



ISLINGTON

EXECUTIVE

14 January 2016

FURTHER DESPATCH

Please find enclosed the following item:

Item 8 Voluntary and Community Sector Grant Funding Programme 2016 - 2020

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Report of: **Executive Member for Economic and Community Development**

Meeting of:	Date	Ward(s)
Executive	14th January 2016	All
Delete as appropriate		Non-exempt

SUBJECT: Islington VCS Partnership Grants Programme 2016-2020

1 Synopsis

- 1.1** The voluntary sector lies at the heart of the council's ambition for a fairer Islington. The sector plays an important role in providing a voice for our most vulnerable residents, mobilising community action, promoting community cohesions and tackling the causes and effects of poverty, inequality, and social and economic exclusion.
- 1.2** Between 2011 and 2015, 49 organisations have received grant funding of £2,328,200 per annum from the VCS Grants Fund and the Advice Fund. The Council's current VCS Grants Fund and Advice Fund programmes administered by the VCS Development Team are due to end on the 30th June 2016. The overall Islington Community Fund of £3,435,000 also includes grant funding provision for Direct Rate Relief, Local Initiatives Fund, Community Festivals Fund and the VCS Rescue Fund.
- 1.3** Since August 2014, the council, in consultation with the Voluntary and Community Sector, other public sector bodies and potential future investment partners has been examining how best to continue to support the sector and its work to meet the changing needs of residents. This work included a comprehensive review of the Council's current advice services delivered in-house or by VCS organisations, and the development of new VCS strategy for Islington "*Towards a Fairer Islington: Voluntary & Community Sector Strategy 2016 - 2020*", attached as Appendix 1 to this report.
- 1.4** The Strategy, ratified at the meeting of the Voluntary and Community Sector Committee on 8th October 2015 confirms the council's commitment to maintaining grants programmes in order to protect vital services and enable Islington's voluntary and community sector to continue to deliver positive outcomes for residents. The document sets out the role that voluntary and community sector organisations play in helping the Council to meet its priorities, outlines the Council's approach to working with the sector, and makes a series of commitments in the areas of funding, contracting, premises and infrastructure.

- 1.5** Future arrangements for Community Chest and Local Initiatives Fund, now administered by Democratic Services and Discretionary Rate Relief administered by Corporate Finance which form part of the overall Islington Community Fund were agreed by the VCS Committee at meeting in January 2015 and March 2015.
- 1.6** The closure of the current VCS Grant Fund and Advice Fund represents an opportunity to replace the existing programmes with a new Islington VCS Partnership Grants programme aligned to the vision and aspirations set out in the VCS Strategy, the key findings of the council's Advice Review and the changed economic and social context. The proposed Grant Programme will provide grants to VCS organisations on a two plus two year basis between 2016 and 2020.
- 1.7** This report outlines proposals for the new Islington's Partnership Grants Programme 2016-2020, and the allocation of the total budget of £2,456,000 (as detailed in section 5 of this report) across the five key programme strands:
- Strategic Partners – Borough-wide Infrastructure
 - Strategic Partners – Neighbourhoods
 - Delivery Partners
 - Strategic Partner – Volunteering
 - Strategic Partners – Advice

2 Recommendations

- 2.1** To agree that the Islington Partnership Grant Programme 2016-2020 be segmented into the following five programme strands as outlined in section 4.1 of this report.
- 1) Strategic Partners – Borough-wide Infrastructure**
 - 2) Strategic Partners – Neighbourhood**
 - 3) Delivery Partners**
 - 4) Strategic Partner – Volunteering; and**
 - 5) Strategic Partners – Advice**
- 2.2** To agree the allocation of funding across the five proposed strands as outlined in section 5.6 of this report.
- 2.3** To agree the outline outcomes for the Partnership Grants Programme as detailed in sections 4.2 to 4.6 of this report and in the Council's Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy 2016-2020 attached as Appendix 1.
- 2.4** To agree the application process and time table as outlined in section 6 and attached as Appendix 2 of this report

3 Background

3.1 Towards a Fairer Islington: Voluntary & Community Sector Strategy 2016 – 2020

- 3.1.1** Since August 2014, and to help the council develop its thinking around future support for local voluntary organisations, the council held a series of consultation events with the Voluntary and Community Sector, other public sector bodies and potential future investment partners. This work led to the development of a new VCS strategy for Islington. *“Towards a Fairer Islington: Voluntary & Community Sector Strategy 2016 –*

2020". Attached as Appendix 1 of this *report*. The Council's Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy 2016-2020 was ratified at VCS Committee in November 2015.

- 3.1.2** A time when central government is cutting funding for public services and cutting welfare benefits for those out of work and in work, the Strategy recognises that the need for a strong, resilient, independent voluntary and community sector, able to respond to the needs of Islington's residents, is greater than ever. The strategy recognises the key role that the sector will have over the next four years in:
- Addressing and preventing deeper complex social issues and long-term challenges that affect our residents
 - Supporting residents to be independent and resilient
 - Promoting community cohesion and championing equality
 - Supporting neighbourhoods and communities to grow
 - Providing or sign-posting residents to appropriate, high quality advice and guidance
- 3.1.3** In the face of budget pressures and increased competition for funding, both the council and the VCS sector will have to find new ways of working both individually and collectively if we are to meet our shared priorities. Whilst the strategy recognises the importance of providing grant funding and small grants to the VCS, it places emphasis on developing effective outcome driven partnerships with the Sector. Delivering the strategy will require a whole council approach – overseen by the Third Sector Strategic Forum and co-ordinated by the newly formed VCS Development Team.
- 3.1.4** The strategy identifies four ways in which the Council will continue to support the sector and its work in meeting the needs of residents:
- **Funding:** including partnership grants and small grants programmes, a bespoke training and capacity building fund, and discretionary rate relief.
 - **Commissioning and procurement:** Commissioning organisations to deliver services, and ensuring social value is included in our approach to commissioning.
 - **Premises:** developing a borough-wide premises strategy that maximises the use of our buildings, and enables organisations to share premises, reduce costs and maximise income generation.
 - **Working strategically with key partners:** to build the capacity of the sector, promote volunteering, support fundraising, establish networks, maximise our collective impact in neighbourhoods, and ensure a coordinated whole-Council approach to the VCS

3.2 Advice Fund Review

- 3.2.1** Since August 2014 Officers in consultation with other investment partners and representatives from the VCS undertook a comprehensive review of the Council's current advice services delivered in-house by Council departments or by VCS organisations commissioned or grant funded by the Council.
- 3.2.2** The Council currently spends over £1.85 million on advice services in total. £445,000 is spent on our in house Imax Advice Service (a reduction of £200K from 2014/15) and £1.406 million on independent advice services delivered by VCS organisations. Of this £1,406 Million, £1.165 million is provided as core grants. Housing and Adult Social Services (HASS) also commission specialist services at a cost of £241,000. In addition, Islington's Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) currently procures advice services from Camden CAB delivered in ten GP surgeries across the borough at a cost of £149,000.

- 3.2.3** The review undertaken with other investment partners and VCS organisations examined the impact of central government's welfare reforms (Universal Credit, Personal Independence Payments (PIP) and the overall reduction in entitlements and level of benefits) on local residents and their future advice needs, taking in to account the context of the significant financial challenges faced by the Council and the advice organisations operating in the borough.
- 3.2.4** We estimate that more than 23,000 residents will be directly affected by welfare reforms such as the introduction of Universal Credit, Personal Independence Payments and a reduction in entitlements and levels of benefits and that this will continue to drive the need for advice in the borough over the next five years.
- 3.2.5** Future Advice services must change to cope with the large numbers of residents affected by these changes. Our advice offer will need to move to a multi-disciplinary, holistic model that provides more effective interventions and tackles a range of related issues at the same time – including employment support. The emphasis should be on enabling people to become more independent and reduce the need for them to repeatedly seek advice services.
- 3.2.6 Advice Review – Summary of Key Findings**
- 3.2.6.1** Despite high spend, the review of advice services highlighted numerous inefficiencies and inconsistencies that run from the point of access through to case resolution including:
- Incoherent commissioning and duplication of contracted services by the Council and other key partners
 - Inconsistent grant awards, especially in relation to income, and premises arrangements between advice services
 - Multiple entry points, with different assessments at each point of access
 - A need to up-skill and integrate the advice offer of smaller VCS organisations into Islington's central advice offer
 - Inconsistent data collection that makes it difficult to gauge resident need and demand across our current grant funded advice partners
 - A lack of established referral mechanisms between key parts of the advice system, which contribute to unacceptable waiting times, and which require residents to access separate services and undertake reassessment to resolve their issues.
 - A consistent inability of services to deliver value to residents on their first, second or third contact with our services, predictably taking more than four contacts to respond to customer demand.
 - A failure of existing services to work with residents holistically or to take advantage of the full range of services in the borough designed to enable residents to develop resilience and independence.

3.2.7 A New model for providing Advice Services

- 3.2.7.1** Following the review, a new model for providing advice services has been established. This model will provide the framework for the 'Advice Partners' Grants Programme. The proposed Future Advice Fund Model is attached as Appendix 5.
- 3.2.7.2** This model aims to improve the delivery of advice services across the following areas:
- Access and outreach
 - Primary access channel

- Detailed triage service and initial advice
- Generalist advice
- Targeted specialist advice and legal support for excluded population groups
- Specialist advice and litigation

3.2.7.3 In order to address the issues identified through the advice review, future grant funded advice partners will need to:

- Establish a consistent common approach to assessment and referral at first point of contact.
- Assess the feasibility and work towards integrating or ensuring compatibility between organisational case management and triage systems
- Address the increased volumes of demand expected to result from major Welfare Reforms within the context of reduced public sector funding
- Reduce waiting lists and times by promoting greater collaboration and effective client referrals between agencies
- Maintain an appropriate balance between ‘access and outreach’ and ‘advice delivery’
- Maintain resident access to specialist advice and litigation in key areas such as immigration, asylum and housing where appropriate
- Prioritise a generalist holistic and preventative approach that reduces future demand on services

3.2.7.4 In order to support the proposed increase in demand for generalist advice in the wake of Welfare Reforms, the most pressing task is to increase the funding allocated to generalist support, the area of advice most likely to see an increase in demand over the coming years.

4 The Islington VCS Partnership Grants Programme

4.1 In order to realise the vision articulated in the VCS strategy and the Advice Service Review it is proposed that VCS Partnership Grants Programme 2016-2020, will award grants covering the four year period on a two plus two year basis. The Programme will comprise of the following strands:

- 1) Strategic Partners – Borough-wide Infrastructure**
- 2) Strategic Partners – Neighbourhood**
- 3) Delivery Partners**
- 4) Strategic Partner – Volunteering; and**
- 5) Strategic Partners – Advice**

4.2 1) Strategic Partners - Borough-wide Infrastructure

4.2.1 This grant programme is to support strategic borough-wide organisations with the necessary expertise and capacity to provide leadership to Islington’s voluntary and community sector and ensure the infrastructure is in place to enable the organisations improve outcomes for Islington residents. Funded organisations will be expected to:

- Provide strategic leadership for the sector
- Ensure that Islington’s voluntary and community sector has skills and knowledge needed to sustain and grow
- Ensure that Islington’s voluntary and community sector can compete for funding and is financially secure
- Ensure that Islington’s voluntary and community sector maximises the use of its resources

4.3 2) Strategic Partners - Neighbourhood

4.3.1 This grant programme will support strategic neighbourhood partners that work with other voluntary and community sector organisations and mainstream services to develop, deliver, coordinate and sustain a high quality offer of neighbourhood-based services and activities. Funded organisations will be expected to:

- Provide strategic leadership within the local community
- Coordinate a coherent and engaging neighbourhood-based offer of services and activities for local residents
- Ensure that local community facilities and assets are utilised to their full potential
- Attract external funding that can facilitate delivery in the local community

4.4 3) Delivery Partners

4.4.1 This grant programme will support organisations that work directly with residents to improve outcomes and quality of life. Grants will be awarded to organisations that have engaged with residents and communities, undertaken effective community profiling and developed high quality services or activities that meet identified need. Organisations funded under this strand will be expected to:

- Work with residents to tackle complex social issues and long-term health challenges
- Support residents to be more resilient and independent
- Promote cohesion, reduce inequalities and champion the needs of Islington's diverse communities
- Support neighbourhoods and communities to develop and grow

4.5 4) Strategic Partners - Volunteering Brokerage

4.5.1 This grant programme is to support a strategic partner to provide a borough-wide volunteering brokerage service and support Islington's VCS organisations to manage volunteers effectively. Funded organisation will be expected to:

- Provide strategic leadership to promote volunteering across Islington
- Help identify and broker high quality volunteering opportunities to support the development and resilience of Islington's VCS Sectors
- Work in partnership with the council, other public sector partners, businesses and VCS partners to help develop pathways into employment for Islington residents

4.6 5) Strategic Partners - Advice

4.6.1 This grant programme is to support registered advice and guidance organisations to apply new working practices to provide a coherent and seamless advice system that supports Islington residents. As illustrated in section 3.2 and the new Advice Model attached as Appendix 5, this programme will comprise of six distinct strands:

- Access and outreach
- Primary access channel
- Detailed triage service and initial advice
- Generalist advice
- Targeted specialist advice and legal support for excluded population groups
- Specialist advice and litigation

5 Overall Budget and Allocation across the Programme Strands

- 5.1** A budget of £1,050,000 for the VCS Grant Fund was agreed by the Executive at its meeting in March 2011. Through the use of an underspend in the Islington Strategic Partnership budget and other budget contributions from other corporate departments, the total spend on grant funding allocated to VCS Organisations in the VCS Grant Fund Programme rose to £1.163 million in 2015/16 (see Appendix 3).
- 5.2** By retaining the budget levels identified in 5.1 for Islington's VCS Partnership Grants Programme strands 1-4. The council is able to maintain its commitment to continue to support the VCS as outlined *"Towards a Fairer Islington: Voluntary & Community Sector Strategy 2016 - 2020"*.
- 5.3** In line with plans outlined in the VCS Strategy and as part of the Advice Review, we have established a joint approach to funding independent advice services across the Council and in partnership with the CCG. This approach has enabled the Council to establish a budget of £1,406,000 per annum for the 'Strategic Partners – Advice' strand.
- 5.4** The budget for 'Strategic Partners – Advice' (strand 5), consists of £1,165 Million from the current VCS core grant budget held by VCS Development Team, £146,000 from Housing and £95,000 from Adult Social Services. Additional resources of £100K from the CCG may be secured to bolster and extend advice services in response to identified needs from September 2016. This additional funding could be utilised to support additional capacity building and or match funding for any future funding bids.
- 5.5** As a result the total budget across the five proposed strands in the VCS Partnership Grant Programme stands at £2,456,000
- 5.6** In order to meet the priorities and aspirations set out in the Council's VCS Strategy 2016-2020, it is proposed that the following levels of funding are attached to the proposed strands illustrated in figure 1 below.

Figure 1: VCS Partnership Grants Programme 2016-2020 - Proposed Funding profile

VCS Partnership Grants Programme 2016-2020 Proposed Funding profile		Source	Proposed Grant Pot Range	Sum PP&C Grant Award	No. of Orgs Potentially funded	Maximum Award	Average Award	% of Strands 1-4	% of overall Pot
1	Strategic Partners - Borough Wide Infrastructure	VCS	£170,000 - £210,000	180,000	8	35,000	22500	17.1%	7.3%
2	Strategic Partner – Volunteering	VCS	£30,000-£40,000	35,000	1	35,000	35000	3.3%	1.4%
3	Strategic Partners – Neighbourhoods	VCS	£475,000-£525,000	475,000	10	50,000	47500	45.2%	19.3%
4	Delivery Partners	VCS	£320,000-£400,000	360,000	20	20,000	18000	34.3%	14.7%
Subtotal				1,050,000					
		Source	Contribution to fund	Sum PP&C Grant Award	No. of Orgs Potentially	Maximum Award	Average Award	% of Strands 1-4	% of overall
5	Strategic Partners - Advice	VCS	1,165,000		5				
		Housing	146,000						
		HASS	95,000						
	Subtotal			1,406,000					
Total				2,456,000		£200,000-£530,000	0	100.0%	57.2%

- 5.7** The VCS Strategy places emphasis on ensuring that Islington's VCS continues to support local residents and communities by maintaining and developing activities and services that respond to the needs of local residents and our most marginalised communities. As a result it is proposed that 79.5% of the overall budget in strands 1-4 is allocated to Strategic Partner – Neighbourhoods and Delivery Partners, organisations who are often the first point of access for local residents and responsible for developing local services.
- 5.8** The remaining 20.5% of the funding is allocated to infrastructure organisations to provide high quality leadership, capacity building and volunteering support for the wider sector.
- 5.9** In order to promote greater flexibility and transparency, it is proposed that the published Grant Funding Prospectuses provide an indication of the maximum award in any strand within the programme and an indicative range of funding available in any one programme strand.
- 5.10** As outlined *“Towards a Fairer Islington: Voluntary & Community Sector Strategy 2016 - 2020”*, attached as Appendix 1 to this report, the VCS Development Team will work with partners to secure additional resources from a range of sources to support the work of the VCS in delivering the outcomes identified in the strategy. Any additional resources secured will be administered through a Supplementary Partnership Grants programme outside of the main VCS Partnership Grants Programme 2016-2020.

6 Application Process

- 6.1** The grants programme will launch on January 15th 2016, when the VCS Partnership Grants Prospectus will be published (see Appendix 5). Applications will close March 4th 2016. A series of 'Meet the VCS Development Team - Question and Answer Sessions' have been scheduled for each of the programme strands to engage VCS organisations and answer any queries about the programme and application process.
- 6.2** The application process for the VCS Partnership Grants Programme will be run on a two stage process. In the first stage, applicants will be invited to submit a written application in response to the published prospectus. The prospectus identifies a series of minimum standards that organisations must comply with and the desired outcomes for each strand which have been established in consultation with relevant officers from other corporate departments and the wider VCS.
- 6.3** In the second stage, shortlisted organisations will be invited to meet with officers from the VCS team to discuss their application in detail. Organisational visits will take place in April 2016 to support the final assessment of applications. Organisations then have an opportunity to refine their submissions before a final assessment and recommendation for funding is made.

7 Additional Support - Premises

- 7.1** *“Towards a Fairer Islington: Voluntary & Community Sector Strategy 2016 - 2020”* recognises that the current premises arrangements for our VCS partners lack parity. As part of the Council's work on the Corporate Premises Strategy, Officers are exploring the potential to establish VCS Hubs and other co-location opportunities.

- 7.2** These proposals will take time to realise and in the interim it is proposed that grants provided for organisations include a Transitional Premises Grant, commensurate with organisations' current level of spending on accommodation. This transitional grant may be tapered to incentivise organisations to maximise co-location opportunities in alternative premises.

8 Implications

8.1 Financial implications:

- 8.2** As Highlighted in 5.1 of this report, the Council Executive agreed a budget of £1,050,000 for the VCS Grant Fund at its meeting in March 2011. Through the use of an underspend in the Islington Strategic Partnership budget and contributions from other corporate departments, the total spend on grant funding allocated to VCS Organisations in the VCS Grant Fund. Programme rose to £1.163 million by 2015/16. Maintaining the budgets highlighted in 5.1 of £1,050,000 for the Partnership Grant programme will enable the council to continue to support a wide range of VCS organisations and is affordable.

- 8.3** At its meeting in February 2015, Council agreed to "Use funding from Section106 to replace (not reduce) core council funding for the Voluntary sector". This has not been possible to achieve to date as S106 is often restricted to capital works in specific localities rather than revenue funding which the various grant programmes for the VCS provide. The Council was able to secure one-off funding to bridge the £340K funding gap in 2015/16 but it is unlikely to be able to do so in future years. This results in an additional budget pressure of £340,000 per annum on core council funding for the VCS which includes the proposed VCS Partnership Grants Programme, LIF, Community Chest and Community Festivals Fund and Discretionary Rate Relief. The total budget pressures identified per annum amounts to £453,000.

8.4 Legal Implications:

- 8.4.1** The council has power to provide grants to voluntary and community sector organisations under the general power of competence set out in section 1 of the Localism Act 2011.
- 8.4.2** The provision of these grants is likely to be associated with state aid. The council can provide state aid in relation to 'services of general economic interest' (SGEI) as detailed in Article 106(2) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and Schedule 3 paragraph 4 of the Competition Act 1998.
- 8.4.3** Aid of up to €500,000 (approximately £407,675) may be provided to an organisation for SGEI so long as that organisation has not received de minimis aid from any other source in the last three fiscal years which would result in the total de minimis aid to that organisation exceeding the €500,000 (Commission Regulation No 360/2012, the "de minimis Regulation").
- 8.4.4** In the event that an organization has received other de minimis aid that takes it over the threshold of £407,675, there is an alternative regime for SGEI exemption for high value compensation that may be used. This was established by Commission Decision (2012/12/EU, the "Decision") that came into force on 31 January 2012. Should this be necessary the detailed rules on calculation of cost and record keeping and reporting set out in the Decision will need to be complied with.

- 8.4.5** In extending the existing grant agreements as proposed in the report the total value of grant provided to each organization over the extended period needs to be calculated in order to ensure compliance with the SGEI requirements as appropriate.
- 8.4.6** The council must also ensure that it complies with its duty to secure best value (Section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999)

8.5 Environmental Implications

- 8.5.1** There are no environmental implications associated with this report

8.6 Resident Impact Assessment:

- 8.6.1** An Equality Impact Assessment, the predecessor of RIA's was completed in 2011 to assess the impact of Islington Community Fund on different groups of residents. The impact was found to be positive. A copy of the EIA was published as an appendix to the Islington Community Fund report to Executive Committee on 17 March 2011. "Towards a Fairer Islington: Voluntary & Community Sector Strategy 2016 - 2020" attached as Appendix 1 of this report builds on this existing programme of work.
- 8.6.2** A primary focus of "Towards a Fairer Islington: Voluntary & Community Sector Strategy 2016 - 2020" which the Partnership Grants Programme aims to support the delivery of is addressing inequality, promoting community cohesion and supporting our most vulnerable residents. The funding programme priorities those organisations which primarily provide services for local residents which will respond to their needs.
- 8.6.3** 90% of the overall Partnership Grant Funding programme, (Strands 2, 3, and 5) is targeted at direct delivery organisations, those operating at a neighbourhood level and therefore most in contact with residents or advice agencies targeting those residents most in need through changes to welfare reform. The remaining 10% of the funding (Strands 1 and 4) is targeted at organisations who can provide high quality leadership, support and capacity building including volunteering in order to help funded organisations and the wider VCS to extend their reach, improve service delivery and respond to residents and communities need. The Strategic partners – Borough Wide Infrastructure, Strand 1 is also intended to support a range of organisations that cover the relevant "protected characteristics" under the Equality Act 2010.
- 8.6.4** At present 44% of all organisations funded through the current VCS grants programme (excluding advice) support BME communities exclusively. This rises to 78% of all organisations who would be eligible to apply for the Delivery Partner Strand. In addition, organisations that receive grant funding through both the VCS Grants Programme and Advice Grants Programme work with BME communities, though not exclusively. There are some notable gaps such as the absence of funding for LGBT organisations and an under representation amongst youth organisations. The new Partnership Grants Programme provides an opportunity to address any current gaps in provision, reduce duplication of services and activities and ensure that allocated funding reflects the boroughs, demographics, structural inequalities and accurately reflects current need.
- 8.6.5** As detailed in the VCS strategy, The VCS Development team will work with VCS partners, in particular the organisations funded through strands 1 and 2 to try and secure additional external funding where possible in order to strengthen the role and work of the organisations funded through the programme and the wider VCS. Similarly the corporate premises strategy aims to ensure greater parity in terms of premises arrangements for our

VCS partners ensuring that funding is targeted at service delivery rather than premises costs.

- 8.6.6** The services currently provided by advice agencies (Strand 5) are open to all residents and the current client profile demonstrates that they are well used by residents with protected characteristics covered by equalities legislation. The advice review has highlighted the opportunity to establish a more integrated system of advice and that this will be essential if we are to mitigate the impact of welfare reform for some of our most vulnerable residents. The proposals are firmly aimed at reducing waiting times and improving client access to a broader range of support within a simpler, responsive and joined-up service within the financial constraints in which we are operating.
- 8.6.7** The model avoids placing any particular resident groups at disadvantage, and explicitly aims to maintain specialist provision for those that need advice in community languages (including BSL), and specialist casework and representation in areas of law that directly impact some BME communities such as immigration and asylum. There is a pressing need for people supported by the No Recourse to Public Funds team who need access to independent casework and specialist legal support for clients looking to regularise their immigration status such as for young people leaving council care. Around one case per month is involved, but these will need to be prioritised by the provider to reduce the financial burden on the council which has to support them under the Children's Act even though their immigration status does not entitle them to housing, benefits or to apply for a student loan.

9 Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

- 9.1** The current VCS Grants Fund and Advice Fund, part of the Islington Community Fund has provided valuable resources to the voluntary and community sector since 2011. The two funding programmes are scheduled to cease on 30th June 2016. The closure of these two funding streams and the current grant funding arrangements with VCS organisations provides an opportunity for the council to think afresh about how it wants to support the sector to help deliver the priorities of the Council.
- 9.2** The recommendations in this report reflect the priorities and services outlined in “*Towards a Fairer Islington: Voluntary & Community Sector Strategy 2016 - 2020*” and the Advice Review which identifies how and where VCS organisations can add real value and support the council in taking forward its ambitions to promote a fairer Islington.

Final report clearance:

Signed by:

Executive Member for Economic and Community Development

11th January 2016

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Appendix

Appendix 1	Towards a Fairer Islington VCS Strategy 2016-2020.
Appendix 2	VCS Partnership Grants Application Process and Timeframe
Appendix 3	Grant Awards through the 2011-2015 VCS Grants Programme
Appendix 4	Proposed Islington VCS Partnership Grants Programme Funding Allocations.
Appendix 5	Islington Advice Model



ISLINGTON

Towards a Fairer Islington: Voluntary & Community Sector Strategy

2016-
2020

Foreword

Islington's voluntary and community sector (VCS) lies at the heart of our ambition for a fairer Islington. It is able to reach and develop relationships of trust with residents and communities which statutory services are not always able to do. Some of our most vulnerable residents will first turn to the VCS for support. The sector therefore plays an important role in providing a voice for the voiceless, mobilising community action and tackling the causes and effects of poverty, inequality, and social and economic exclusion.

Islington's VCS organisations have a long tradition of finding new approaches and developing innovative solutions to a range of social issues. They have been at the forefront of major social movements and helped change the face of both local and national policy. Building on this history, we want to maintain a vibrant, dynamic and independent sector, that is able to respond directly to the evolving interests and changing needs of the neighbourhoods and communities we collectively serve.

The VCS also has an important role in achieving community cohesion and other outcomes that we are seeking. This includes helping us deliver our public sector equality duty and the specific equality objectives that we have set. Islington enjoys good community cohesion, and is a good place to live, study and work for most people. However, we know that we can do more to address the third equality duty – fostering good relations between people from different groups.

This means improving relationships between communities and within communities. It is not just about the relationship between different ethnic groups. It is also about the relationships between young people and older people, disabled people and people who are not disabled, people who have lived here a long time and new arrivals, people from different neighbourhoods or wards, straight communities and gay communities, affluent and poor and so on. In particular, we want young people from different communities to grow up with a sense of common belonging, which also means helping them explore and access positive life opportunities.

At a time when central government is cutting funding for public services and cutting welfare benefits for those out of work and in work, we need strong and independent voluntary and community organisations more than ever. As well as providing day-to-day services to residents, we know that the sector can use its independence and creativity to challenge social injustices. Islington Council is therefore committed to continuing substantial support for the VCS, including maintaining our grants programmes and harnessing external funding opportunities.

This strategy sets out the role we see for voluntary and community sector organisations in the borough in helping us to meet our priorities. It outlines the approach that we will take in our work with the sector and makes a series of commitments that seek to maximise our collective resources in an increasingly constrained financial context.



Councillor Asima Shaikh
**Executive Member for Economic
and Community Development**

The Context for Our Strategy

The VCS in Islington

Islington has more than 2,200 independent voluntary and community organisations established for charitable, social, community or environmental benefit, rather than for profit. They vary in size, work in diverse fields and specialisms, and support a wide range of local beneficiaries (see Appendix A). We recognise that many organisations whose presence help to make Islington a vibrant place to live and work, receive no direct financial support from the Council.

Key parts of Islington's voluntary and community sector have consistently demonstrated their ability to deliver high quality services and compete for funding.

Current funding and support for the VCS

Our confidence in the VCS is visible through our contracting arrangements and grant funding. During 2014/15, the sector secured Council grants and contracts to the value of £41.15 million, delivering a range of services, many of which the Council has a statutory duty to provide (See Appendix B). Since 2011, 48 organisations have received direct grant funding of £2.3 million per annum from the VCS Grants Fund and the Advice Fund, enabling them to support and improve the quality of life for thousands of residents. The overall VCS grants fund of £3.5 million also includes grant funding provision for Direct Rate Relief, Local Initiatives Fund, Community Festivals Fund and the VCS Rescue Fund.

We also support the sector through in-kind arrangements, such as the provision of premises at below market rents, the transfer of buildings on long lease, the use of mandatory and discretionary rate relief, or by working directly with organisations to develop and deliver new services.

A harsher financial climate

The Council has faced, and will continue to face unprecedented cuts, which have forced us to reduce our spending dramatically. Between 2010 and 2016 our central government funding will have been cut by half. This includes savings of £38 million in 2015-16. Over the next four years we expect to have to save a further £70 million. Within this context, we need to meet our statutory obligations, maintain essential services and respond to increasing and changing needs of residents.

We remain determined to continue making a real difference in the areas that matter most to local people, and the voluntary sector is a key partner in this endeavour. However, budget reductions on this level will inevitably result in reductions to key Council grants and procurement opportunities. We hope that the VCS can adapt to a harsher financial climate by reducing costs, becoming more efficient and diversifying income sources.

Our Strategy

We see the VCS as key strategic and operational partners in delivering our vision and priorities for a fairer Islington.

Our Vision

We're determined to make Islington fairer: to create a place where everyone, whatever their background has the same opportunity to reach their potential and enjoy a good quality of life

We need Islington's VCS to work independently and in partnership with mainstream services to...

- Address and prevent complex social issues.
- Support residents to be resilient and independent.
- Promote cohesion and champion the needs of Islington's diverse communities.
- Mobilise community action and support neighbourhoods to develop and grow.
- Be dynamic and responsive to local need in creative ways.
- Provide and signpost residents to high quality advice and guidance

We will support Islington's voluntary and community sector through...

- **Funding:** Including small-grants and partnership grants programmes, discretionary rate relief, and a bespoke training and capacity building fund.
- **Contracting:** Commissioning organisations to deliver services and ensuring social value is included in our approach to commissioning.
- **Premises:** Developing a borough-wide premises strategy that maximises the use of our buildings, and enables organisations to use these for income generation.
- **Working strategically with key partners:** Including the VCS and Council departments to provide leadership and build the capacity of the sector, promote volunteering, support fundraising, establish networks, maximise our collective impact in neighbourhoods, and ensure a coordinate whole-Council approach to the VCS

Our vision and priorities



Islington's Council's Corporate Plan ("Towards a Fairer Islington") sets out the Council's vision and priorities for the next four years, what we will do to achieve them, and how we will measure our success.

Our Vision for the borough is to make Islington fairer and to create a place where everyone, whatever their background, has the opportunity to reach their potential and enjoy a good quality of life. Our priorities over the next four years are to:

1. Building more Council housing and supporting private renters
2. Help residents who are out of work to find the right job
3. Help residents cope with the rising cost of living
4. Make Islington a place where our residents have a good quality of life
5. Provide residents with good services on a tight budget

Supporting a Dynamic VCS

We want to support Islington's voluntary and community sector to maintain and renew its long-standing history of being dynamic, vibrant and independent. We want the sector to use its

independence and ability to be responsive, and to identify opportunities to improve quality of life for Islington residents in a rapidly changing environment.

At the same time we need the voluntary and community sector to be connected with mainstream services, supporting residents to access the range of opportunities in the borough that promote independence and resilience including help with finding the right job. In order to fulfil our ambitions for Islington, we need the voluntary and community sector to:

■ **Address and prevent deeper complex social issues and long term challenges that affect our residents.** We need the sector to provide innovative solutions and high quality services (both preventative and ameliorative) that improve outcomes for people affected by complex social issues such as, mental health, domestic violence, long-term health conditions and substance misuse. We need the sector to continue, and develop its work with particular population groups such as young people, carers, elderly residents and people with disabilities in these areas.

■ **Support residents to be independent and resilient.** We recognise that the social issues affecting the quality of life for Islington residents are often the consequence of structural issues such as the social isolation of older people, or experiences of disaffection and alienation amongst the young. In order to ensure that Islington is a place of opportunity for all of its residents we will need to work with organisations that support individuals to be independent and resilient and to access the range of opportunities available in the borough, for example through building capacities and skills for independent living, securing financial stability or sign-posting to preventative services. We need this work to improve outcomes for vulnerable residents. Where appropriate, we need the sector to support residents to find the right job.

- **Promote community cohesion and champion equality.** We want to ensure that Islington is a place where people have a sense of common belonging and feel safe, regardless of background or life stage. We need the sector to respond to the needs of Islington's diverse communities by championing equality, promoting positive relations and cohesion across, between and within different communities, combatting hate crime, and ensuring participation and access to services for all sections of the community.
- **Mobilise community action and support neighbourhoods to develop and grow.** We want to support organisations that enable local communities and neighbourhoods to develop and grow. Across the borough, we want to mobilise community action, and to ensure that community resources, skills, knowledge and spaces are used to their full potential. At a neighbourhood level, we want the voluntary and community sector to work with us to ensure that residents are able to access animated community spaces and a coherent offer of high quality activities, services and opportunities that meet local needs.
- **Provide or sign-post residents to appropriate, high-quality advice and guidance when residents are faced with difficulties.** We want to ensure that residents are able to access high quality advice, guidance and legal support when faced with difficulties. We recognise that many residents will first turn to local voluntary and community sector organisations for support. We therefore need the sector to combine its capacity to reach some of our most vulnerable residents with the ability to link residents to professional advice services and mainstream provision.

The support we will give the VCS

There are four ways in which we will support Islington's voluntary and community sector to be key partners in delivering our vision of a fairer Islington, the details of which are set out later in this document.

- **Funding:** including partnership grants and small grants programmes, a bespoke training and capacity building fund, and discretionary rate relief.

- **Commissioning and procurement:** Commissioning organisations to deliver services, and ensuring social value is included in our approach to commissioning.
- **Premises:** developing a borough-wide premises strategy that maximises the use of our buildings, and enables organisations to share premises, reduce costs and maximise income generation.
- **Working strategically with key partners** to build the capacity of the sector, promote volunteering, support fundraising, establish networks, maximise our collective impact in neighbourhoods, and ensure a coordinated whole-Council approach to the VCS

The sorts of organisations we will we support

To ensure that Islington's voluntary and community sector can support local residents and communities, we want to support a range of organisations, including:

- **Smaller organisations** that provide activities and deliver services at a neighbourhood level or to particular population groups.
- **Community anchors and neighbourhood centres** that are able to coordinate, and curate a coherent offer of local services in response to the needs of the local community.
- **Thematic networks**, which represent and articulate the needs of disadvantaged and excluded communities, and that ensure that services respond to the specific needs of different population groups.
- **Organisations** that lead, challenge, and support the sector as a whole, and that can work in partnership with the Council to champion change, resilience and innovation in the sector. We need voluntary and community sector organisations that are able to provide strong and visible leadership to the wider sector, to inspire organisations to continuously improve, to share best practice, and advocate on behalf of the sector. This could be through organisational development services to local groups, supporting organisations to attract and recruit volunteers, bringing external investment into the borough; or establishing networks to facilitate joint funding applications.

Our Approach

Our Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy responds to the needs that we have identified, the views expressed by local organisations in our consultation (Appendix C), and the Council's priorities for the borough over the coming years.

Our primary focus is on improving outcomes for residents. We're determined to make Islington fairer and to ensure that everyone, whatever their background has the same opportunity to reach their potential and enjoy a good quality of life. We want to work with organisations that can help us achieve this aim.

We want to support local organisations to operate in a different and fast changing environment. And so, our strategy is firmly focussed on helping local organisations to become more independent, financially resilient and better equipped to meet the challenges that lie ahead.

We recognise the important role of core funding and small grants for the voluntary and community sector. Funding and grants of this nature provide a foundation from which organisations can grow and develop responsive initiatives. We also know that over the next few years there are particular areas where Council spending will remain significant. We want to ensure that voluntary and community sector organisations that deliver high quality services and social value are well placed to be our providers of first choice.

Despite these commitments, we recognise that the Council's relationship with the voluntary and community sector cannot simply be based on funding. Both the Council and the voluntary and community sector will have to adapt, be flexible, identify efficiencies and collaborate in order to identify opportunities for mutual benefit.

Our approach therefore focuses on continuing to build and develop strong, outcome driven partnerships between the whole Council and the VCS. These partnerships will need to leverage the financial resources, physical space, and expertise that our voluntary and community sector organisations require to be independent, financially resilient and responsive to local need.

With the primary aim of improving outcomes for residents, we will look to use our resources to work with the sector to establish the infrastructure it needs to deliver high quality services and be resilient. We want to see a better connected sector, with more collaboration and sharing of resources between organisations and groups who share similar goals or who are serving the same communities. We want this infrastructure to support organisations whether we directly fund them or not.

The Islington Compact sets out how local statutory and voluntary sector organisations have agreed to work together to improve the quality of life for residents and will be refreshed over the lifespan of the strategy.

Delivering the Strategy

Delivering Islington's VCS strategy will require a cross Council approach, including commitment from a wide range of service directorates. We are committed to working across the organisation to ensure that the whole Council's approach to the voluntary and community sector is coherent, and that our energies and resources are maximised.

The Voluntary and Community Sector Committee oversees the Council's engagement with the Islington community and voluntary sector and to ensure value for money and fairness in the allocation of Council resources to the sector.

The Council's Third Sector Strategic Forum will serve as the primary officer mechanism to ensure that the Council adopts a consistent and coordinated approach to its engagement with the VCS.

The Council's Voluntary and Community Sector Development Team will be tasked with coordinating the Third Sector Strategic Forum. The team will be responsible for establishing an annual work plan, with clear milestones and reporting mechanisms to deliver the VCS strategy.

Playing a role as advocate and challenger, the team will develop stronger links with key corporate departments and services, and with Islington's voluntary and community sector. The Team will establish a work plan with our key partners to achieve the aspirations set out in this strategy, which will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Our consultation highlighted funding as the key concern of Islington's voluntary and community sector. We want the VCS to be able to focus on the delivery of its core services. Wherever possible we will try and draw together funding programmes to simplify and streamline application processes, and establish appropriate and proportionate monitoring processes

In recognition of the value of grants to local organisations and the potential for these to lever additional resources into Islington, we will look for opportunities to develop our grant and commissioning arrangements.

The Islington Community Fund

The Council is committed to continuing grant funding, we will maintain the Islington Community Fund, which will include a small grants programme, and continue our partnerships grants programme which will contain a responsive organisational development and training fund.

1) Small Grants Programmes

We will continue to support a range of local voluntary and community organisations through our small grants programme. These grants programmes are designed to support smaller organisations to add value to their programmes or to run one-off projects or activities often at a neighbourhood level and will include:

- The Community Chest programme: Small one-off grants for local organisations
- The Local Initiatives Fund: To support ward-specific projects and initiatives
- The Community Festivals Fund: For borough-wide events that support the Council's wider priorities around equalities, community cohesion and place-shaping.

2) Partnership Grants Programmes

We will offer financial support to a range of local voluntary and community organisations and consortia of organisations through four-year funding agreements. These will be run on a two plus two year basis in order to allow us to have greater flexibility, create new opportunities throughout the four year funding cycle where resources allow, and respond to changing needs of the community and the sector.

These grants will be available for organisations that are well run; provide effective services; have the potential to develop and where there is a strategic need for what they do and where they operate.

Our Partnership Grants Programme will be available for small organisations that deliver core services through to those that provide leadership and support to the sector as a whole. There will be three strands to our Partnership Grants Programme, including:

- A Delivery Partnership Programme: For organisations that work directly with residents to improve outcomes in line with the priorities identified above.
- A Strategic Partnership Programme: For organisations that provide leadership, establish networks and build the capacity of the VCS
- An Advice and Guidance Partnership Programme: For organisations that deliver high quality, specialist advice, guidance and legal support.

We want to ensure that the voluntary and community sector organisations are able to respond and adapt to challenging circumstances over the coming years. In addition to funding leadership organisations we will establish a small organisational development and training fund and work with a framework of providers to allow organisations to request or deliver specialist bespoke support according to need. For example specialist support with fundraising, management, preparation for commissioning, governance, or marketing and communications.

Discretionary Rate Relief

We will continue to provide discretionary rate relief to organisations with premises in the borough that provide local benefit. All registered charities will continue to receive mandatory rate relief from the Council which covers 80% of their rates. We will also give discretionary rate relief for locally focussed voluntary and community sector organisations to either cover the remaining 20% (or all of their rates if they don't qualify for mandatory rate relief).

Council and other Public Sector Commissioning and Procurement

We want more local organisations that deliver high quality services and social value, whether large or small, individual applicants or consortia, to attain greater financial resilience by securing contracts from the Council and other statutory organisations such as the Clinical Commissioning Group.

The financial context in which we will be operating is likely to result in reductions to the funding available through Council contracts; collectively we will need to bid for external opportunities and leverage resources into the borough. To do this we need to make sure that the sector is equipped to compete with professional external voluntary and private sector providers. We also want voluntary and community organisations to be able to participate in public sector commissioning processes, helping to shape the terms of procurement processes in order to ensure that our tenders reflect the social value contribution the sector can make.

To do this we will:

- Work in partnership across the Council and with other public bodies to establish joint commissioning and grant funding arrangements where appropriate.
- Review our existing commissioning arrangements, monitor the proportion of contracts we award to Islington-based voluntary and community sector organisations and identify opportunities where local VCS organisations could deliver in terms of quality and social value.

- Review current procurement and commissioning systems to make them simpler and easier to navigate and bid for
- To work with our larger VCS organisation and encourage them to support consortium bids which unlock opportunities for smaller VCS organisations.
- Produce a user guide for the local voluntary sector to explain the process and ways in which it can benefit.
- Strengthen the value of community benefit and social value in our assessment of tenders.
- Provide advance notice to the sector of upcoming opportunities to tender.
- Build the capacity of organisations and offer brokerage services to help them access these funds, including helping them to cost and demonstrate the impact of their work.

Premises

The high cost of premises makes Islington an expensive borough for the voluntary sector to operate in. Smaller organisations, particularly those in buildings owned by private landlords, are finding it increasingly difficult to meet costs and the sector needs help to find and access good quality accommodation at reasonable rents. Rising costs in Islington are placing many organisations in an uncertain position and fuelling the demand for affordable premises.

We want to help the sector to cut costs, share resources and access suitable accommodation. We will develop a Council premises strategy which will take account of the needs of the sector and will:

- Improve the consistency and transparency of Council leases of Council owned premises occupied by voluntary organisations and make clear what outcomes we would expect to see for in-kind support of this nature.
- Make sure that the Council's property portfolio is allocated efficiently and seek to accommodate more organisations – particularly in underused buildings.
- Explore ways in which non-residential premises on housing estates can be used to benefit local voluntary and community organisations.
- To explore, where appropriate, how planning gain can be used to enable the VCS to access affordable, quality premises.
- Identify and promote co-location opportunities for VCS organisations to further develop neighbourhood and thematic clusters of interest, and to help organisations to cut costs by sharing associated common services such as IT, resources, administration, or to support bulk purchasing.
- Broker voluntary sector access to public premises.

Working Strategically with Key Partners

Delivering Islington's VCS strategy will require a whole-Council approach, including commitment from a wide range of service directorates. Within the financial context in which we are operating, it is imperative that the decisions made by the Council in relation to funding, contracts, premises and capacity development are coherent and consistent. There are numerous opportunities such as the pooling of funding and cross-departmental partnerships. The Third Sector Strategic Forum will serve as the primary arena to raise changes that will impact on organisations in the voluntary and community sector.

The Council's complex relationship with the sector will primarily be managed by the new Voluntary and Community Sector Development Team. This team will be tasked with advancing the actions outlined in the VCS strategy.

In addition, this team will work with the key leadership and networking partnership organisations to ensure that our work, and the sector itself, creates an enabling environment for organisations working with local residents. This enabling environment will include opportunities for capacity building, volunteering, fundraising support, networking and neighbourhood working.

Capacity Building

Through our Partnerships Grant Programme, we will support local voluntary and community sector organisations to deliver high quality capacity building and training opportunities for organisations in the borough. We will work with our strategic partners including Cripplegate and local businesses, particularly through the Big Alliance to:

- Establish a borough-wide offer of relevant and responsive support in areas of need, such as fundraising, governance, organisational strategy and development, business planning, managing volunteers, quality standards, monitoring and evaluation.
- Assess the range of capacity building and training opportunities available to organisations in the borough and where there are gaps provide grants for organisations to develop bespoke opportunities.

Volunteering

Volunteers are the backbone for many organisations and some groups rely entirely on unpaid help. Although the sector leads by example, working with volunteers is resource intensive. This presents a challenge for small groups with limited capacity to take on the task of recruiting, inducting and preparing volunteers for placements. We will work with our partners to:

- Ensure that infrastructure is in place to recruit and prepare volunteers.
- Ensure access to support for small groups to deal with the necessary regulations and policies for volunteers.
- Support organisations to offer placements, identify suitable candidates and manage volunteers.
- Work with other funders to find ways to increase the capacity of core funded organisations to use volunteers, particularly through resources that they can share.
- Maximise the benefits of volunteering from local businesses to help organisations develop – particularly professional services such as finance, business planning, marketing and developing commercial services or trading arms.

Fundraising Support

We will work more strategically with other local, national and international funders such as Cripplegate Foundation, Islington Giving, London Councils, the Big Lottery, and others, in order to help local organisations bring additional resources into the borough. This will require us to actively pursue opportunities, broker relationships and support consortia of voluntary organisations to unlock funding.

Where we can, we will join bids for projects that meet our priorities. Where we can't, for example when programmes are primarily targeted at the voluntary sector, we may endorse the application and provide information and expertise to help organisations write successful applications.

- We will work with our partners to:
- Establish one-to-one support and sharing of fundraising expertise across organisations.
 - Identify trusts and external grant funding and help organisations to take advantage of these.
 - Support fundraising and bid-writing – particularly joint voluntary sector/Council bids (e.g. the major ESF employment programmes).
 - Develop and maintain stronger relationships with key funders to attract and direct investment into the borough.
 - Identify private sector funding and maximise the benefit from corporate social responsibility programmes of leading firms located in the borough, linking in with the Big Alliance initiative.
 - Promote and support the development of appropriate business models such as social enterprise models, community interest companies and trading subsidiaries for charities.

Networks

We see formal and informal networks of organisations, organised around thematic priorities (such as unemployment, health, volunteering, or cohesion agendas) or demographic interest groups as an effective way to advance common issues, gain efficiencies and promote partnerships for collaboration and joint-funding applications.

We will work with partnership grant funded organisations to ensure that they establish open, inclusive and effective networks that deliver value to their members

Neighbourhood-based approaches

Across Islington too many community spaces are not utilised to their full potential. There is an opportunity to join-up the resources that different Council departments invest in local neighbourhoods to ensure that they deliver a coherent and relevant neighbourhood offer.

Based on an analysis of indices of deprivation and the prevalence of long-term health conditions at Super Output Area level, six key geographical areas will be targeted in the first instance for Place Based Community Development Plans: the Bemerton Estate, New River Green, the Andover and Six Acres, Crouch Hall Estate, Elthorne Estate and Mayville Estate. As part of this we will work with our partners to:

- Identify and evaluate the quality of the local community offer in relation to spend and need.
- Identify gaps and find innovative ways to work with local VCS organisations to address these.
- Develop a programme of action jointly with Housing and other Council departments to improve the coherence and quality of services and opportunities offered at neighbourhood community centres.

Appendix A: A picture of the VCS in Islington

Background

The size, diversity, emergent, and sometimes transient nature of civil society organisations operating within Islington, presents challenges to those interested in establishing an accurate and complete picture of the borough's voluntary and community sector.

The picture presented below brings together information from a number of sources including: Voluntary Action Islington, Octopus Network, London Voluntary Sector Council and London Borough Islington in order to provide a starting point for the Council's VCS strategy.

How many VCS organisations operate in the borough?

Islington's voluntary and community sector is very diverse and includes organisations of all types and sizes. The local scene is further complicated by the presence of charities with a national or international focus headquartered here but that don't deliver local services.

In 2014 more than 2,244 charitable organisations were operating in the borough. 1,169 were registered charities while other types of non-profit making organisations, including community interest companies, made up the rest. However, this data doesn't include information on the many small unregistered community groups in the borough. Neither does it accurately reflect the number of active registered voluntary organisations.

In the same year it was estimated that 400 to 450 locally focussed organisations were actively operating in the borough. If we also include small groups, such as tenants and residents associations and organisations

that have engaged with or received some type of support from the Council – including rate relief and small grants – approximately 700 is a reasonably accurate reflection of the number of local organisations that our strategy needs to address. However, it must also be recognised that up to 20 groups at any one time will be in the process of starting-up.

What types of organisation exist?

Table 2 shows a segmentation of the voluntary and community sector in Islington on the basis of size measured in terms of their income. The activities and needs of large voluntary organisations are very different from those of small community-based organisations. It is therefore important to gain an understanding of the sector in order to know how best to, not only provide support, but also to identify effective partnership opportunities.

The majority of VCS organisations in Islington are grass roots or small organisations. Approximately 40% of the VCS organisations operating in the borough are grass roots organisations with no paid staff and an income of less than £10,000. 30% are small organisations with at least one member of staff and registered charity status and an income of between £10,000 and £50,000. This situation demonstrates the importance of ensuring opportunities such as small grants programmes for local grass roots organisations that have extensive reach into local communities.

Approximately 9% of VCS organisations, many of whom have an Islington focus, have an income of between £250,000 and £1 million plus (Tiers 4 & 5). These organisations can be considered as strategic actors within the sector, both in terms of delivery and infrastructure.

Type of organisation	Income	Number (approx)	Examples
Tier 1: Grass roots run by volunteers. New and emerging groups. No paid staff, largely unregistered and unlikely to own premises.	Under £10,000	300	Scouts and Guides; friends of parks groups; community festivals; tenants and residents associations, estate based community groups.
Tier 2: Usually with at least one member of staff and registered charity status.	£10,000 to £50,000	250	Small BME organisations; community arts, networks and forums, older people's groups.
Tier 3: Small/medium Islington focussed with at least one co-ordinator plus other staff. Registered charity and/or company status.	£50,000 to £250,000	115	Community centres, mid-sized BME organisations.
Tier 4: Medium, mainly Islington focussed.	£250,000 to £1 million	40	Mental health, specialist advice groups, larger nurseries.
Tier 5: Large established local and regional charities.	£1 million and over	30	Large community hubs, social care and large children's services providers.
Tier 6: National and regional charities. Not Islington focussed. Largely located in south of the borough.	£10 million plus	Under 30	NSPCC, Shelter, Amnesty International.

Table 2: Islington VCS Organisations Categorisation by Size

What do these organisations do?

These 700 organisations are engaged in a range of activities and many organisations are involved in cross-cutting work that cover a range of areas, so it is difficult to classify them within distinct sectors of activity. The table below shows the primary focus for local organisations that we have been able to map.

Type/activity focus	Number
TRAs and TMOs	85
Arts and culture	79
BME/refugees	72
Children	66
Young people	53
Environmental	41
Faith	33
Health	32
Sport and leisure	25
Neighbourhood Regeneration	22
Community Centres (general)	21
Older people	17
Housing/homelessness	13
Disability	12
Women	11
Education/training	10
Employment	7
Networks	6
Adult social care	5
Business support	4
Volunteering	4
VCS Infrastructure	2
Other	61
TOTAL	676

Table 1: Voluntary and Community Organisations: Primary Thematic Focus – Source: National Council for Voluntary Organisations commissioned by London Voluntary Service Council (2013)

Where are Islington’s VCS organisations located?

Islington is a small borough and the services and activities delivered by local voluntary organisations appear reasonably spread throughout, although we estimate that Finsbury Park ward has the highest number (15% of groups, but most are very small).

Small groups are often found in wards in the north of the borough, where a number of important community centres and voluntary sector hubs are located. These centres often host smaller organisations within their premises. The number of organisations found in the north of the borough may also be reflective of the nature of the communities in this part of the borough. For example, Finsbury Park ward is the most deprived ward in Islington and also has the largest black and minority ethnic population in Islington. The vast majority of organisations in this ward reflect the needs of these communities.

Islington has a long and proud history of hosting major national and international charities and voluntary organisations. Typically these organisations are located in the south of the borough.

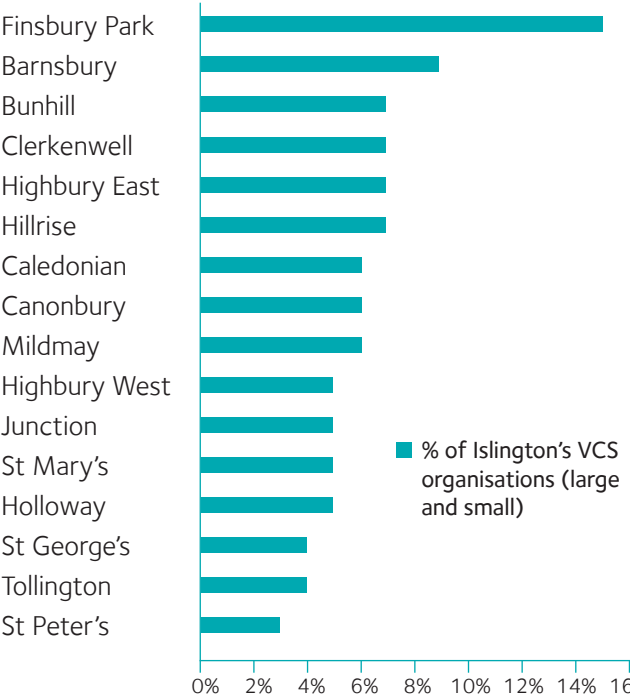


Figure 1: VCS Location by Ward (approximate)

What are Community Centres and Hubs?

There are a range of community centres in the borough – some that are Council funded, some that are located on housing estates, and some that are independently financed and run.

These community venues offer a range of services both directly and indirectly to communities at the neighbourhood level, for example, early years provision, after schools clubs, youth clubs, over 55s clubs that provide lunch and tackle older people’s social isolation. They bring together a wide cross section of Islington’s diverse local communities and play a key role in supporting the Council’s community cohesion agenda’s.

Much of the activity delivered in our community centres is developed and delivered in partnership with a range of voluntary and community sector organisations operating in Islington. The centres play a key role in supporting the work of the wider VCS and connecting local residents to the boroughs wider VCS offer. Community centres have a key role to play in supporting smaller grass roots organisations, providing not only accommodation for activities but providing informal advice and support.

Between 2011 and 2015, the Council provided funding for 12 Community Hubs supported by Octopus Community Network through its core grants programme.

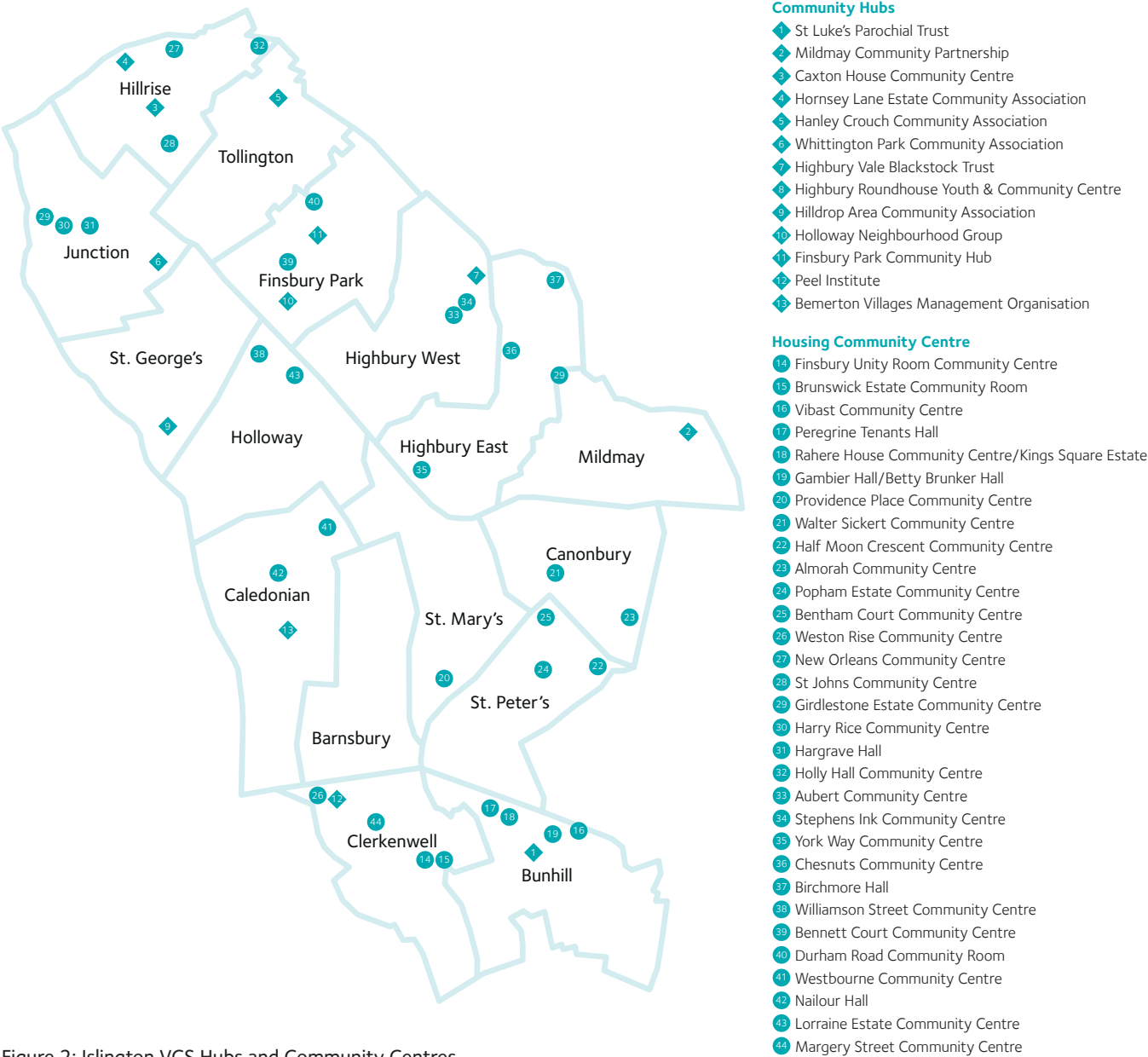


Figure 2: Islington VCS Hubs and Community Centres

Appendix B: Summary of Council VCS expenditure – contracts and grants

In 2014/15 we spent £41 million with the voluntary sector. The largest commissioner is Adult Social Care, followed by Children’s Services. Voluntary and community sector organisations are also commissioned to deliver contracts in the areas of Community Safety and Environment and Regeneration.

Service Area	Total
Adult Social Services (Including public health)	£26.35 million
Children’s Services	£7.51 million
Chief Executive’s VCS Grants	£2.3 million
Public Health	£1.98 million
London Council’s Grants	£1.57 million
Community Safety	£548,400
Environment and Regeneration	£448,093
Discretionary Rate Relief	£450,000
Local Initiatives Fund*	£240,000
Rescue Fund	£250,000
Community Chest	£200,000
Finance and Housing	£189,196

Council Voluntary Sector Contracts and Grants

Appendix C: Summary of VCS Consultation on the Council's Support to Local Voluntary Organisations

A consultation on the Council's support to local voluntary organisations was held from 19 June 2014 to 15 August 2014. This consultation focussed on the programmes in Islington Community Fund.

During this eight week period we received 41 responses including notes from a workshop facilitated by Voluntary Action Islington which was attended by 30 representatives of local organisations.

Around 70% of responses were from organisations currently receiving financial support from the VCS Grants Fund or the Advice Fund programmes.

A full version analysis of the VCS consultation is available on the Council Webpages. Below is a summary of the key issues raised by respondents.

Supporting the Local Voluntary and Community Sector

Partnership Working

A strong partnership between the Council and the voluntary sector was seen as key to meeting the needs of local residents in the difficult times that lie ahead. There should be regular dialogue with key representative bodies and greater VCS involvement in setting priorities, designing procurements and agreeing outcomes.

Some respondents felt that, over time, the VCS should aim for increased independence with a less dependent relationship and more of a partnership of equals with the Council.

Others suggested that there should be more emphasis on collaboration, for example in sharing information and attracting additional resources to the borough and argued that the Council has a leadership role in coordinating funding opportunities and bringing organisations together, a 'catalyst for creativity'.

Funding

Funding Landscape

Respondents understood the financial uncertainty facing the Council beyond 2015/16 and felt that introducing 2 + 2 agreements is a fair approach in the circumstances. There should be a clear and transparent process, compliant with the Compact, for the current review of funding and any subsequent reviews from 2017.

Several people highlighted the value in continuing to support organisations that have built up relationships and trust with residents, arguing that this can't just be transferred from one agency to another. However this shouldn't mean sticking with historical patterns that no longer meet the needs of our communities.

Mixed views were expressed about social enterprises and trading models. Some felt these had a lot of potential to support innovation and generate new income streams. Others were more cautious, perceiving the opportunities for income generation as modest, and in most cases not as a viable replacement for grants and contracts.

Core Grants Funding

There was a strong feeling that the Council should continue to give grants and a view that commissioning often focuses on the wrong areas. There was unanimous support for retaining an Islington Community Fund. It is seen as a successful approach which provides longer term funding for organisations delivering strategic priorities as well as smaller grants for groups responding to very local or specific community needs.

Users should be the most important consideration and the Council should support effective local grass roots organisations with a good track record in serving residents. Many felt that larger organisations tended to get Council funding at the expense of smaller groups. The Council should consider top-slicing its large contracts to allow small groups to benefit.

The Council should have fair and open funding programmes and should check what organisations actually do when awarding grants.

Small Grant Programmes

There was overwhelming agreement that current small grant programmes should continue. Islington Community Chest generated more comment and support than Local Initiatives Fund (LIF). Some respondents argued that LIF should be more transparent, with one suggesting a Dragons Den type approach involving ward partnerships. Opportunities for Islington Giving fundraising to complement small grants programmes should be explored. The two programmes could be better aligned to avoid the risk of duplicating funding awards when resources are scarce.

Fund Priorities

The Council's commitment to addressing the key areas

of concern to local residents – jobs, housing and rising cost of living – is strongly endorsed by the voluntary sector. Many other priorities were mentioned including health and wellbeing, community safety and cohesion, and provision for children and young people and for older people.

Feedback indicated very high levels of support for continuing with current grant programmes: core funding to strategically important local organisations (VCS Grants Fund); independent advice provision (Advice Fund); discretionary rate relief; and small grants (Community Chest and Local Initiatives Fund).

Joint Working and Funding

The Council should hold the ring and play a bigger role in bringing organisations together and creating partnerships. Brokering relationships and putting organisations in touch with each other for mutual benefit is also important.

Forcing groups to collaborate is not possible (the VCS is independent), but they could strongly be encouraged. Similarly, good organisations could widen their remit (if in line with their mission) to work with others.

The Council needs to involve the VCS at a strategic level, rather than simply inviting it to apply for funding. This would encourage organisations to develop consortia and partnership bids. Joint funding of organisation from larger pots would also help smaller groups to work together (or with larger organisations).

The Council should also organise events, seminars and provide information to promote understanding and help groups to focus on the most pressing equalities issues.

Monitoring of Performance

Various comments were made about how the Council monitors performance. Outcomes were preferred to rigid targets – using a key performance framework and allowing flexibility for changing priorities. Monitoring should be proportionate and should celebrate strong performance as well as pointing out weaknesses. Some organisations would like more dialogue about priorities and more face-to-face meetings with grants officers. Council systems and monitoring were viewed as unnecessarily bureaucratic involving too much paperwork and onerous reporting requirements, particularly for small grants where administration cost exceed the value of the grant. Monitoring should be proportionate and the Council should have clearer, simpler systems – and use plain English.

Premises

Affordability and Availability

Islington is a very expensive borough for the voluntary sector to operate in and the most popular answer by far was support from the Council to provide affordable premises and discounted or peppercorn rents. Smaller organisations, particularly those in buildings owned by private landlords, are finding it increasingly difficult to meet their premises costs.

There was strong support for making better use of premises, both the Council's own space and that owned by the voluntary sector. Schools and faith properties were cited as examples of buildings with spare capacity outside their normal hours of operation. Many agencies are looking for more flexible space and new community locations to deliver their outreach services.

Community Cohesion, Engagement and Advocacy

Communities must have opportunities to feedback their views and the Council has a role in creating and supporting this – but it should remain flexible on what it funds. What is important is that activities increase inclusion and reduce marginalisation, including for a wider community beyond the protected characteristics such as Irish, white working class residents and people living within the same neighbourhood.

Forums and Organisations

The importance of forums and networks (and that the Council should core fund them) was stressed, although this shouldn't necessarily extend to funding a separate forum for each of the nine protected characteristics. They should all be community led however. There were also calls for forums to have stronger links with local policy makers.

Support Needs of the Sector

All responses highlighted the importance of continuing to fund support for the sector. The most requested services were fundraising, training, information, premises, marketing and communications, networking, and HR. Many people commented on the difficulties their organisations are facing and the challenges of becoming more resilient. They would like more help with managing finance, 'business' planning, building partnerships and consortia, and developing new income streams. Training in social enterprise, trading and mutual support were also mentioned. The support needs of organisations are directly related to their size and scale.

Type	Support Required
Tier 1 Under £10,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Setting up – charity registration, organisational etc.■ Using volunteers – eg DBS checks.■ Practical development – finance management, trustees, developing policies etc.■ Fundraising inc. small grants applications.■ Finding premises.■ Information and intelligence,■ Developing links.■ Accessing capacity building sources.
Tier 2 £10k – £50k	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Fundraising to diversify income.■ Communications and marketing.■ Finance and administration.■ Staff development.■ Governance and trustee training.■ Volunteer support and supervision.■ Business planning.■ Developing new activities.■ Links with similar organisations.■ Suitable and affordable premises.
Tier 3 £50k – £250k	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Business planning – inc. measuring impact and cost of services.■ Management and staff s development.■ Developing better links with statutory sector as well as VCS.■ Information and intelligence.■ Securing flexible funding.■ Developing new services.■ Improved access to■ Income generation/trading (inc. private sector links).■ Fit for purpose premises.■ Consortia/joint working/mergers.■ Service specific support eg. adult/children’s social care and accessing public sector procurement opportunities.■ Volunteer training, support and supervision.■ IT development.
Tier 4 £250k – £1m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Links to contracts and commissioning opportunities.■ Developing income generation inc. trading.■ Increasing use of volunteers.■ Professional trustees.■ Innovation.■ IT development.
Tier 5 £1m +	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Ability to compete against external VCS organisations and private sector for LBI contracts.■ Professional trustees.■ Innovation.
Tier 6 Over £10m	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Links with Islington’s VCS and Council – eg expertise and employment opportunities for residents.

Support Needs by Organisational Size

A common theme was that organisations find it difficult to know what support is available and to access it at the right time. Smaller groups in particular are looking for more 1:1 advice and help with filling in fundraising applications, and more opportunities to network and share information with each other. They would like affordable space to be available for groups to share – desk space with meeting space and event space attached – close to where their communities are based

Neighbourhood Services

The concept of community based provision was widely supported and preferred to services centralised in Council buildings. Residents with the greatest needs are considered more likely to access support close to where they live. Voluntary sector providers rooted in neighbourhoods have an important role to play in putting people in touch with a broad range of services as well as enabling them to be engaged in what is going on in their local community.

A wide range of services were suggested for neighbourhood delivery. Those thought to be most valued by residents are:

- Advice and information, especially around the impacts of welfare reform, including family support. Effective signposting and referral to other sources of help.
- Youth and play activities – before and after school, at weekends and in school holidays
- Activities for older people to prevent isolation and tackle health problems
- Employment support services
- Support for vulnerable adults including mental health
- Volunteering opportunities

Volunteering

All respondents stressed the importance of volunteers to their organisations and that the Council should support volunteering in the borough. Some argued that volunteering is the core ethos of the local voluntary sector and that the Council should only support groups with a good track record of using volunteers.

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Appendix 2 VCS Partnership Grants Application Process and Timeframe

Decision Making Processes:

Detail	Key Dates
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executive Report (VCS Grant Funding Programme 2016-2020) drafted - outlining funding streams, funding available and core criteria and processes. – reviewed at regular intervals with Exec member. 	Ongoing until 11 January 2016
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key Budget Decisions made by Executive allocating VCS Partnerships Grants Programme Funding 	Thursday 7th January 2016
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executive Report (VCS Grant Funding Programme 2016-2020) revised following above 	7-10 January 2016
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executive meets and consider report (VCS Grant Funding Programme 2016-2020) 	Thursday 14 January 2016
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executive Call in period (Three Days) 	Tuesday 19 January 2016
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VCS Committee Paper (VCS Grant Funding Programme 2016-2020) submitted to Democratic Services and distributed 	Wednesday 13th January 2016
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Islington VCS Committee (VCS Grant Funding Programme 2016-2020) noted 	Monday 25 January 2016
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VCS Committee Call in period (3 days) 	Thursday 28 January 2016

Stage One: Applications

Detail	Key Dates
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalise prospectus and assessment framework and scoring criteria 	Friday 15 January 2016
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launch Voluntary and Community Sector Partnership Grants Programme 	Friday 22 January 2016
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet the VCS Development Team - Question and Answer Session (Borough-wide Infrastructure) Lift Project, 45 White Lion Street, London, N1 9PW – The Angel Room 	Friday 29 January 2016 10am – 12pm
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet VCS Development Team – Question and Answer Session (Strategic Advice) 	TBC
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet the VCS Development Team - Question and Answer Session (Neighbourhood Partners) Lift Project, 45 White Lion Street, London, N1 9PW – The Angel Room 	Friday 29 January 2016 2pm – 4pm

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet the VCS Development Team - Question and Answer Session (Delivery Partners) Holloway Neighbourhood Group, The Old Fire Station, 84 Mayton Street, London N7 6QT 	Thursday 28 January 2016 (12pm – 2pm)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet the VCS Development Team - Question and Answer Session (Borough-wide Infrastructure) Central Library, Holloway Road 	Wednesday 3 February 2016 2pm – 4pm
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet the VCS Development Team - Question and Answer Session (Delivery Partners) Lift Project, 45 White Lion Street, London, N1 9PW – The Angel Room 	Thursday 4 February 2016 (12pm – 2pm)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Closing Date for Stage One Applications (application window of 6 weeks) 	Friday 4 March 2016
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Logging applications and base data 	Monday 7 March 2016

Stage One: Shortlisting process

Strategic Advice Partners	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete Shortlisting Applications Applications sent to LBI Link Officer 	Friday 11 March 2016
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Link Officer comments/ scoring of shortlisted applications 	Wednesday 16 March 2016
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shortlisting Stakeholder Panel Meeting 	Friday 18 March 2016

Borough-wide Partners	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete Shortlisting Applications Applications sent to LBI Link Officer 	Friday 11 March 2016
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Link Officer comments/ scoring of shortlisted applications 	Wednesday 16 March 2016
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shortlisting Stakeholder Panel Meeting – Strategic Borough-wide Partners/ Volunteering Brokerage 	Wednesday 23 March 2016

Delivery Partners	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete Shortlisting Applications Applications sent to LBI Link Officer 	Friday 11 March 2016
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Link Officer comments/ scoring of shortlisted applications 	Wednesday 16 March 2016
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shortlisting Panel Meeting – Delivery Partners 	Wednesday 23 March 2016

Strategic Neighbourhood Partners	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete Shortlisting Applications Applications sent to LBI Link Officer 	Friday 11 March 2016
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Link Officer comments/ scoring of shortlisted applications 	Thursday 17 March 2016
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shortlisting Stakeholder Panel Meeting – Strategic Neighbourhood Partners 	Thursday 24 March 2016

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report to Exec Member on outcome of shortlisting 	Monday 4 April 2016
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notify shortlisted organisations 	Friday 8 April 2016

Stage Two: Application Process.

Detail	Key Dates
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stage Two – Meet shortlisted organisations (VCS Dev Officers to set dates and book rooms to meet organisations) 	Monday 11 April 2016
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> End of Stage Two 	Friday 29 April 2016
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Closing Date for Resubmitted/ Revised Proposals (Organisations have an option to resubmit their applications within two weeks of their meetings) 	Friday 13 May 2016
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommendations sent to (Special) VCS Committee 	TBC

Formal Approvals of recommendations:

Detail	Key Dates
▪ VCS Committee	TBC
▪ End of Call in Period	TBC

Stage Three: Notification of Grant Awards (Dates dependant on date of VCS Committee)

Detail	Key Dates
▪ Send approval letter and SLA to successful organisations – (One week to sign and return SLA)	Two days after VCS Committee's Call in Period
▪ Send letter to unsuccessful organisations	Two days after VCS Committee's Call in Period
▪ Notify current funded organisation that their agreements will end Thursday 30 June 2016	Two days after VCS Committee's Call in Period
▪ Assign organisations to VCS Development Officers	One week after VCS Committee's Call in Period
▪ VCS Development Officers to arrange meetings with successful organisations to discuss their proposal	One week after VCS Committee's Call in Period

Special Date:

Detail	Key Dates
▪ Start delivery of new programmes	TBC

Appendix 3: Grant Awards through the 2011-2015 VCS Grants Programme

Organisation	PP&C Grant Award (per year)
Algerian British Connection	£10,000
All Change Arts	£20,000
Almeida Theatre Company	£10,000
Angel Community Canal Boat Trust	£18,200
Arab Advice Bureau	£25,000
Every Voice (Islington BME Forum)	£20,000
BSB Somali Arts & Education	£5,000
Caxton House Community Centre	£30,000
Creative Islington	£40,000
Disability Action in Islington	£40,000
Eritrean Community in the UK	£20,000
Finsbury Park Community Hub (Andover CC)	£60,000
Finsbury Park Mosque	£20,000
Hanley Crouch Community Association	£60,000
Highbury Roundhouse	£50,000
Highbury Vale Blackstock Trust (Elizabeth House)	£30,000
Hilldrop Area Community Association	£25,000
Holloway Mosque	£10,000
Hornsey Lane Estate Community Association	£25,000
Islington Community Network (Hosted by VAI)	£20,000
Islington Chinese Association	£15,000
Islington Pensioners Forum	£5,000
Here To (Isledon Partnership)	£55,000
Islington Arts Factory	£15,000
Islington Bangladesh Association	£25,000
Islington Faiths Forum	£25,000
Islington Link-Up	£10,000
Islington Refugee Forum	£20,000
Islington Somali Community	£25,000
Kurdish & Middle Eastern Women Organisation	£10,000
Light Project Pro International	£15,000
Mildmay Community Partnership	£60,000
Muslim Welfare House	£20,000
Octopus Community Network	£20,000
Peel Institute	£40,000
Queensland Multi-Media Arts Centre (QMMAC)	£10,000
Rowan Arts	£15,000
Somali Speakers Association	£15,000
St Luke's Parochial Trust	£60,000
Tollington Parish (StMark's Church)	£20,000
Turkish Education Group	£10,000
IMECE Turkish Speaking Women's Group	£20,000
Voluntary Action Islington	£40,000
Whittington Park Community Association	£60,000
BVMO	£15,000
TOTAL	£1,163,200

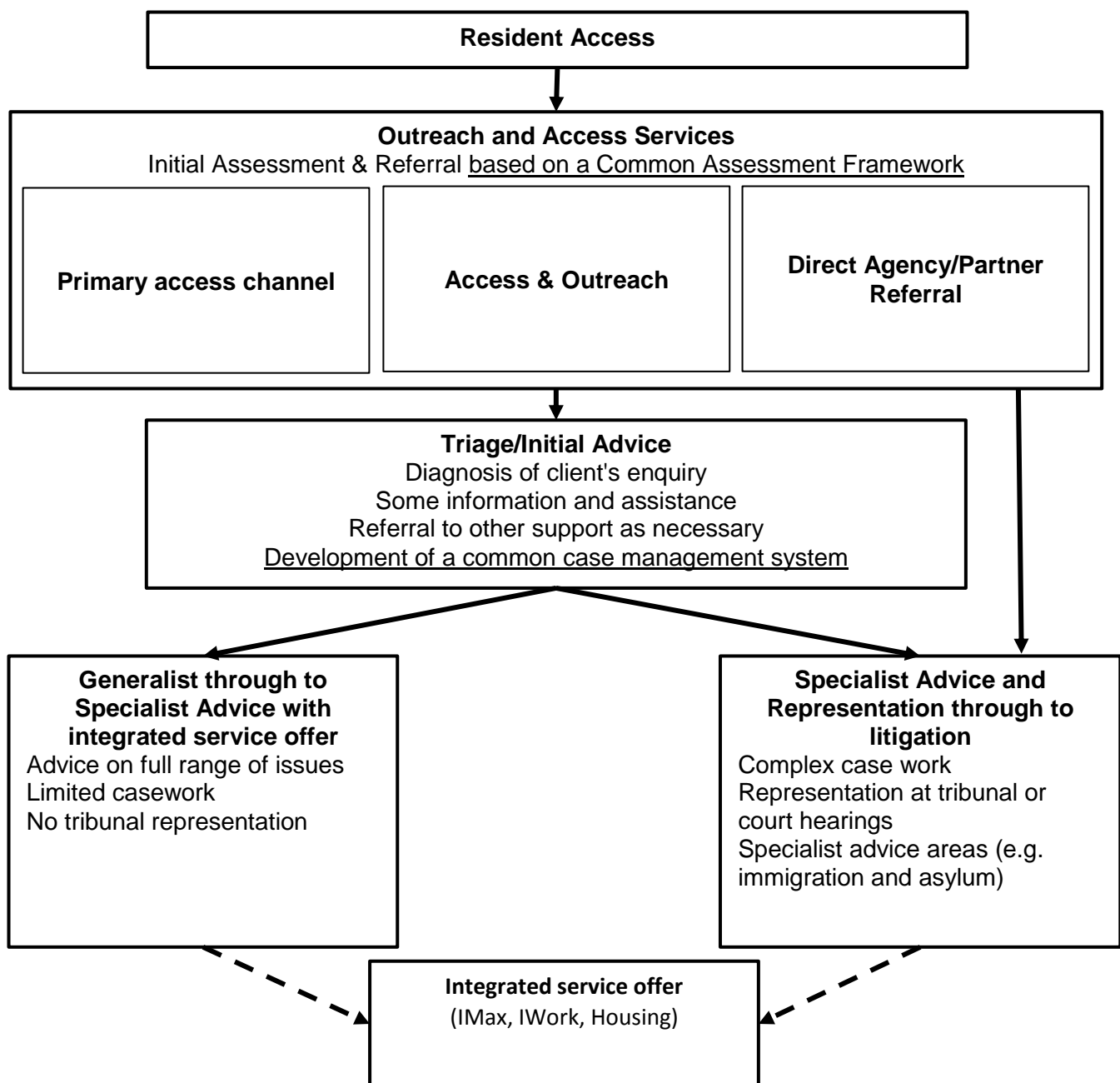
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Appendix 4 Proposed Islington VCS Partnership Grants Programme Funding Allocations

	VCS Partnership Grants Programme 2016-2020 Proposed Funding profile	Source	Proposed Grant Pot Range	Sum PP&C Grant Award	No. of Orgs Potentially funded	Maximum Award	Average Award	% of Strands 1-4	% of overall Pot
1	Strategic Partners - Borough Wide Infrastructure	VCS	£170,000 - £210,0000	180,000	8	35,000	22500	17.1%	7%
2	Strategic Partner – Volunteering	VCS	£30,000-£40,000	35,000	1	35,000	35000	3.3%	1%
3	Strategic Partners – Neighbourhoods	VCS	£475,000-£525,000	475,000	10	50,000	47500	45.2%	19%
4	Delivery Partners	VCS	£320,000-£400,000	360,000	20	20,000	18000	34.3%	15%
	Subtotal			1,050,000	100.0%				
		Source	Contribution to fund	Sum PP&C Grant Award	No. of Orgs Potentially funded	Maximum Award	Average Award	% of Strands 1-4	% of overall Pot
5	Strategic Partners - Advice	VCS	1,165,000		5	£200,000-£530,000	0	100.0%	57%
		Housing	146,000						
		HASS	95,000						
	Subtotal			1,406,000					
	Total			2,456,000					

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Appendix 5 : Islington Advice Model



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