









RESILIENCE

Annual Report 2014/15



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.

Voluntary Action Camden

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CHAIRS ADDRESS



Velcome to VAC's Annual Report for 2014/15.VAC has continued to work with a range of partners over the last twelve months, with some very fruitful collaboration with Camden's Clinical Commissioning Group and some very welcome support from Trust for London for our area based community forum

work. We also worked closely with Camden Council in its continuing focus on developing a strategic relationship with the voluntary and community sector. Close collaborative working with our statutory and other partners will continue to be a priority in 2015-16.

The continuation of Central Government's austerity programme following the General Election means that the climate for civil society organisations of all kinds continues to be a difficult one, with the levels of need and vulnerability inevitably rising as elements of welfare reform affects different groups in our community. For organisations and groups big and small, there are major pressures on all the resources we depend on, whether that's 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, 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.

We have been looking at new ways of providing support and help to organisations and continue to try and meet what sometimes feels like ever increasing requests for practical help on a wide range of issues. The vibrancy of civil society in Camden, however, is extremely impressive in these difficult days and definitely something to be celebrated.

VAC's Executive Committee saw a number of changes in 2014/15 as long standing members left and new ones joined, bringing different skills and insights. I would particularly like to thank here one of VAC's former Chairs – Efua Taylor – who has been unable to take an active part this year due to illness. Efua has been a loyal and insightful supporter for VAC over many years her input has been much missed.

Staff and volunteers have continued to respond flexibly to new opportunities and to show a willingness to look at issues in fresh ways, together with a commitment to finding the best solutions to the many issues they encounter. We have continued to develop our web-based resources during the year, whilst recognising that it is the face-to-face contact that groups find most 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 current and we hope future success.

Sue Wilby

ABOUT US

AC 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 performance 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 National Association for Voluntary and Community Action's quality mark as an infrastructure organisation. VAC is also committed to climate change and has successfully secured the Camden Climate Change Alliance Mark of Achievement – Cutting Carbon.



INVESTING IN OUR COMMUNITIES TO ENSURESUSTAINABLE NEIGHBOURHOODS

"VAC, given the work that it does, has a responsibility to build the resilience of community organisations, which in turn help build resilience amongst the communities they work with."

VAC Service User, NW5

Increasing the Resilience of Local Residents and Communities

The biggest strength of civil society is its understanding of local communities, the ability to identify need and deliver services tailored to meet those needs which in turn provide vital activities and services, create local jobs and enrich the lives of the people of Camden.VAC has a long history of providing direct support and training to those involved in civil society that strengthens the skills, abilities and confidence of people to play key roles in supporting the resilience and sustainability of Camden's communities.

"VAC does a lot of work to engage smaller organisations in consultations and to feed into strategy, to make sure their views and input are not missed out."

VAC Service User, NW5

Capacity Building

In 2014/15 VAC provided direct support to over **200** civil society organisations.

- Structures and Governance 37
- Employment & HR 31
- Income Generation & Quality Assurance 35
- Business Planning 15
- Working together / Finding premises -
- Payroll **62**
- Accountancy 9
- Finance queries 869
- Signposting 158

"VAC helped us develop a bespoke capacity building programme for the board to address their learning needs. This helped with the ability of our board members to help shape and influence strategy, influence commissioning, be more strategic at meetings and involve and engage our board at the strategic level and build a more resilient board."

VAC Service User, NWI

"They are a good organisation to talk to about anything to do with community groups because I am still learning. Help with funding applications has been important, and of course the child protection and safeguarding training. I would be very sad to lose them."

VAC Service User, NW5

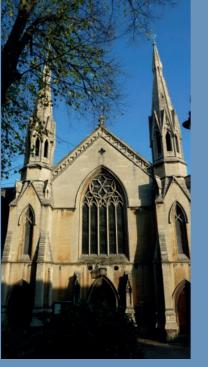


CASE STUDY:

HEATH STREET BAPTIST CHURCH

Treasurer

I got involved with VAC's Salary Administration Service because I am treasurer of a church. Within the last two or three years we took on one paid employee and so I suddenly realised that I had to get to grips with payroll. I am retired and work from home. I was petrified! HMRC has got much tighter, the penalties are higher. If you attempt to do the payroll as a volunteer like me, then it is time consuming and very hard to we had the necessary skills or expertise and knowledge to feel confident to run the payroll ourselves. So this seemed like a great opportunity to sign up to the payroll service at VAC. Even with the recent changes to the service where we now have to pay the salary and liabilities to HMRC ourselves, we still get the calculations done for us and the safety net of Heath Street Baptist Church, Hampstead somebody making sure that we comply with legal requirements.



It saves me a lot of time and hassle as I would have to be trying to keep up to date with anything to National Insurance, tax, student loans, etc. are taken care of by someone who knows what they're doing, and also how to set up the payroll for new employees, which is quite likely for us in the very near future.

If VAC didn't offer this service then I think a lot of organisations would faff around trying to find somewhere else to do it and would end up paying more, or people like me would end up trying to do it themselves, which is a potential risk. Having an external organisation do this for you, it's terribly practical.

CASE STUDY: EMPLOYMENT AND HUMAN RESOURCES ADVICE ON REDUNDANCY

Malcolm McKenzie: Chair of Home Start Camden

Home-Start Camden offers free, confidential support, friendship and practical help to parents of children under five in the London Borough of Camden. In 2014 they approached VAC for advice on how to deal with redundancy.

"We didn't know whether we were going to get some funding that we applied for. The existing down on the staffing and make some people redundant or reduce their hours. So we arranged a meeting with VAC so that I knew what it was legally that I was required to do.

I knew a bit about the law but VAC helped to refine and enhance my understanding of what the law foot wrong legally it actually holds up everything you need to do to get your organisation to survive, and you may end up with additional costs should you have to go to an employment tribunal.

VAC focussed on exactly what our problem was and helped me to understand what it was I had to do to make sure I was fair to people and that everything was above board with the law and still acting for the best interests of my organisation.

Home Start UK provides a legal service that is good and has worked in the past but I found it more emotionally accessible to have someone local to whom I could talk face-to-face. The VAC service was fantastic. I couldn't fault it. The feeling one gets when you talk to people from VAC is they want to help to time and think of leaning on a lot more. That's what you're there for isn't it?"

"For a very small group like ours, we can't survive without this support. They are a local organisation with friendly and knowledgeable people who are willing to help small organisations to develop their work locally; so VAC is extremely important to keep local connections, and in many ways, to keep small, local organisations up and running."

VAC Service User

Training

In 2014/15 VAC's training programme was especially designed to equip individuals and community groups with the skills and knowledge they need to help build resilient communities that can adapt, survive, sustain and innovate when faced with challenging circumstances.

STATS

36 Courses **615** individuals **357** organisations

8 accredited courses 50 qualifications

- Awareness Raising 55
- Business Planning 35
- Coaching & Mentoring 30
- Collaboration 85
- Employment 6
- Finance 70
- Governance 18
- Health Inequalities | 4
- Income Generation 58
- Management 108
- Structures 19
- Sustainability 17
- 90% felt training increased knowledge and skills
- **85%** felt more confident to perform their job better

"All our staffs receive training from VAC. They do specific tailor made training which is very useful and is either free or very low-cost."

VAC Service User, NW3

VAC has continued to work in partnership with the Mary Ward Centre to deliver quality accredited and non-accredited training and learning opportunities tailored to the needs of staff, trustees and volunteers. During the year 63 people involved with civil society organisations attended courses ranging from accredited programmes with the Institute of Leadership and Management (Level 2 Certificate in Team Leadership) and the accredited courses in Project Management and Risk through to non-accredited courses in Governance, Setting up a Social Business and Starter Project Management.

Camden Community Festival Fund

In 2014/15 VAC managed the Camden Community Festival Fund. Community festivals are run by community organisations or a community-led partnership. Camden Council supported the grants programme in recognition of the contribution made by community festivals to strengthening Camden communities, in developing a rich culture and economy within the borough and offering opportunities for volunteering and mentoring for Camden residents. Grants were for varying amounts ranging from £200 to £3,000. The Grants Panel was made up of a wide range of organisations ranging from the British Library, British Museum, Crick Foundation to the Chief Executive of the Camden BID, Argent, Camden Council, an expert in festival management and two local residents. There were 47 applications, 34 of which received a grant which in turn supported an impressive programme of activity from June through to December.



CASE STUDY: LADY SOMERSET ROAD STREET FESTIVAL

Anna Wright, Local Resident and Festival Organiser

Our festival is a very small event and open to everybody. Its main participants and beneficiaries are from the five streets around the site, which includes the Ingestre Estate and residents of Highgate Road, Burghley Road and Fortess Road. It is quite a confined and very diverse community. There's a mix of social housing, housing associations and private housing, which has become increasingly valuable in the last decade and there are two schools within that space as well. It's a very mixed community.

At the start of the festival we have lunch and in the afternoon there are bands and magicians, street performers, a guy comes with his snakes, different things like that. A new thing that we have in recent years is a dog show which is just hilarious. That really brings in the crowds. There's an open mic session where anybody can get up and perform. A lot of the younger people do that. We always try and include local bands and music.

I would say the one area we really stand out is community cohesion. I can genuinely say that through these street parties people in those streets get to know each other, we know the community police, we know people that we wouldn't otherwise know. There is a genuine sense of community within that patch.

I'm a real advocate for the community festival model. In terms of building resilience in communities and building those connections and putting people in touch with each other and making people in a diverse community work together on a project, community festivals are hugely effective and powerful. I just love showing pictures of residents holding hands doing the 'hokey-cokey', with local police officers and local kids.



Mary Ward Choir, Queen Square Fair Community Festival

"Everything went well! The band was excellent. The catering went perfectly and the entertainment was very popular, in particular the running races, slow bicycling race and tug'o'war. Many of the elderly residents came, people who hadn't previously been involved were, and everyone had a great day."

Albert Street Party

"The event ran smoothly with no mishaps or emergencies. There was a good level of participation by local businesses, including several who have not participated in previous years. There was a good mix of local stalls, including local residents, organisations and businesses. The musical acts were well received. The local history exhibition was well visited."

Covent Garden Neighbourhood Festival





SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES TO TAKE AN ACTIVE PART IN DECISION MAKING

Giving the Community a Voice Through Neighbourhood Planning

STATS

6 seminars, workshops & training

99 local people trained

2 local working groups for Planning and Development and Health

Neighbourhood planning is an opportunity for local people and communities to shape the development and growth of their neighbourhoods. People who live in an area have a vast amount of knowledge, skills and ideas about what they want to see happen. Throughout 2014/15 VAC supported local people in taking forward their ideas by delivering seminars, workshops and training including planning, legal and development themes.

Housing Policy

with Duncan Bowie University of Westminster.

Community Infrastructure Levy

with officers from Camden Council.

Local Greens

with University College London and the Environmental Law Foundation.

Community Councils

with the National Association of Local Councils.

Two community associations went on to receive grants to explore community council development in their neighbourhoods.

Thanks to the grant aid support from Trust for London VAC was also able to support formal campaigning in relation to HS2 (including the development of a parliamentary petition), the emerging moves to establish community councils, through to achieving affordable housing and the management of the impacts of Crossrail 2. Work involved a combination of lobbying, petitioning and negotiating alternatives supported by research and evidence with the support of the 'Expert Helpers'. Through the seminars, training and the support of the Expert Helpers a new and growing toolkit was made available on VAC's website.





CASE STUDY:

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING FOR THE HOLBORN COMMUNITY

Nahida Chowdhury, Holborn Community Association

We're trying to get people involved in the community and to raise awareness about neighbourhood planning. We're talking to people about what they think of their area, about their problems with the area and how they feel they want to sort these out. We want to collect their ideas and think of an action going forward.

I was introduced to VAC by my line manager at Somers Town who knew about the Neighbourhood Plan they were doing in Somers Town. I didn't know anything about neighbourhood planning! My first impression was I was shocked because it is a very big thing and it was very difficult for me to understand. The neighbourhood planning process is hard and explaining the concepts to people who have never heard of anything like this before is also hard. So VAC helped explain this to me: what it is all about and how I could go out and explain it to people and how to get them involved.

VAC shared with me a lot of information and gave me a check list about what a Neighbourhood Forum and a Community Council could do. What are the advantages and disadvantages of each one? So VAC's support helped me to develop my project. I've listened to over 200 people in the area. We're inviting them and others to hear about the project and find out what they would like to see.







CASE STUDY: WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP TO DELIVER NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

Or Sue Brownill, Oxford Brookes University



I work at Oxford Brookes University in the Built Environment department and I've been doing some research on neighbourhood planning. The Somers Town Neighbourhood Plan (STNP) is a really interesting plan as most of the neighbourhood plans in the country are in rural areas or parishes, in fairly wealthy areas, and so this is very different. I think the

STNP has lots of really innovative ideas about what neighbourhood planning can achieve and the priorities for it. One of the issues around planning has been about trying to secure some of the gains from development and communities being able (or not able) to know what they can ask for.

There are actually two aspects of tackling inequality there. One is if you can get some of the value out of developer's profits, some of that should be redistributed to the community. So, any involvement that is going out there and increasing the amount of value that is going back into the community will hopefully help to tackle inequality, for example, by provision of housing, training, local labour. VAC has been really proactive about picking the brains of academics from varying institutions on things like housing, which will hopefully feed into the neighbourhood planning process in Somers Town. This is directly tackling those issues of inequality.

Indirectly there is the inequality of knowledge, for example, knowing how the planning system works. One of the whole things behind neighbourhood planning is about trying to engage people with processes they may have been unable to previously engage with. Making use of knowledge and skills already in the community – nor just planners who have the funds, or the technical and professional expertise - but people who live in an area have a vast amount of knowledge and skills and ideas about what they want to see happen; so it's a way of ensuring that they can be involved in these discussions and debates. VAC has a really good understanding of the policies and knows a lot of people in the area. If you look at what VAC is doing around neighbourhood planning, it's actually pretty unique. Most neighbourhood planning groups don't have an organisation like VAC there to support them. To have that long term consistent support for neighbourhood planning is pretty unique and I think it's a model really that other places should follow



DEVELOPING NEW SOLUTIONS WITH PARTNERS TO REDUCE INEQUALITY: BUILDING SAFE AND RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

Resilient Families

Resilience is about being able to bounce back when faced with challenges. It is about building the strength of local communities and the support offered from family members, peers and communities. This requires offering families what they need to be resilient, in the right way and at the right time, being able to make links with the community support networks that exist in our communities. The Community Partnership Adviser Project plays a key role in supporting resilient families.

The Community Partnership Adviser Project – Safeguarding Children.

STATS

16 safeguarding sessions delivered to 16 BAMER, faith groups and supplementary schools.

192 BAMER delegates trained including Bangladeshi, Somali, Congolese, Sudanese

"I got access to BAMER community and faith groups through this Project that I would otherwise struggle to gain access to."

Staff member from statutory body

The current population for the London Borough of Camden is 237,400, of which 20% are children and young people aged 0-19. 30.0% of these children live in 'child poverty'. The 2011 census data estimates that 47% of children and young people aged 0 to 24 years are from a Black Asian Minority Ethnic Refugee (BAMER) background.

The Community Partnership Advisor (CPA) Project is about working with residents, faith and community organisations, supplementary, mainstream and weekend schools to promote the safeguarding of children in all areas of life and to encourage stronger working relationships with statutory service providers. As well as statutory services, there is a range of voluntary and community led service providers working with children and young people from BAMER communities – including supplementary schools run by members of the communities, many faith groups and voluntary youth initiatives.

By involving parents and carers in the design and delivery of training on child safeguarding and building the capacity of BAMER communities to engage with UK safeguarding rules the CPA Project helped communities to challenge culturally harmful traditions and develop faith in the roles and responsibilities of social workers, health service providers, those involved in education and the Metropolitan Police. The Project also acted as a 'conduit' through which information was channelled from the statutory service providers to BAMER communities, faith organisations and supplementary schools.

CASE STUDY:

CHILD PROTECTION TRAINING

ulia Evanjalista, See Through Theatre Company



See Through Theatre Company was founded in 2010 and uses combined arts to inform and inspire people of all ages, particularly those from undersupported backgrounds, in the world of creation and knowledge. In November 2014 VAC arranged Safeguarding Children training for the theatre.

The Child Safeguarding training has made a real difference to our group. There are safeguarding dangers that we have to deal with all the time, so this course provides an opportunity to refresh our knowledge and learn about the law and

be more specific about safeguarding and how to implement this across the organisation. Now we are trying to be aware (and make children aware) of their safety, to think about how we should all behave as a group and to collaborate to be safe. We believe this is a good strategy so children become aware of safeguarding issues so they can participate within the process too. We have already had one meeting with the directors and staffs to discuss and put on paper the new policies and build these into our good practice.

They (VAC) are a good organisation to talk to about anything to do with community groups because I am still learning. Help with funding applications has been important, and of course the child protection and safeguarding training. I would be very sad to lose them. For a very small group like ours, we can't survive without this support. They are a local organisation with friendly and knowledgeable people who are willing to help small organisations to develop their work locally, so VAC is extremely important to keep local connections, and in many ways, to keep small, local organisations up and running. We could never have afforded the child protection costs charged by other providers.

"Child Protection Laws are not there to punish my culture and belief, it is about protecting every child including ours."

Community Member.

Ethnic Profile of BAMER groups Supported:

Ethnicity	%
Black British	0.52
No Data	1.04
Algerian	1.56
Eritrean	1.56
White British	2.60
Brazilian	3.13
Nigerian	4.69
Congolese	5.73
Sudanese	8.33
Somali	25.00
Bangladeshi	44.27

I. Camden Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report 2014-15

Working with Camden's 16 Mosques and Islamic Centres

A collaboration between the mosques, Camden Council, the Metropolitan Police, the Charity Commission, the Camden Borough Safeguarding Children's Board and the Camden Safer Neighbourhood Board

Camden has a substantial population who practice Islam and local Mosques are catering for the needs of Muslim communities from Bangladesh, Somalia, Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sierra Leone, Middle Eastern countries, North African communities and new converts to Islam.

Mosques quite often provide educational services to children and young people as well as to women. This innovative project engaged the local Mosques and Islamic Centres in learning about agencies such as the Charity Commission, the Safeguarding Children Board, the Metropolitan Police and local government as a service provider.

Overall the project was a success as it not only increased the awareness of what matters most within the Muslim faith groups but it allowed all participants, including other faith groups, to work together and learn from each other. The project also initiated a platform of dialogue and discussion on how to jointly 'own' issues of safety and above all the project demonstrated that major faith groups in the London Borough of Camden could work together for a 'local' common good.

"The rationale behind conducting an interactive session is the acknowledgement that community safety is a very sensitive topic to be discussed and it would test religious people from different faiths to see it as a common issue and discuss it frankly as peers."



"We had for the first time a platform to convey our ideas, at least we had that, whether it has been well received or not we will wait to see what the next steps would be".







Home Link: Improving Educational Attainment

"Inequalities in educational outcomes affect physical and mental health, as well as income, employment and quality of life. Once at school, it is important that children and young people are able to develop skills for life and for work as well as attain qualifications. Closer links between schools, the family, and the local community are important steps to this achievement". 'Fair Society Healthy Lives' (The Marmot Review)

STATS

- Home School link worker
- Camden school

According to the 2011 Census 12% of children in secondary school across Camden are Bangladeshi. Despite some recent improvements in educational attainment, Bangladeshi children still perform below both the Camden and national average at GCSE and A level.

In 2014/15 VAC continued to support the Home School Link initiative, which aims to tackle inequality amongst Bangladeshi secondary school children by helping to improve educational attainment using early intervention approaches. During the year the Home School Link Worker worked with school staff, parents and pupils as a bridge between home and school to improve the achievement of Bangladeshi children. They helped raise awareness amongst staff on issues affecting the pupils' achievement and helped staff develop strategies to address them. With parents, they helped enable them to better support their children's learning through informative group workshops on the UK education system.

Baitul Amaan Mosque, Kentish Town

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Health Inequalities

"Inequalities in health arise because of inequalities in society — in the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age... Reducing health inequalities is a matter of fairness and social justice". 'Fair Society Healthy Lives' (The Marmot Review)

Mental Health

Camden has the second highest serious mental illness prevalence and fifth highest depression prevalence in London. There are 3,358 adults diagnosed with serious mental illness registered with Camden GP's and 19,647 adults with depression.² Certain BAMER groups, such as the Bangladeshi and Black African communities, have a higher risk of developing mental illness.

Improving Mental Wellbeing In BAMER Communities.

STATS:

24 trained Mental Health Champions

215+ BAMER staff trained in Dementia Friends Information Sessions, Stress management, Five Ways to Wellbeing, Youth Mental Health First Aid, Mental Health First Aid, Stigma, Mental Health and Resilience.

687 organisations received monthly information and briefings on mental health challenges and initiatives in Camden.

28 outreach sessions to BAMER groups

Community development work took place throughout the year to identify and raise awareness of the mental health needs of BAMER communities, to work to remove the barriers to accessing services and to support a constructive dialogue on service design between service users and commissioners.

TO THE WORK THE WAR TH

The team also worked in partnership with the Camden and Islington Psychological Therapies Service (ICope), with the aim of increasing the number of BAMER people accessing the service.

To date a total seventeen volunteer Mental Health Champions and seven Work Place Mental Health Champions have been recruited and trained in delivering a number of mental health messages. The Mental Health Champions delivered a number of sessions, including five sessions in the 'Five ways to Wellbeing and Dementia Awareness'. The Work Mental Health Champions were supported to deliver mental health messages in their own workplaces. This strengthened the resilience of organisations and enabled people to develop the skills to be more supportive and committed in raising awareness of mental wellbeing within the work environment.



CASE STUDY:

CASTLEHAVEN COMMUNITY CENTRE – DEMENTIA FRIENDS INFORMATION SESSION.

When Castlehaven Community Association (CCA) got in touch with VAC with a request for a Dementia Friends Information Session at one of their coffee mornings, two of VAC's Mental Health Champions (MHC's) jumped at the chance to get involved and agreed to run the session jointly. VAC offered the MHC's a refresher and one-to-one support session to help them develop their skills and build confidence. For one MHC this was the first opportunity to deliver a Dementia Friends Information Session and the other was feeling a bit rusty as she hadn't done one for some time. VAC also provided a room for them to meet up before the session to have a practice run-through. Following this session, CCA asked VAC to run further coffee morning sessions on the Five Ways to Wellbeing and Sleep Hygiene.

"I just wanted to say a huge thank you to VAC for providing the Mental Health Champions a window to come along to our Centre to give a talk on dementia. The session was very successful with a good crowd turning up, the feedback has been great and the information was delivered perfectly."

Rosa Walden, Castlehaven Community Association

"It was a great way to learn how people can improve their wellbeing through the 5 steps."

"These coffee mornings are invaluable to our members who really benefit from any advice and information they can receive about their health and wellbeing or what to expect as they are getting older."



"I want to help people see that the discrimination they have towards people with mental health problems is wrong and damaging. If there is some way to reach as many people as possible and teach other people to go out to talk about these issues then all the better". **BAMER Groups Influencing Mental Health and Wellbeing Policies and Servcies.**

STATS

78 attendees

4 cross-sector partners

78 people attended a Mental Health Summit in September 2014. The event was organised by the Mental Health Community Development Workers in partnership with Healthwatch Camden, the Camden Clinical Commissioning Group and the Camden and Islington NHS Foundation Trust. The aim was to bring together representatives of BAMER communities to identify how mental health services can better meet the needs of these communities. The summit highlighted the significant gap between mental health services and grassroots communities going on to identify ways of bringing the two together to develop services that are more accessible to people from different communities and cultures and more sensitive to their needs.

Health Inequalities Hub - Community Health Advocates and Social Prescribing.

STATS

55 volunteer advocates recruited and trained

598 advice and signposting consultations



55 volunteer health advocates were recruited and trained in Level I Health Awareness (Royal Society of Public Health), Mental Health First Aid, Designing Questionnaire and Data Analysis, and many of the volunteers are continuing to develop their research skills.

The health advocates were placed in GP surgeries and other local settings. They focussed on encouraging and enabling people to take greater responsibility for their health with a focus on involving and referring people to community services and linking isolated people into community networks. The health advocates also carried out research and collected data that was used to inform the commissioning of local services. A problem solving workshop on local services was held with 23 people representing the Camden Clinical Commissioning Group, GP practices, Public Health and the Volunteer Health Advocates. The workshop was an opportunity for the volunteers to present some of their findings about local services to clinicians and commissioners.

Feedback from GP practices confirmed that the approach was providing valuable support to GP's. Volunteer health advocates were often the only people in the GP surgeries that had time to sit and answer questions with the knowledge to make referrals to local services and activities. An informal network of social prescribing developed and in 2015/16 further work is planned to develop this model to fully engage the potential of linking Camden's social and clinical spheres of work

CASE STUDY: HEALTH ADVOCATE PLACEMENT IN GP PRACTICES

Anna Suarez, Practice Manager at Swiss Cottage GP Practice

We've had two really fantastic Health Advocates at our GP practice who provide an excellent service for us in signposting patients to local services and support. This is a service the practicitself hasn't been able to provide. It's really important, making patients aware of things that are happening in the area and the locality that we, the surgery staff, are not always aware of.

The Health Advocates service relieves doctors and staff from the time taken up in dealing with patients who might have are ailment but also just want to have a chat. They may be lone for example, and are not always presenting with a clinical problem. We really try to help those patients out and have time for them but we can't dedicate half an hour with our existing workload, we just don't have enough time. Instead, the Health Advocates will sit there and talk to the patient and will find out about them and say, look there are other things you could do, there are these services or groups you can join in your area, you don't have to be lonely. People are expecting that service now and are coming in and asking – even non patients – for the Health Advocates.

We've been very happy with service. It's really excelled and I'd recommend any surgery go for this too.



"Last week I booked an appointment for a Bengali woman regarding her housing. At the same session I advised someone with heart surgery and a recent kidney transplant about his eligibility for the exercise on prescription scheme and also referred another patient who was of No Fixed Abode to the safer streets team (with his consent)."

CREATING CONDITIONS FOR AND HARNESSING THE BENEFITS OF ECONOMIC GROWTH

Saving Money Through Joint Purchase Networks

Since 2013 VAC has been helping small civil society organisations in Camden harness the buying power of larger organisations by brokering bulk-purchase networks in insurance, telecoms, gas and electricity. Through the scheme community groups secured discounts on services for which they would ordinarily pay higher premiums. Reducing the amount spent on overheads has helped community groups free up more money to reinvest in vital services and activities for the community.

Business and Strategic Planning and Financial Management

VAC has seen an increase in demand for its role supporting organisations with business and financial planning, not least because of the challenging and fast-changing environment in which community organisations must now operate.

By providing business planning and financial management support, VAC helped directors and trustees to perform effectively and to take efficient action and leading roles in the development of sustainable organisations.

STATS

3 courses in 'Business Startup for Social Enterprise, Micro Enterprise, Sole Trader' and 'An Introduction to Social Enterprise and Business Planning'

6 courses in Financial Management, Budgeting for your Projects and Payroll

105 attendees

72 VCS groups





CASE STUDY: BUSINESS PLANNING AND

STRATEGIC REVIEW

Donna Liburd, Kingsgate Community Centre

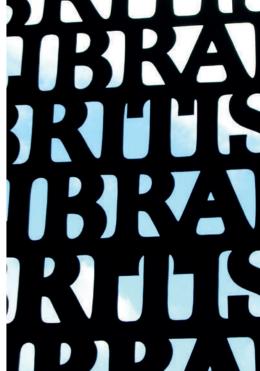
For the last seven or eight years VAC has facilitated a strategic away day for our trustees. We look at developing a new business plan or review the progress of the current business plan.

Because VAC is embedded in Camden, has so many networks, a relationship with the council and a really good understanding of the environment in which we are operating - locally, nationally, in Europe - it has a wider understanding and knowledge of funding and policy environments and strategy, as well as new government policies coming in; all of this is really helpful in terms of feeding into our business plan. VAC also has very good knowledge of governance and what the roles and responsibilities of the board are, so if the board drifts off into discussing more operational work then VAC steers them back to the strategic side, which is where they should be focused.

As a director I am confident and comfortable that we will get a lot out of the day. I know that straight after the meeting I can start moving things forward: writing the business plan or measuring what we have done. Some of this happens in the meeting and some after the event. It is a very productive day and the board is very comfortable that VAC can deliver. It is also an opportunity for our board to receive informal training, which elsewhere can cost a fortune.

I think as a result we become a more resilient organisation because we can focus on what is current, what direction we need to move in to stay in our business and meet current and developing needs. We have gone on to develop services for children and young people and older people, even though we've had reduction in our funding, something like 38% over the last few years. Despite this we have adapted and responded to the changes in environment to find new ways to bring in income and develop new services and keep innovating, which keeps us vibrant and relative to help meet the needs of our local community.

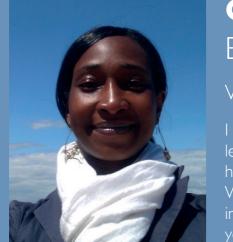




Social Value

Whilst commissioners opened up the tendering process to an ever widening list of competitors it became important for Camden's civil society organisations to convincingly demonstrate social value to ensure that this was not excluded by the power of 'price'. Evidencing social value when bidding for contracts is challenging as impact can be subjective and difficult to measure. In 2014/15 VAC invested significant time into helping 26 civil society organisations understand the importance of evidencing and demonstrating social value and the link with building social capital and the building of resilient communities.

In November VAC delivered two bid-writing sessions to help 15 civil society organisations embed social value into future funding bids. Later in the year VAC and the Big Lottery offered one-to-one support sessions for nine Camden groups applying for Awards for All and Reaching Communities funding in 2015.



CASE STUDY: BID-WRITING TRAINING

Violet Oruwari-McCabe, of Progressive Stages

I came on the Bid-Writing course in November 2014 as I wanted to learn the best approach towards bid writing: what to focus on and how to deliver the information in our application to sell the project. We learnt about the key performance indicators that are of most interest to the funders, the best way of presenting the organisation or your project, how to demonstrate the potential likely impact of the project, or how to show the value for money, or social value, of the

benefits coming out of the project that are not necessarily financially quantifiable. It is really useful to make the funders aware that project outcomes provide a social benefit, a benefit to society and the community overall, which in fact can reduce the overall cost to society of other forms of deprivation. The trainer knew how to teach, he could teach, he could deliver and I learnt a lot. I've gained a great amount of knowledge now. The learning was really very valuable and will be applied and used in the next year for sure.

I am always boasting to others about the things VAC does and how good it is, how it trains, what it does compared to similar services I have experienced elsewhere - it's amazing.

If VAC wasn't around I think there would be a huge impact for VCS groups as it's a one-stop-shop that everybody, every VCS groups will know or come to know in Camden. In terms of training VAC also sets the learning at the right level for small and new community groups. VAC has years of knowledge which gives you an understanding of what is the best way to help try and translate these very complicated difficult concepts, like corporate governance terminology, into something that can be understood by those who are new to these concepts.

The Social and Economic Value of Volunteering

"Volunteering makes Camden stronger, more resilient and a better place in which to live, work, study or even just visit. It helps people connect with each other, reduces isolation and increases social capital and community cohesion."

Giving Your Time,
Camden's Volunteering Strategy 2013-16





STATS

53 volunteers involved with VAC contributed the financial equivalent of £406,713 to the support services offered to Camden organisations and communities.

During 2014/15 VAC continued to recognise the enormous contribution that volunteers brought to the organisation, to the hundreds of other community organisations across the borough, to residents and to the volunteers themselves. Volunteers provided help with administration, IT, mental health, governance, measuring impact and neighbourhood planning.

Volunteering opportunities varied from people wanting to improve their skills whilst doing something constructive to support local communities in Camden, to the voluntary contribution of 'expert volunteers' who offered their time, skills, expertise and experience.

"Volunteering for VAC has improved my confidence and I believe it has helped me gain experience to assist in my vocational development in working towards employment. The various trainings provided by VAC for volunteers have also helped me learn new skills and brush up my knowledge."

VAC Volunteer, 2014

"I got a job through volunteering. If you're interested in volunteering into employment its worth getting on the voluntary books."

VAC Volunteer, 2015

Giving something to the community has also helped some volunteers improve their overall sense of wellbeing.

"I've had depression ever since I was a kid.

This volunteering is a nice step towards bettering my life and it helps me to get my confidence back.

The team at VAC make me feel really appreciated and welcome".

VAC Volunteer, 2015

In the current context of cuts in public spending volunteering is going to be central to the wellbeing of local residents, both in the giving and receiving of support. In two reports from the Young Foundation in 2012 and 2013, 'An insight into the Impact of Cuts on the Most Vulnerable in Camden' and 'Feeling the Squeeze', the importance of civil society in supporting community resilience was highlighted. VAC's long term vision is to link up the skills and experience of volunteers with the remaining paid employment opportunities that will be present through commissioning. Recruiting local Camden residents to paid work, that they have acquired the skills to do through volunteering, would increase the value of the Camden pound and strengthen the local economy.

Coaching and Mentoring

The European funded project on Peer Mentoring came to an end in 2013/14. The initiative was such a great success that during 2014/15 work was undertaken to see how the skills and enthusiasm of the volunteer coaches could be built into the support package offered by VAC to local organisations. The coaches now form part of the core offer from VAC. The coaches and mentors will be managed by a key worker at VAC and continued to offer discrete packages of support to local organisations. In the coming year VAC wants to increase the pool of mentors by working with local businesses.



DELIVERING VALUE FOR MONEY SERVICES

Shared Services

- I 0 small groups using VAC's hot-desk facility
- 150 hours of hot-desk time booked (saving of £2990.00/year)
- 8 VCS organisations sharing office space
- 1285 room bookings for trainings and meetings = 3% increase on 2013/14
- 674 tenant room bookings at reduced rate (saving of £8246.00) = 16% increase on 2013/14

VAC's premises is a hub of civil society activity generated by eight organisations that benefit from shared services including access to meeting and training space, the use of a photocopier, franking and utility services. As VAC holds the head lease for the building, organisations also saved on the time and energy required to deal with the landlord, suppliers and solicitors. Organisations also benefitted from the opportunities to network with colleagues and service-users that come to visit the building, share information and develop collaborative working relationships.

Tenant bookings accounted for 37% (674 bookings totalling 1901.5 hours) of all room bookings. Of the total hours of room hire booked by tenants, 61.95% (1178 hours) were for meeting rooms for which there is no charge. This presents an annual saving for tenants of £8.246.00.

VAC also offered free access to the hot-desking service for ten small community organisations so enabling them to provide valued services to local residents. The service was available to groups looking for low-cost, back-office services and was free to members of VAC. People who used the hot desk had the use of a fully-equipped desk, including a computer, internet access, phone, fax and photocopier. Over the year 61 separate hot-desk sessions were recorded totalling 149.5hours. The cost of renting a hot-desk in Camden differs vastly with prices starting at about £20 per hour. Taking this lower rate the estimated savings for community groups making use of the hot-desk service was in the region of £3,000.



PROVIDING DEMOCRATIC AND STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP FIT FOR CHANGING TIMES

Mobilising Communities

On 25th September 2014, Voluntary Action Camden (VAC) and the Camden Clinical Commissioing Group (CCG) hosted a ground-breaking event with nearly 100 participants from the CCG, mainstream health services, Camden Council and the voluntary and community sector to develop a shared understanding of the local health challenges and how these can be addressed through greater partnership working.

The three keynote speakers – Caz Sayer, David Cryer and Simone Hensby – set out some of the local health challenges, and the benefits and drivers for greater partnership working between mainstream services and the voluntary and community sector. Simone Hensby talked about the findings of the King's Fund that one of the barriers to closer working included different perspectives where mainstream services define outcomes in clinical terms, whereas the voluntary and community sector define outcomes as more 'whole person' focused.

In reality clinical and social outcomes are intertwined and should not be seen as separate. Speakers highlighted that it was an opportune moment to progress this agenda as NHS England was requiring CCGs to secure greater involvement of the voluntary and community sector in providing health services. At the same time, the CCG and the Council were both under substantial financial pressure and needed to find different and more cost effective ways of working. The majority of the afternoon was spent in rich discussion exploring in more depth

the challenges to partnership working and identifying how these can be overcome. A detailed action plan was put in place and will continue to be rolled out in 2015/16.

Camden Community Platform

The year saw the development of the Camden Community Platform. This initiative originated from the feedback that VAC received on the importance of supporting community platforms to encourage dialogue and action. The Community Platform is an opportunity for independent funders to meet with each other in the context of Camden. It is a forum in which to discuss strategic cross cutting polices and issues, share intelligence, agree a strategy and consider how co-operation could further the amount and range of resources being levered into the Borough. In 2014/15 the Platform met on a quarterly basis. As well as agreeing the role of the Community Platform attention was also paid to the potential impact and opportunities presented from Camden Council's review of the nature of its relationship with the voluntary and community sector. Mental health is also an area of concern and will be the subject for the next meeting in January 2016.

Promoting And Supporting Consortiums

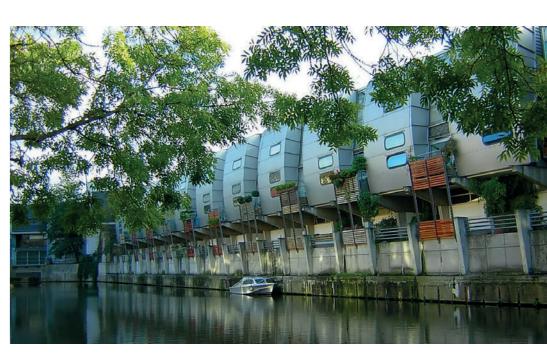
Camden Council has a commitment to develop a **Centre for Independent Living** (CIL) and locally based civil society organisations are keen to be involved in the development and future management of the CIL. During the year VAC supported the development of a local consortium of organisations to co-ordinate input into the development and the possibility of tendering for the contract to run the CIL. This support will remain in place in the coming year. During the year VAC also provided support to the formation of a consortium of local civil society organisations to bid for the tender to run the CRICK Healthy Living Centre.

Promoting And Supporting Cross Sector Forums

VAC continued to support the planning and delivery of the Children Schools and Families Provider Forums. This is good example of collaboration, two way dialogue and support. It is 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 work on common challenges. The Voluntary and Community Sector Forum, a joint initiative between VAC and Camden Council, met twice during the year and focussed on discussing the changing nature of Camden Council's relationship with the sector. VAC worked closely with Healthwatch Camden to put forward the strengths of civil society organisations and what they can contribute to the health and wellbeing agenda. VAC was a member of the Health and Well Being Board's Stakeholder Engagement Group, the Camden Clinical Commissioning Group, the Community Safety Partnership, Tavistock and Portman Trust and the NHS Foundation Trust Boards.

"As an umbrella organisation VAC doesn't have allegiance to a particular geographic location or community group in Camden so they're in a good position to have an overview and able to work across communities and organisations."

VAC strategic partner



"VAC as an umbrella organisation can make links between adults and children for example – between health and social care. So it's a good location for multi-agency working."

VAC strategic partner

COMMUNICATIONS

STATS

44,959 hits to VAC and One Camden website = 21% increase from 2013-14

581 Twitter followers = 30% increase from 2013-14

3 social media channels

VAC Website and Newsletter

In April 2014 work on the redesign of VAC's website commenced. The aim was to better relate it to the current work of VAC, to demonstrate VAC's impact and to improve functionality for both staff and visitors. The new website was presented at VAC's AGM in December 2014 and officially launched in January 2015.

"It is really excellent, clear, easy to use!"; "Looks great - well done everyone!"; "Please pass on big praise to those involved in the website redesign. It is really fab. Loving it"; "I must say, I'm really impressed; it's a really clear, clean site — and you've clearly put a great deal of thought behind the signposting, ensuring it's straightforward."

Comparing a quarter's statistics against the previous period showed that the number of hits to the website rose by approximately 19%. Some of the top referrers to the site included Camden Council,

Healthwatch Camden, Voluntary Action Islington, Camden Carers, National Association of Voluntary and Community Associations and the VAC Twitter and Facebook accounts.



New VAC website design

VAC continues to send out its weekly newsletter to over 3000 subscribed readers who tell us what a great resource it is.

"I just want to say, again, what a terrific bulletin your organisation sends out. It gives the most excellent picture of our part of London, and I often forward pieces of information to relevant people, and I compliment you all for the work and knowledge you have, and share."

"The newsletter is really useful; it gives you everything and has a bit for everybody in the organisation: where funding is available, what training is on, job opportunities, things and events that are happening in Camden."

VAC Service User



Social Media

During the year VAC developed three active social media channels: Twitter, Facebook and YouTube. Individual staff members were active on LinkedIn. In December 2013 VAC had an average *Klout score of 33.At the end of March 2015, this had risen by 32% to an average score of 43.52. Of these channels the most successful was Twitter. This was largely due to a conscious drive to interact on Twitter and boost followers. In 2014/15 VAC had more followers (581) than following (470). The top interests of the followers included 69% business and news, 64% politics, current events and government resources and 54% in non-profits. The VAC Facebook account was less active although posts from VAC's Twitter account are automatically posted to Facebook to help a different audience engage with VAC's work and interests. The VAC Facebook page currently has 222 likes.

The VAC YouTube Chanel is a developing platform that will host digitised impact content e.g. video case studies, also a resource to upload videos from training, conferences and events. In 2014/15 there were 73 views of VAC's YouTube content / an estimated 309 minutes watched or 4.13 minutes watched per session.

*A Klout score, with a score range of I-100, is a recognised measure of social media influence i.e. your ability to drive action through your engagement with followers and theirs with you.









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 2015, but are not the full statutory report and accounts. The full financial statements were approved by the executive committee on 19 October 2015 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.

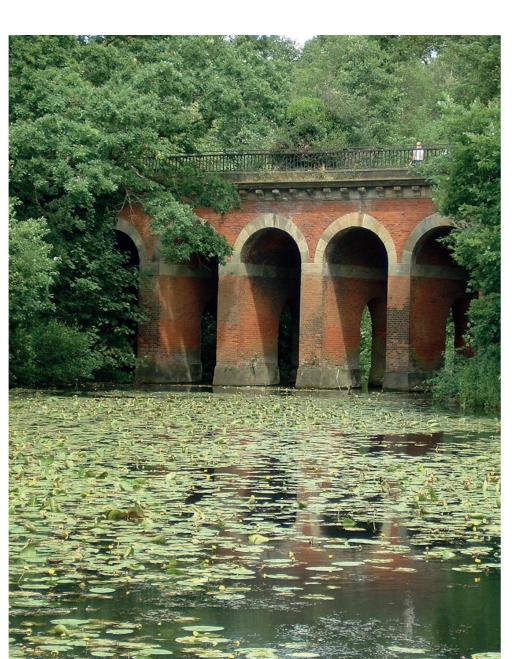
Copies of the financial statements may be obtained from:

293 – 299 Kentish Town Road, London NW5 2TJ

Signed on behalf of the executive committee

Simone Hensby, Director

19/10/2015



Statement of financial activities (incorporating an income and expenditure account) for the Year Ended 31 March 2015

	Restricted	Unrestricted	Total	Total
Incoming resources	£	£	£	£
Activities in furtherance of the charity's objects: Capacity building Information, co-ordination & partnerships Promotion, policy & projects	74,117 400,653 66,158	339,041 - -	413,158 400,653 66,158	499,141 324,736 103,951
Activities to generate funds: Lettings, room hire & service charges Interest receivable		184,895 639	184,895 639	159,372 588
Total incoming resources	540,928	524,575	1,065,503	1,087,788
Resources expended Charitable expenditure				
Capacity building Information, co-ordination & partnerships Promotion, policy & projects	122,054 329,584 58,120	592,248 - -	714,302 329,584 58,120	735,738 260,159 91,933
Governance costs	32,365	15,034	47,399	41,967
Total resources expended	542,123	607,282	1,149,405	1,129,797
Net outgoing resources before gains & transfers	(1,195)	(82,707)	(83,902)	(42,009)
Transfers between funds	5,918	(5,918)		-
Net (outgoing)/incoming resources before	4,723	(88,625)	(83,902)	(42,009)
Actuarial gains/(losses) on defined benefit pension scheme		(587,000)	(587,000)	(289,000)
Net movement in funds for the year	4,723	(675,625)	(670,902)	(331,009)
Total funds brought forward	45,517	(768,624)	(723,107)	(392,098)
Total funds carried forward	50,240	(1,444,249)	(1,394,009)	(723,107)

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 as at 31 March 2015

as at 51 Hartin 2015			2015	2014
	Restricted	Unrestricted	Total	Total
	£	£	£	£
Fixed assets	_	_		_
Tangible fixed assets	<u> </u>	8,170	8,170	1,280
Current assets				
Debtors	61,391	231,446	292,837	257,845
Short term deposits	-	251,765	251,765	251,639
Cash at bank and in hand	34,090	221,758	255,848	608,813
	95,481	704,969	800,450	1,118,297
Liabilities	, , , , , ,		333,333	1,112,-11
Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year	(45,241)	(393,388)	(438,629)	(643,684)
Net current assets	50,240	311,581	361,821	474,613
Net assets excluding pension scheme liability	50,240	319,751	369,991	475,893
Defined benefit pension scheme liability	<u>-</u>	(1,764,000)	(1,764,000)	(1,199,000)
Net assets/(liabilities) including pension liability	50,240	(1,444,249)	(1,394,009)	(723,107)
Funds				
Restricted funds excluding pension liabilities	50,240	_	50,240	45,517
Unrestricted funds:				
Designated funds	-	81,721	81,721	81,721
General funds	-	238,030	238,030	348,655
Unrestricted income funds excluding pension liability	_	319,751	319,751	430,376
Pension reserve	<u> </u>	(1,764,000)	(1,764,000)	(1,199,000)
Total funds	50,240	(1,444,249)	(1,394,009)	(723,107)

Approved by the Executive Committee on 19 October 2015 and signed on its behalf by Sue Wilby - Chair Ralph Scott - Treasurer

THANKS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

VAC STAFF TEAM

Alex Charles

Ann Wolfe

Asha-Kin Duale

Caroline Jepson

Dilware Rashid

Donna Turnbull

Kevin Nunan

Mandira Manandhar

Manuella Bunketi

Maria Ajala

Maureen Brewster

Monica Crooks

Paul Bragman

Peter Simonson

Ricky Tokhi

Simone Hensby

Somanah Achadoo

Stefanie Borkum

Sue Dowd

Sylvia Okene

VAC VOLUNTEERS

Len Lauk

Martina Rusnakova

Messeret Amde

MENTAL HEALTH PROJECT MENTORS

Abdi Ali

Alice Mercier

Celia Potterton
Dilhani Hettiarachchige

Dilwara Rashid

Fion Ngan

Grace DiCarlo

Larlan Davis

Larlan Davis

Momota Khatoon

Paul Raymond

Peter Baxter

Rosa Anna Garau

Selina Cheung

Shelly Khan

Simonne Wedderburn

Stuart Knowles

Sukti Neogi Tanya Su

Vijya Patel

Yvonne Vanhek

HEALTH INEQUALITIES – HEALTH ADVOCATES

Aaliya Abdali

Agram Muse

Ange Gomez

Bwantumu M Swaleh

Chanika Bengamin

Ellen Nkomo

Grace Dicarlo

Hawa Hersi

Jacquie Cox

Jamila Heineke

Mari Fembe

Michele Priestley

Noel Adebayo

Omolabake Adelokiki

Peter Joseph

Peter Simonson

Rahima Rahman

Rashmi Padke

Sara Goitom Asgedom

Selwa Al Abdali

Simonne Wedderburn

EXPERT HELPERS

Community Land Trust

Duncan Bowie, University of

Westminster

Environmental Law Foundation

Michael Parkes

National Association of Local

Councils

Sue Brownill, Oxford Brookes

University

University College London

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2014-2015

Abul Rahman Brian Parker

Catherine Russell

Efua Taylor

Gaynor Humphreys

Harunur Rashid

Julie Christie Webb (Vice Chair)

Ralph Scott (Treasurer)

Sarah Elie

Sue Wilby (Chair)

Cllr Gillian Risso-Gill)

Cllr Georgia Gould (Observer)

Cllr Meric Apak (Observer)

