Partnership Grants Panel

In 2013/14, VAC chaired the Camden Carers Partnership Panel. The Panel invited applications from community based organisations, working closely with the Camden Carers Partnership, to identify people who are in a caring role but are not accessing the support available. Once identified the people can be linked into the carers support services that are available in the borough – a key but simple example of early intervention that safeguards the health and well-being of carers and the people they care for.

Parenting Support Trial (CANparent project) in Camden

Camden was one of the three boroughs selected to pilot the Parenting Support Trial (CANparent project) in UK. VAC, one of the partners delivering this project, worked with over 90 Camden Distributors to distribute the CANparent Vouchers, which were used by mums, dads and other important carers of children aged five and under living in Camden, to access parenting classes with over 10 approved providers.

VAC also worked providers to carryout Road Shows across Camden to raise awareness on Canparent. Road Shows took place in various outlets such as libraries, sports and leisure centres, parents events and others. VAC acted as broker between some providers and community organisations to set up parenting classes in community settings such as libraries and community centres'.



CANparent roadshow

Make Every Pound Count ►►►►

Creating Conditions for Economic Growth

With a reduction in the amount of public sector funding available for civil society organisations, people have had to think more creatively about organisational structure to ensure financial sustainability and economic viability. In response, VAC developed pioneering courses, accredited and non-accredited, to look at alternative structures for civil society organisations that help, enable and harness economic growth – in particular looking at setting up social enterprises and other social business models.

The business courses were well received, in particular the Business Start Up for Social Businesses. The original thinking behind the course started with the imminent introduction of personal budgets, which presented opportunities for individual and communities to set up micro enterprises to offer specific services to their communities. VAC also developed a course on Income Generation, providing the knowledge and expertise needed to successfully identify new funding sources and a funding mix that would be sustainable. This was complemented by the launch of a course on how to write tenders.

"I learned lots of new information about setting up a business. The course helped me to think about the process involved in starting a small business. Very interesting."

"I enjoyed everything about the course, especially the marketing."

"It's a great course."

CASE STUDY: SETTING UP A SOCIAL BUSINESS

The idea for Betknowmore UK came from a mixture of my own personal addiction issues and professional experience. I had a gambling addiction for nearly 20 years. It had an enormously negative impact on me, affecting every single aspect of my general well-being and lifestyle.



Once the idea of developing Betknowmore UK started, it was a natural progression for me to set up a company to facilitate this, a social enterprise or a company limited by guarantee. The Mary Ward Centre course, delivered in partnership with VAC, was the foundation and start of that process.

It was a six week course, designed to give students a grasp of the different areas you need to tackle in setting up your own business. We looked at areas like company structure, accounting and marketing. It was a holistic approach on how to take your business ideas forward into the market place.

I think one of most important benefits of the course is that you become part of a group and there's peer-to-peer learning. Once you do a course like this you start to see that you actually know more than you think. It gives you confidence and motivation. You're exchanging ideas. It starts to facilitate a process when you start to move things forward.

Frankie Graham, Director of Betknowmore UK



Quality Marks

During the year, VAC worked with 52 organisations on income generation and quality assurance. Increasingly, especially when bidding for tenders, organisations were expected to have a quality mark and a quality mark was seen to strengthen an organisations position in what was now termed the 'market place'. The organisation then had a greater chance of winning a contract and bringing or keeping economic investment in the borough so making every pound count.

CASE STUDY: GAINING A QUALITY ASSURANCE MARK

Because of the climate at the moment of how difficult it is to get funding, we thought it would be a good idea to have a recognised quality mark.

We hoped this would show that we do good quality work, and maybe that will give a bit more of a chance to get funding. I didn't know anything about the quality marks and so VAC came to our meetings a couple of times. We looked at the various systems and in the end the Executive Committee decided we should go for Investors In People.

VAC were very helpful about telling us what this particular quality mark would cover so that we could navigate around the system to see if it was appropriate for our needs as a smaller organisation. When we thought we had everything ready VAC came and checked everything and said we could go for the mark as we were well prepared. So we went for the mark and got it in May 2014!

I think what the award will do is definitely help us to improve that we demonstrate social value, because the IIP mark is about the way that you treat your people, how best you utilise the human resources that you have and how you develop the staff and volunteers to better the organisation, and support the members and the users of the centre. We are investing in people, we do care about our staff and volunteers and we want the best of them. This is all about sharing the knowledge and helping each other, training etc. and IIP demonstrates that this is what we are doing.

*Begoña Blanco-Carbia, Crisis Worker at
West Hampstead Women's Centre*



Making 'Added Value' Count

During the year VAC worked with local authority officers to try and develop a framework or tool that would enable the added value that civil society organisations bring to service delivery to be built into the commissioning and procurement processes. When you deliver a service you know that the delivery of the service in isolation is not the true picture of the benefit e.g. an under fives baby gym may be targeted at the children, but the parents and carers develop social contacts and community support networks that help them cope with the demands and sometimes isolation that can come with looking after young children. The challenge is to get 'added value' recognised, after all it makes economic sense to know what the monetary return on the investment is. VAC also raised the question of proportionality in relation to procurement. The procurement process was very onerous and prevented small organisations from bidding. The question was also raised as to whether or not the spend on the procurement process could be justified in the current financial context. Should some of the resources be relocated to front line services?

To complement these discussions VAC worked with the sector to gain access to the skills required to use the 'added value tools' that exist and to build these into grant applications and tenders. Some examples of the tools available include LM3, Volunteer Investment and Value Audit and Social Return on Investment.

Community Researchers

In 2012/2013 VAC worked in partnership with Camden Council to set up the Camden Community Researchers Enterprise. This work continued in 2013/2014 and a new venture was also developed in Kilburn supported by South Hampstead and Kilburn Partnership.



CASE STUDY: COMMUNITY RESEARCHERS

We did a bid to the Reaching Communities lottery that involved wider user involvement and through that worked on the Community Researchers Project. I was just starting to formulate that and for advice approached VAC. VAC were already aware of the project that Camden Council was doing and so put me in contact with the Council officer and from there we had a meeting. At the meeting we were able to agree to share materials and the same trainer. We also agreed that the people from SHAK, who completed the training, could also qualify to do paid work with the Council's project. VAC kept me connected. The whole point was to connect us to others. If you're a small charity you're in danger of working on your own quite a lot. Having VAC as hub put me in touch with other groups, made me aware that these other things were happening, giving us contacts and support as well. In a way it was a very simple intervention but it turned out to be very important.

John Boyle, Director of South Hampstead and Kilburn Partnership

Over the lifeline of the project:

200+

Over 200 peer mentoring sessions among the trustee learners took place

14

Peer Mentors meetings to discuss the issues faced by the trustee learners and sharing of best practice.

183

learners attended a range of training sessions in topics such as Financial Management, Introduction to Coaching & Mentoring including Peer Mentoring and Introduction to Social Enterprise and Business Planning.

1

One website setting out how to approach peer mentoring

Peer Mentoring to Ensure Economic Sustainability

During the year VAC's two year project 'How to Educate Learners through Peer-Mentoring (HELP)', funded by EU Grundtvig Lifelong Learning Programme, came to an end. This project involved working with five European partners in France, Germany, Greece, Ireland and Spain to promote peer-mentoring.

Each partner looked at how peer mentoring could be used to support their learners in various learning situations. With expertise in both Peer Mentoring and Financial Literacy, VAC contributed on the Financial Literacy side of the Peer Mentoring project and shared its learning and best practice with all the partners in this project.

CASE STUDY: PEER MENTORING PARTNERSHIP

By observing the work of VAC it was possible to understand how behind organisations and services that help people to achieve independence and security, there is the support and governance of voluntary action, strongly focused on diversity and committed to improving the quality of life, creating jobs and generating wealth in the local area. What I am already doing with my learning back in Sardinia is to strengthen our partnership with VAC, which has a huge portfolio of best practices to share and to implement in finding new ways of working. I wish to thank VAC for this opportunity which helped the development of my knowledge of civil society in the UK.

Marinella Lei, EU Partner



CASE STUDY: PEER MENTORING FINANCIAL LITERACY

Peer mentoring has helped me in trying to get things done properly within organisations. It gave me the confidence to go in and discuss things that you've already done in your organisation and advise other people, in my case mostly on finance. So as a result of me going on the finance course at VAC and understanding what peer mentoring was, I mentored our trustees through a programme of cutting our expenditure. And we actually cut our expenditure radically as a result of that. We just took it in stages, like paying less rent. We got rid of these extraneous expenditures, a massive amount of wastage. We found cheaper ways of doing everything. I don't think I would have tackled the Director and the Trustees if I hadn't been on that course. If I hadn't realised there was actually a way of doing it I don't think I would have done it.

Celia Potterton, Trustee of Survivors Poetry



EU Peer Mentors' visits to London



Joint Purchase Networks – Working to Make Every Pound Count

On behalf of the sector VAC has worked hard to establish bulk-purchase networks. By leveraging the buying power of smaller groups into one purchasing network it was possible to negotiate lower prices for essential supplies. There are now five established networks in: telecoms, electricity and gas, insurance, stationery and IT. Much of this work took place behind the scenes with groups only needing to provide details of their bills to see how much they could save. The sign-up process was simple thereafter and significant savings were seen across all networks. In the voluntary and community sector every penny counts and each penny saved can be diverted back into the organisation to maintain vital services.

CASE STUDY: BULK-PURCHASE NETWORKS

We've been signed up to the various bulk-purchase networks for fifteen months now. We're signed to gas, electric, phones and IT and insurance. It saved us hundreds of pounds and time. The savings are quite good and we haven't had to work for it. I can say with a degree of confidence we're getting the best products at the best price. And also the manpower savings – having somebody systematically do this job is just worth gold because you know nothing is being missed and you have the additional leverage of having the joined up purchasing power. I don't understand why any of my colleagues wouldn't go for it! If you factor in insurance, actually, the savings are well above two grand. We're saving so much time; no one here has the time to arrange all these deals.



Lukas Lehmen, Director Holborn Community Centre

▶▶ Having the Opportunity to Make Every Pound Count – Pathways to Paid Employment

Volunteers bring enormous benefits to organisations. This has certainly been the case at VAC in 2013/14. In return for the contribution made by volunteers, VAC provided opportunities to build up skills and knowledge and possibly secure paid work.

- 25 volunteers and expert helpers provided direct support to VAC
- 20 of these provided expert advice and guidance in human resources, planning policy, environmental and planning law, community land trusts and housing, access to education and training and peer mentoring support in financial literacy
- 5 provided invaluable volunteer support within VAC in admin, impact measurement, IT and support to the Mental Health Team
- 50 trained volunteer Health Advocates
- 19 trained Mental Health Champions

CASE STUDY: VOLUNTEERING AS A COMMUNITY HEALTH ADVOCATE

One of the major reasons I wanted to volunteer is because of the sheer boredom of getting up and trying to find some structure to your day when you're unemployed. If you have a goal during your day you're using your time well. The Health Advocacy volunteering came up at a time when I was getting antsy about not doing much. I wanted to get a job in the public health field so then having the opportunity of doing something in public health, which is a field I had worked and volunteered in in the past was really good, but I really needed to get more experience in the area to get more work. Volunteering was another job I could add to my CV to do with public health. It's very different because previously I was doing research and it was desk bound. So having to go out to GP surgeries and actively approach people to see what you could do to help them – it took a bit of getting used to but once you get into the flow of it it's pretty easy. I've had quite long, interesting conversations with people about what their needs are. You get the instant acknowledgement that you're helping someone get some advice or get in touch with a support group or giving them information about a place they need to go or information about where to find exercise classes etc.

You do get the feeling that you're putting back something into the community where you can see that hopefully it has an effect, whether that's immediate or long-term.

Peter Simonson, Community Health Advocacy Volunteer



"As a volunteer at VAC I have developed a lot of skills. I have never worked in an office environment before, so I have developed skills in administration and organisation."

VAC Admin Volunteer

"VAC is a good place to volunteer as it helps volunteers to gain more experience, to learn new skills and to boost their confidence."

VAC IT Volunteer



CASE STUDY: VOLUNTEERING TO PAID EMPLOYMENT

For my part there's no way I would have a job in the voluntary sector if I wasn't volunteering at VAC. Also, doing this kind of work in the voluntary sector in the community you live in, even if you might make more money somewhere else, has an effect on your happiness in a way. I'd been earning a living using a very specific bit of software that just became useless over time, so

since I've been volunteering at VAC I've acquired an enormous amount of marketable skills, which means I can apply for a wider range of jobs. I've become way more employable by volunteering at VAC. Within less than a year I had transformed my CV so that I can show some current experience at a going concern. And the thing about VAC is it's an umbrella organisation so you're at the centre of the voluntary sector of Camden. Another thing about volunteering is when you're unemployed and you're just sending CVs out it just grinds you down. To have somewhere to go to and know that you're contributing to your community as a volunteer, but you're also gaining some skills and experience, and it turned into paid work – it's really transformed my life. There's no way I would have gotten work like this unless I'd volunteered.

Len Lauk, VAC Volunteer / Information Officer at Healthwatch Camden



Investing in Communities to Build Sustainable Neighbourhoods ▶▶



Neighbourhood Projects

Communities become more sustainable and resilient when individuals and organisations are able to take steps to effectively address local problems and enrich community life. In 2013/2014 VAC was involved in a number of initiatives to help support, develop and promote individual and community resilience so strengthening the local economy.

VAC continued to support neighbourhood planning in Camden, a planning process that acts as a vehicle for neighbourhood transformation. Support focussed on the neighbourhood planning process in Somers Town and the convening of a meeting to explore the possibility of one large neighbourhood forum for the south of the Euston Road. In Somers Town the Neighbourhood Forum developed as a platform supporting a variety of resident and civil society led actions. Themed working groups initiated community projects, formed collaborations to mobilise local resources, and campaigned against HS2. The Camley Street Neighbourhood Forum adjoins Somers Town and VAC helped to bring the two forums together on issues of common interest, particularly initiatives that reinforced local greening, air quality, pedestrian 'green' routes and sustainability.

In parallel to supporting neighbourhood action VAC fostered relationships with experts in a range of disciplines to build community knowledge and voice. Neighbourhood planning forums, community groups and residents across the borough gained insight, expertise and knowledge by attending a number of seminars exploring the planning system, land valuation, and community land trusts, followed later in early 2014 with housing policy and the protection of green spaces. This experience introduced more possibilities for collaborative working that could help to challenge inequalities, for example, rethinking public ownership, new models of service delivery and the development of built assets. In the coming year the focus will be on action research to build the capabilities of civil society organisations to use new methods to sustain their services for disadvantaged and excluded communities. VAC will work with organisations to understand some of the attributes of resilient communities and co-produce interventions that can help people improve their life chances. This will include asset development, negotiating neighbourhood level impact bonds, coproducing and commissioning local services. The evidence produced by this work will be used to lobby and broker relationships with public and private sector bodies and increase opportunities to demonstrate the value of collaboration and preventative community based services.



**CASE STUDY: MICHAEL PARKES,
EXPERT PLANNING VOLUNTEER,
ON WHAT IT MEANS TO
VOLUNTEER WITH VAC ON THE
NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING
PROJECT IN SOMERS TOWN.**

I'm 70 next year. I'm a surveyor and a town planner. I'm retired, but I was a community planner for 25 or 30 years, self-employed, and for 15 of those years I was the community planner for two days a week for the King's Cross Railways Lands Group.

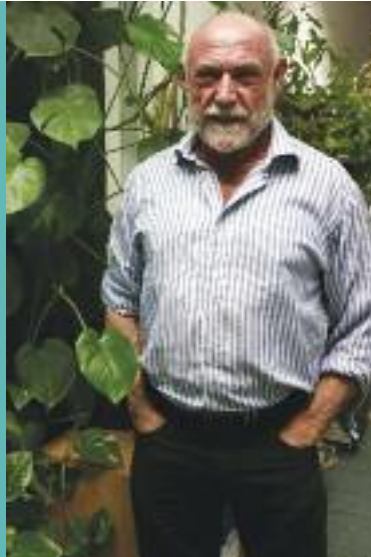
My partner of 35 years died in January 2010 and I found myself living on my own for the first time in my life. Bereavement is a huge shock. One really needs something else to focus on. Sometime in spring 2011 I received an email from VAC saying would I come to a daylong workshop that Camden Council and VAC were putting on about neighbourhood planning – could it be done, should it be done?

Work is half my life so as my life at that point was in rather a distressed state it was a lifeline to put it bluntly, and to a certain extent, it still is. It forced me to get out of bed, get vertical, get dressed, mind engaged by 10 in the morning at the very latest. There was a real risk that that wouldn't necessarily happen.

I strongly believe in helping people to help themselves, and that includes in town planning terms. So when a Bill comes along, and then an Act, that empowers local communities to prepare their own neighbourhood plan you can imagine I was amazed and delighted!

I love all voluntary organisations. I'm a natural community voluntary sector person. My parents were volunteers. Not only can the voluntary sector deliver services more appropriately and cheaply but the community sector can like wise.

Michael Parkes, Expert Helper and Volunteer



Community Festivals

The Camden Community Festivals Fund, a fund supported by Camden Council, supports the contribution made by community festivals to strengthening Camden communities, and in developing a rich culture and economy within the borough. In 2013/14 VAC continued to manage the fund and held an evening networking and information event for all successful applicants. 30 grants were made ranging from £500 to £5,000.



Camden Mela Festival

28

Bringing People Together

Bangladeshi Mental Health and Wellbeing Forum

The Bangladeshi Mental Health and Wellbeing Forum was facilitated by VAC. Meetings included a session about the Camden Psychological Therapies Service and the Bangladeshi community, during which people shared their understanding about barriers to accessing the service with providers and commissioners, looking at ways these could be overcome. People also watched "Talking from the Heart", a film in Bengali with English sub-titles which examines some of the religious and cultural aspects of mental health problems. The film features a Bengali-speaking Imam and a family therapist exploring the links between emotional and mental health and faith, acknowledging the important roles both therapy and faith can have in supporting people to recover from mental health difficulties. They looked at what the Qur'an says about mental health and address some of the concerns, which can deter people from seeking help, such as fear of bringing shame on their families and community. Copies of the DVD were distributed to interested groups and individuals, who thought it would be a very useful resource, for themselves and their clients.



Dementia Friends

Dementia Friends is an Alzheimer's Society-led initiative which aims to raise awareness about dementia and create one million Dementia Friends by 2015. Four VAC staff members and volunteers were trained as Dementia Friends Champions, delivering short interactive information sessions to community and voluntary sector organisations. Participants on these sessions gained an insight into what dementia is and what it might be like to live with the condition. Their newly acquired understanding made it easier for them to take small steps to make their communities more dementia-friendly. VAC is encouraging all its volunteers, especially those from BMER communities, to train as Champions so we can reach as many people as possible.

Camden Climate Change Alliance

VAC was a founding member of The Camden Climate Change Alliance when it was formed in 2008 to help organisations in Camden reduce their carbon emissions (as well as reducing energy bills). The Alliance has grown to over 280 members and VAC's role is to promote the Climate Change agenda to the voluntary and community sector in Camden. The CCCA has run many initiatives to promote a greener Camden, including workshops, information days, energy audits and demonstration days. Civil society organisations can sign up to become members and can then go for a green quality award, starting with 'Going Green', then moving up to 'Cutting Carbon' and finishing as a 'Carbon Champion'. The VAC e-bulletin contains regular updates of the CCCA's activities. The latest initiative is a project to link businesses and schools and the VCS in a mutual beneficial relationship mixing Corporate Social Responsibility and green energy solutions.

Making it all Possible



Working Together to Focus on Outcomes, Tackle Inequality, Champion Early Intervention and Make Every Pound Count

In times of austerity and the ongoing cuts in public spending it is crucial that civil society organisations, the public sector and the private sector collaborate to maximise the positive impact that can be made on the quality of life in Camden. During the year VAC worked to make sure that the relationships and structures were in place to make this happen.

In December 2013 VAC hosted an annual summit, 'Individual and Community Resilience. What is the role of the Voluntary and Community Sector in Camden?' The summit was attended by 84 individuals representing directors, senior managers, trustees, staff and volunteers from across the voluntary and community sector, local authority and public and private sectors.

The **key themes** to emerge were:

- Greater collaboration within and across sectors.
- Creating channels for two way dialogue to take place.
- Supporting the role of civil society organisations in providing support, advice and early intervention to local residents.

During the year, in addition to the training programme and one-to-one capacity building support, VAC delivered a number of awareness raising seminars in response to emerging trends and opportunities e.g. welfare reform, changes to parliamentary campaigning, the development of effective working relationships between civil society organisations and businesses and how civil society organisations can contribute to the delivery of services and support for Complex Families. VAC also circulated information through the weekly e bulletin, the web site and the networks, e.g. Community Centres Network, Community Nurseries Partnership. In 2013/2014 a piece of work was undertaken with the Chair of the Adult Safeguarding Board to look at how the involvement of civil society organisations could be strengthened in this area of work.

The quarterly Children, Schools and Families Providers Forums were a good example of collaboration, two way dialogue and support. This was an opportunity for people to meet with organisations from different sectors, have a dialogue with senior officers, get up to date with changes in policy and practice and to work on some common challenges. The Voluntary Sector Strategic Forum, a joint venture between VAC and the Council, met three times during the year. It was an opportunity for open discussion on the key strategic issues in the context of public health, resilience and the financial challenges faced by the council.

VAC worked closely with Healthwatch Camden to put forward the strengths of civil society organisations and what they could contribute to the health and well being agenda. VAC was a member of the Health and Well Being Stakeholder Group and the Camden Clinical Commissioning Board. Other areas of work included the Camden Community Safety Partnership, Employment and Skills Forum, Steering Group for Complex Families and facilitating the work of the Centre for Independent Living Consortium.

Thanks and Acknowledgements

VAC wishes to give special thanks to all those who have helped and supported us in 2013/14 and up until the present day in November 2014.

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Sintya Bokaa

VAC Volunteers

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Lyll Russell

Community Health Advocates

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Ambika Afrose Dow
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Chikwaba Oduka
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Sanije Rracaj
Sara Asgedom
Selwa Al Abdali
Shanti Ann Marie Rebello
Simone Wedderburn
Susan Lake
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Wallur Rahman Choudhury

Mental Health Champions

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Gillian Risso-Gill
Harunur Rashid
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Ralph Scott (Treasurer)
Sally Mulready
Sarah Elie
Sue Wilby (Chair)

Funders

Camden Council
Cabinet Office
Basis Big Lottery Funding –
Target HR
Basis Big Lottery – Better Governance
Camden Clinical Commissioning Group
Department for Education
European Commission –
Grundtvig Lifelong Learning Programme
Self-Generated Income –
Training and Room Letting



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 2014, but are not the full statutory report and accounts. The full financial statements were approved by the executive committee on 11 November 2014 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

DATE

Voluntary Action Camden
Statement of financial activities (Incorporating an income and expenditure account)
For the Year Ended 31 March 2014

	Restricted £	Unrestricted £	2014 Total £	2013 Total £
Incoming resources				
<i>Activities in furtherance of the charity's objects:</i>				
Capacity building	195,448	303,693	499,141	610,754
Information, co-ordination & partnerships	324,736	-	324,736	305,715
Promotion, policy & projects	103,951	-	103,951	101,266
<i>Activities to generate funds:</i>				
Lettings, room hire & service charges	-	159,372	159,372	125,589
Interest receivable	-	588	588	795
Total incoming resources	624,135	463,653	1,087,788	1,144,119
Resources expended				
<i>Charitable expenditure</i>				
Capacity building	312,393	423,345	735,738	797,404
Information, co-ordination & partnerships	260,159	-	260,159	226,119
Promotion, policy & projects	91,933	-	91,933	96,601
<i>Governance costs</i>	<i>26,282</i>	<i>15,685</i>	<i>41,967</i>	<i>52,769</i>
Total resources expended	690,767	439,030	1,129,797	1,172,893
Net (outgoing)/incoming resources before recognised gains and losses	(66,632)	24,623	(42,009)	(28,774)
<i>Actuarial gains/(losses) on defined benefit pension scheme</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>(289,000)</i>	<i>(289,000)</i>	<i>(263,000)</i>
Net movement in funds for the year	(66,632)	(264,377)	(331,009)	(291,774)
Total funds brought forward	112,149	(504,247)	(392,098)	(100,324)
Total funds carried forward	45,517	(768,624)	(723,107)	(392,098)

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

Voluntary Action Camden (Limited by Guarantee)
Balance sheet

Company No. 2386150

As at 31 March 2014

	Restricted	Unrestricted	2014 Total	2013 Total
	£	£	£	£
Fixed assets				
Tangible fixed assets	-	1,280	1,280	5,743
Current assets				
Debtors	2,205	255,640	257,845	246,296
Short term deposits	160,370	91,269	251,639	371,367
Cash at bank and in hand	-	608,813	608,813	250,549
	162,575	955,722	1,118,297	868,212
Liabilities				
Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year	(117,059)	(526,625)	(643,684)	(377,053)
Net current assets	45,517	429,097	474,613	491,159
Net assets excluding pension scheme liability	45,517	430,376	475,893	496,902
Defined benefit pension scheme liability	-	(1,199,000)	(1,199,000)	(889,000)
Net assets/(liabilities) including pension liability	45,517	(768,624)	(723,107)	(392,098)
Funds				
Restricted funds excluding pension liabilities	45,517	-	45,517	112,149
Unrestricted funds:				
Designated funds	-	81,721	81,721	81,721
General funds	-	348,655	348,655	303,032
Unrestricted income funds excluding pension liability	-	430,376	430,376	384,753
Pension reserve	-	(1,199,000)	(1,199,000)	(889,000)
Total funds	45,517	(768,624)	(723,107)	(392,098)



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