

Lambeth Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy

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Foreword

Lambeth is one of the most diverse and open places on the planet. People from all over the world come to our borough to build a life for themselves and their families. The borough's voluntary and community sector (VCS) reflects this diversity, with over 1,500 organisations employing at least 22,000 people and playing a key role in ensuring that our local community is thriving and working together towards a better, fairer Lambeth.

We recognise the value and unique contribution that the VCS makes in supporting and delivering services that meet the needs of Lambeth residents, having seen first-hand over many years the positive effect that local organisations have on the lives of residents. Lambeth Council has been a proud supporter of the voluntary sector for many years, the contribution of the sector being apparent in every part the borough, through their work to help and care for residents of all ages, the support they offer to the most vulnerable, the bonds they create between communities and through their empowerment of all residents from all backgrounds.

As a borough, Lambeth has seen much positive change, but we still experience unacceptable levels of deprivation and growing inequalities, with challenges at a local and national level likely to continue. If we are to meet these needs, we need to think differently about our role. It is not enough to provide effective and efficient public services. We believe that having shared goals between local public bodies, VCS organisations and communities is key to tackling inequality and driving social change, providing better opportunities for residents and ensuring that they have a greater say. For our residents, we need to be ambitious and respond effectively to changing needs and demands and we are proud that Lambeth organisations have a history of developing innovative solutions to tackle a range of social challenges. We will only be able to achieve the objectives set out in the Borough Plan by working together with all our partners, especially the VCS. We need to continue our work to align our approaches to ensure the delivery of our joint aims and to make best use of our resources, such as the funding available or our assets.

The priorities outlined in this strategy are based on what the sector and residents have told us they need through engagement and consultation, focusing on what the challenges that have been highlighted and how we aim to tackle them. In this strategy, we aim to set out the roles that both the voluntary sector and Lambeth Council can play in meeting our Borough Plan priorities and in delivering the best outcomes for our residents. Although we are expecting the pressure on the council budgets to increase, this strategy presents an opportunity to find innovative ways to support residents and to focus on the benefits of collaboration and partnership with local value-driven organisations.

Through partnerships, creative ideas and collaboration we are determined to work together to improve the lives of people who live and work in the borough. We are committed to ensure that our local voluntary and community sector continues to thrive as we believe that their strong presence is at the heart of a better, fairer Lambeth.

Cllr Donatus Anyanwu and Cllr Jim Dickson, Cabinet Members for the Voluntary Sector & Partnerships (job share)

Context

Voluntary and Community Sector in Lambeth

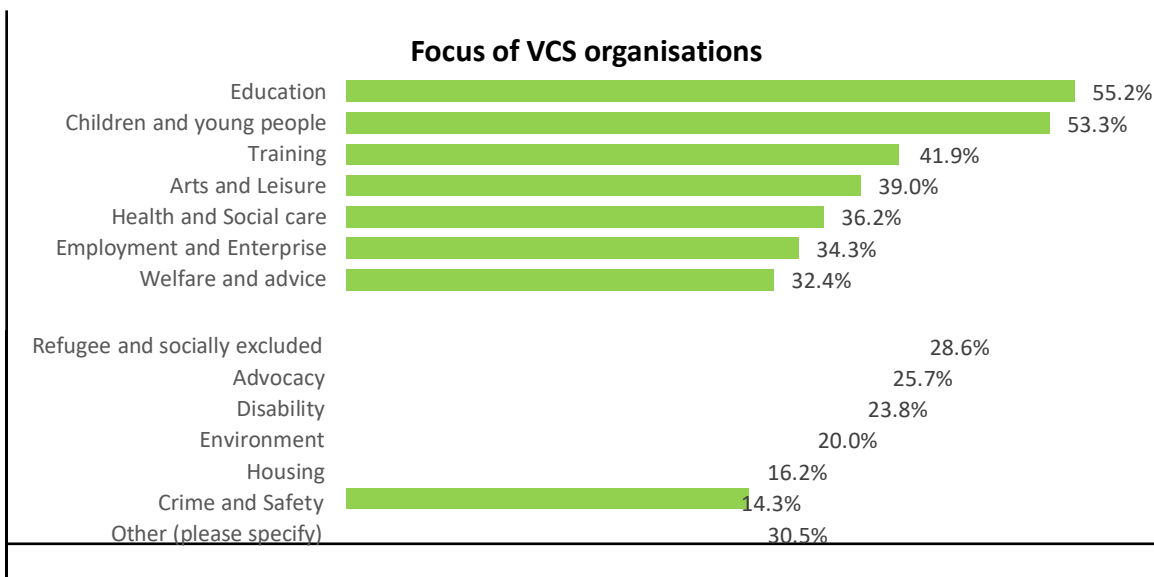
The voluntary and community sector (VCS) in Lambeth plays a vital role in the lives of people who live in the borough. Lambeth’s VCS has a strong track record in developing and delivering a range of innovative approaches to social, economic and environmental issues.

The borough’s VCS organisations reflect the diversity of the people and communities who live and work in Lambeth. Estimates have suggested there over 1,500 VCS organisations in Lambeth including registered charities, community interest companies, social enterprises and unregistered groups. London Voluntary Sector Council’s (LVSC) borough profile for Lambeth shows that in 2013 there were at least 1,570 VCS organisations in the borough:

Type of organization	Number
Charities ¹	836
Community Interest Companies	57
Industrial and Provident Societies	37
Companies Limited by Guarantee	640
Total VCS organisations²	1,570

The report also suggested that the total annual income for Lambeth-based charities alone was over £1.5bn, employing at least 22,000 people. At least half of the charities are local or regional in focus, with the other half having a national or overseas focus.

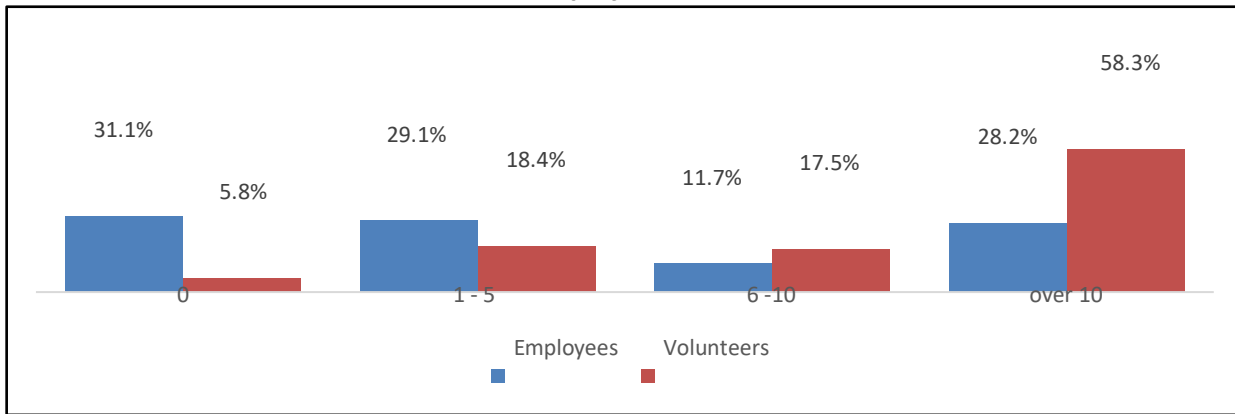
A survey of VCS organisations was carried out in summer 2017 and this shows that VCS organisations seek to benefit the local community in a variety of different areas and that local organisations range in size, both in respect of turnover and number of employees and volunteers:



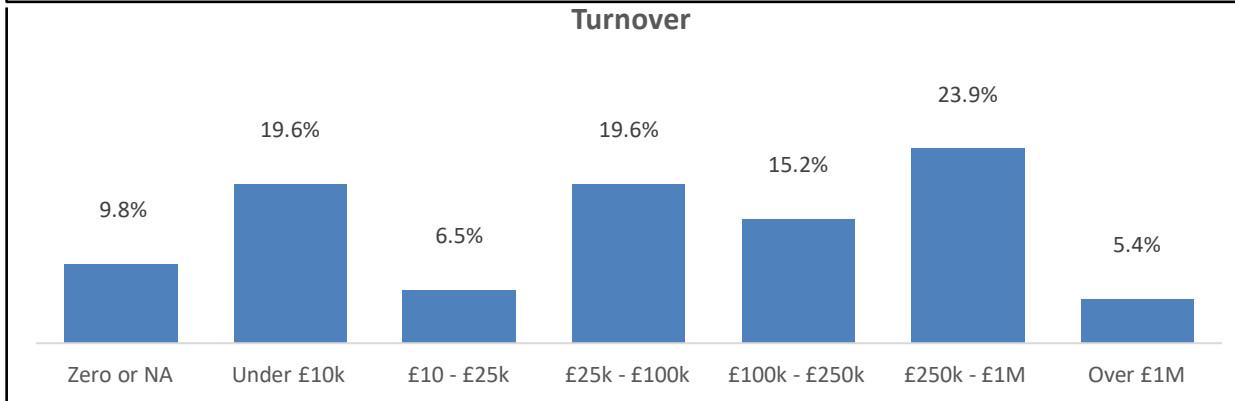
¹ Does not include housing associations, independent schools, government bodies, trade associations and faith groups whose main objective is the promotion of religion

² Does not include unregistered VCS groups, so the actual figure is likely to be higher

Number of employees and volunteers



Turnover



Financial climate and current funding

We know that the Voluntary and Community Sector in Lambeth has been operating in an increasingly difficult environment. Organisations have been significantly affected by the both the reduction in public sector budgets since 2010 and the simultaneous increasing needs and demands from local communities due to widespread austerity and punitive welfare reform providing challenges for the most vulnerable in society. Reductions in public procurement opportunities and an increasingly competitive environment for other sources of funding and resources have put many VCS organisations under pressure, meaning that the VCS has had to adapt to a harsher financial climate by reducing costs, becoming more efficient and diversifying income sources to best meet communities' needs.

Lambeth Council has faced similar unprecedented cuts in funding over recent years. Between 2010 and 2018 our funding from central government will have been cut by half. From a budget of £274m in 2017/18, a further £55m in savings needs to be made by 2020.

This has forced the council to make significant savings, at the same time as dealing with increased demand for services such as housing and social care. The council needs to continue to meet statutory obligations, maintain essential services and respond to increasing and changing needs of residents.

- The council has not been able to provide funding for strategic infrastructure support to the VCS since 2013. Whilst many individual organisations have been able to remain resilient, this has led to an absence of support which previously helped to coordinate and represent the VCS. The council has identified that this is an issue for the VCS and has therefore procured Integrate CIC to provide this strategic support to the sector.
- Ongoing support and funding for the Lambeth Forum Network

- Discretionary Business Rate relief for local charities and not-for-profit organisations
- £243k contribution to the London Councils Grants Programme in 2020/21

Delivering The Borough Plan

We want Lambeth to be the best place it can be – a borough to serve all of its population – and to do this, we all have to be on the same page. To understand the future of the VCS, it is important to look at the short-term and long-term aims for the borough as a whole, through our Borough Plan. We know that Lambeth is a place of huge ambition, energy and opportunity, ready to be capitalised on by the diverse population who live here -radicals and reformers, social entrepreneurs and innovators, those looking to help change the lives of others, or individuals wanting to improve their and their family’s lives.

Lambeth is a place which has historically provided the freedom for people to try new ideas - from the pioneering research of our universities, to the innovative work of trusts and foundations working in the borough, to the array of social entrepreneurs, community groups, charities and networks working alongside communities. All of these, whether they be institutions, groups or individuals, have the ability to bring about borough-wide change, and this is what we want to facilitate and enable in our VCS.

The role of Council and its partnership is constantly evolving as the political context changes. Currently, the role involves harnessing the energy and dynamism of the borough, to further the building of relationships, and to facilitate the collaboration and networks that can drive innovation and improve outcomes for all. The Borough Plan is just one tool to help us collaborate effectively, align our energy and resources and focus on our businesses’ and residents’ priorities as a range of organisations work together to achieve the desired goals for Lambeth Together and of the Lambeth First Partnership Board, we need to use our shared powers and influence to ensure that the benefits of sustainable growth are channelled into building individual and community resilience, and to create an environment that supports peoples’ wellbeing, attracting people to live, work and invest in the borough.

Over the coming years the Council and partnership’s role will increasingly focus on achieving the Borough Plan’s 4 big ambitions and the 20 goals which sit underneath these to improve the lives of those who work and live in the borough:

Enable growth and development in the borough	Increase community resilience	Promote care and independence by reforming services	Make Lambeth a place where people want to live, work and invest
Fair jobs	Early years	Support to children with SEND	Town centres
Affordable housing	Lifelong-learning and education	Vulnerable children and families	Leisure and culture facilities
Innovative industries	Serious Youth Violence	Mental health and wellbeing	Housing quality
Transport	Early intervention and resilience	Health and support	Parks and green spaces

Community facilities	Community assets	Vulnerable adults	Environmental impact
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The Borough Plan recognises that in many cases, no one agency or organisation can deliver the change we collectively want to see by themselves – we can only do it if we work together. Therefore, it is vital that we, as the Council, The VCS and the wider public sector, along with others, believe in the partnership which can exist in Lambeth and work together to better achieve the outcomes we want to see.

How the strategy was developed

To develop the strategy, the council has been engaging with a reference group of around 25 local VCS organisations, drawn from a range of sectors and size. Consultation with this group has helped to inform the approach taken as well as the proposed content. One of the recommendations from this group was to have a document, jointly owned by the VCS and public sector, which sets out a collective view for the future of the VCS in Lambeth in the context of the Borough Plan and the challenging financial climate for both sectors.

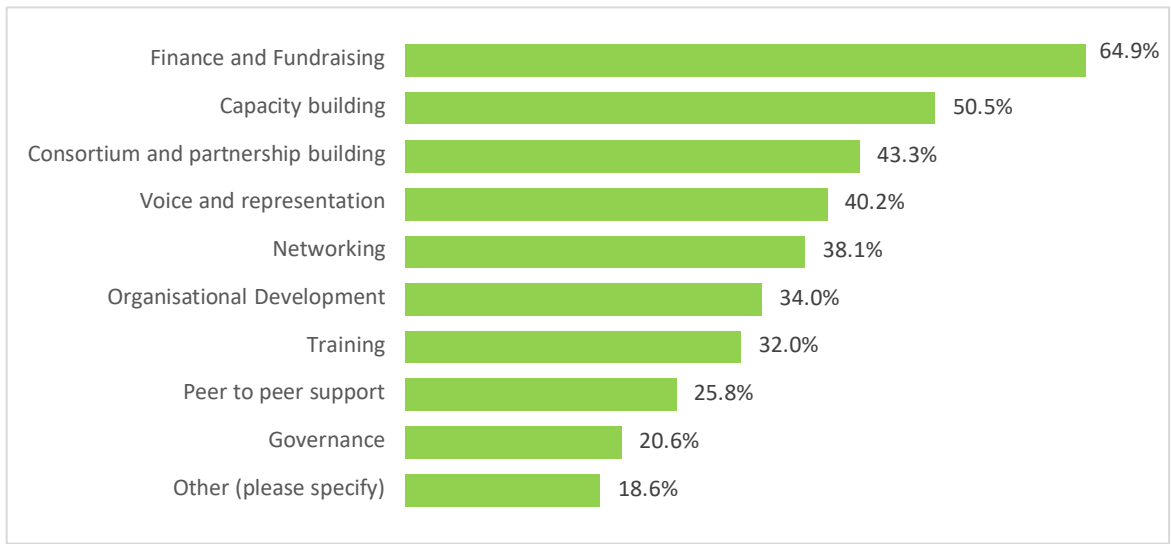
Equinox Consulting carried out research into the needs of local VCS organisations and the support needed from the public sector. Their research included:

- 108 online interviews with the community and voluntary sector in Lambeth, about their characteristics, needs and support preferences
- 18 in-depth interviews with selected VCS organisations on the telephone and in person. These interviews focused on the state of the sector, their support needs and services, relationships and information sources. Their views were also sought on preferences for support services and the delivery mechanism.
- Six interviews with commissioners and funders mainly conducted face to face – their priorities, relationship with the sector and support they can offer
- One interview with a Charitable Foundation support service for voluntary sector organisations in Lambeth
- Two events with the reference group

In summary, the research found that difficulties in accessing resources; a lack of representation; a shortage of affordable space; and an absence of skilled volunteers were the main issues facing the VCS.

Most VCS organisations access information about the borough and their sector through word of mouth; forums/ meetings attended; emails from the council; and the council newsletter. They would welcome a more systematic method for receiving information.

VCS organisations identified the following as their support needs through the survey:



The key asks from the VCS to the public sector from the research are for a commitment to co-production and collaboration, to receive more funding and support.

The research carried out by Equinox Consulting has provided an analysis of the VCS in Lambeth.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large, diverse and grassroots sector encompassing different sizes delivering to communities with different minority groups • Grassroots and close to the community and has good knowledge and intelligence of community needs • Tenacious, resilient, energetic and highly motivated groups working in creative ways to make a difference for the communities they serve despite funding cuts • Passion and commitment of workers, volunteers and trustees working for something they believe in, leveraging money into the Borough to deliver services in and effective coalition and partnership with residents and other groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence of CVS therefore no strategy, no direction, no voice, no representation • No real networks that are bonded together. Individuals working on their own with no effective collaboration. • Lack of partnership working and strong consortia and it is therefore difficult to leverage funding and other resources into the Borough • Organisations are not strong suffering from lack of support and inadequate capacity building to be sustainable or help them move to the next level • Too many organisations mistrusting and competing • Lack of coordination to facilitate close working relationships
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to form an infrastructure organisation that is inclusive, representative, transparent to be the real voice and coordinator of all the sector's efforts • Opportunity to work together, collaborate and create real partnerships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of funding threatens the vibrancy and diversity of the sector • Commissioning has meant larger more efficient organisations with strong administration and quality systems coming into the Borough and contracting with the statutory sector for

amongst VCS organisations and with the statutory sector

- An opportunity to form and strengthen organisations operating in the local areas as well as in different sectors and communities of interest
- An opportunity to partner the statutory sector to contribute to the transformation agenda in the borough
- To engage in the burgeoning social prescribing opportunities particularly and become a key partner in the Lambeth Together agenda
- Opportunity to leverage more money into the borough if the VCS can work in partnership with each other and the statutory sector

delivery of services to Lambeth's communities.

- Lack of capacity building and lack of a voice will erode confidence in the sector
- If the sector does not adopt a modernising agenda that embraces technology, quality systems and collaborative working that will enable the sector to adjust to a variety of funding regimes it will become less vibrant and services that are needed for the community will not be delivered
- Funding cuts and austerity will make it difficult for the sector to thrive

Key social contract principles

The following key 'social contract' principles are at the heart of the Lambeth VCS Strategy and are to be shared by all partners in Lambeth:

- We will improve the quality of life for local people is at the centre of all the work that we do in Lambeth;
- We will recognise the importance of voluntary and community activity in the development of a democratic and socially inclusive society;
- We will understand and promote the idea that the independence and diversity of the voluntary and community sector is fundamental to the well-being of civil society;
- We understand that the voluntary and community sector is entitled to act as advocates, as part of its variety of functions including: campaigners, service providers and active participants in the design and delivery of services;
- We will create successful partnerships, which are based on mutual respect, recognition of difference as well as similarity of purpose. Successful partnerships require all parties to contribute appropriately and to keep agreements they make;
- We will commit to equality of opportunity for all people and to respond to the needs of Lambeth's diverse communities;
- We will be accountable for our actions and the relationships should be based on integrity, objectivity, openness and honesty;
- We will develop partnership working between the public, private and voluntary and community sectors in the borough to maximise opportunities and minimize duplication of resources;
- We will build effective working relationships with partners and develop awareness of how each sector operates and the issues that affect it;
- We understand that it is only through working in partnership and collaboration that we will achieve a real improvement in the quality of life of local people.

How we will do this

The need to work collaboratively within the VCS and more broadly with the public and private sectors has informed this vision for the future of the VCS. This vision recognises that the VCS must be responsive to the needs of the communities they serve, whilst simultaneously being proactive in helping to mitigate the social issues that prevent the borough receiving the funding it deserves and suffering from a lack of cohesion that hinders partnership formation.

This vision is to have a sector that is:

A valued, competent, indispensable and harmonious voluntary and community sector working to champion and provide a supportive and sustainable environment for all communities in the borough.

Strategic objectives

1. Maximise funds and resources into the borough

What is the change we want to see?

- VCS organisations benefit more from regional and national trusts, foundations and other external sources of funding
- Increased proportion of council (or public sector) spending with the VCS, albeit in the context of reduced public sector budgets
- Greater exploitation of Corporate Social Responsibility from local businesses by the VCS
- VCS organisations have more diverse income streams, providing greater resilience to funding changes
- More Lambeth residents and workers receive the London Living Wage

Shared responsibilities and commitments

To promote relevant funding opportunities so there is equal access to the available resources
To support collaboration between sectors and organisations on funding bids

Role of the council/public sector

- Facilitate a regular Funders' Forum to provide an opportunity to influence and understand the priorities of funders operating in Lambeth.
- Recognise the wider social and economic benefits, within the context of the Borough Plan, to working with the voluntary and community sectors when developing commissioning strategies and inviting tenders for contracts.
- Ensure that the voluntary and community sectors are able to compete for tenders by working with the sector to give them the skills to understand commissioning procedures, and by keeping the tender process as simple and open as possible, offering feedback on unsuccessful tenders
- When commissioning voluntary and community groups, ensure that proper consideration is given to allowing full cost recovery of the project, therefore having regard to the provision of reasonable core costs to support the funded service.

Retain Living Wage Friendly Funder status

Role of the VCS

- Recognise that public sector organisations are publicly accountable for the resources they allocate, and they are under a duty to secure the most appropriate and cost effective services to meet identified local priorities.
- Adopt quality standards appropriate to the organisation and to the services provided, and continually monitor and evaluate performance within available resources with the aim of continuous improvement in quality and demonstrating impact of the services to funders.
- Diversify its funding base and business model as appropriate so that organisations are not reliant on one funder and adapt to the changing commercial environment.

2. Build the organisational capacity of VCS organisations

What is the change we want to see?

- VCS organisations are able to source well skilled volunteers and trustees
- VCS organisations have access to information and support about good governance and appropriate policies, procedures and quality accreditation
- Organisational leaders and trustees have appropriate finance, fundraising and marketing skills
- Greater levels of mutual support within the local VCS with help and advice exchanged between people and organisations

Shared responsibilities

- Everyone recognises the value and importance of volunteers to the sector, and the importance of volunteering to personal development and accessing opportunities, so it is own joint aim to promote volunteering opportunities, including those for trustees, using mechanisms that ensure they are likely to be seen by people with appropriate skills.
- Promote training and support opportunities relevant to VCS organisations, particularly those that are free or low cost. Provide specific support for youth workers and those who work with young people.
- VCS organisations understand good practice in relation to organisational governance, structure and leadership skills.

Role of the council/public sector

- Ensure there are opportunities for council employees to use their volunteering time to benefit local VCS organisations, especially those with professional skills.
- To build relationships with volunteering providers that are delivering services within Lambeth

Role of the VCS

- Regularly review the training needs within their organisation and seek appropriate training and support.
- Ensure their organisations comply with all relevant regulations relevant to the organisational structure.
- To seek support from volunteering providers where there are opportunities to gain professional support that will enhance the performance of the host group.

3. Create stronger networks, relationships and levels of trust between VCS organisations

What is the change we want to see?

- VCS organisations who are better informed about what is happening in the borough and their sector, and are made aware of opportunities for funding, collaboration, engagement and celebrations.
- For the VCS to be formed of multiple networks, and for these networks and forums to regularly meet face-to-face and provide solutions to challenges rooted in relevant themes and topics
- Opportunities for sector-wide meetings and discussion
- Greater sense of collaboration and partnership amongst the VCS, rather than organisational competition

Shared responsibilities

- Approach relationships and partnerships from the perspective of you can offer, rather than just what you can get from it.
- Take a proactive approach to finding out what is happening in the borough and more widely, and to openly share information with others.

Role of the council/public sector

Provide resources to enable VCS forums and networks to meet, specifically those for:

- Children and young people
- Health and wellbeing, linked to the formation of Local Care Networks
- Lambeth Forum Network
- Organise and distribute a regular e-newsletter to the VCS which should include relevant local news, information about planned/ongoing consultations, and highlights funding opportunities and upcoming events.
- Organise an annual conference for the VCS in Lambeth, in conjunction with VCS representatives

Role of the VCS

- Constructively contribute to relevant networks and forums, including taking a leadership role within the network or leading on specific topics.
- Actively seek out opportunities to make new contacts with other VCS organisations and recognise the value of personal relationships.
- Provide news and information to other VCS organisations about the services being offered and opportunities for linkages and collaboration.
- While looking out for organisational interests, recognise the importance of collaboration and partnership between VCS organisations and avoid seeing other VCS organisations as competitors.

4. Enable the VCS to represent local communities and be recognised as a partner

What is the change we want to see?

- Involvement of VCS organisations in strategic partnerships
- Commitment from the public sector to involving and collaborating with the VCS in the development, design and delivery of services
- Opportunities for the VCS to represent the views of their communities to the public sector
- Mechanisms are in place to allow VCS representatives to be chosen fairly and openly

Shared responsibilities

Develop appropriate mechanisms to ensure that the VCS can be represented on the local strategic partnership, as well as other working groups and project boards.

Role of the council

Ensure that the voluntary and community sector is given the opportunity to be involved in the local strategic partnership, as well as other working groups and project boards, including:

- Lambeth First Partnership Board
- Health and Wellbeing Board
- Children and Families Strategic Partnership
- Safer Lambeth Executive
- As well as Council facilitation of neighbourhood working which would allow VCS groups to better tailor their services to place and the people within it, in line with their target groups.
- Ensure that the voluntary and community sector is given the opportunity to be involved at an early stage in the design and delivery of local services, and commit to show the impact of their involvement.
- Respect and value the campaigning role of the voluntary and community sector while acknowledging that this may conflict with public agencies' plans and decisions.
- Be proactive in sharing data about the borough and local services.
- Recognise the role of VCS organisations in advocating for local communities and offer opportunities for VCS representatives to be involved in assessing the equalities impacts of council decisions.
- Promote the borough's diversity and lead the way in tackling inequality.

Role of the VCS

- Be clear on who is being represented and how their views have been gathered
- Identify groups that are in danger of being marginalised, excluded or currently under-represented in voluntary activity and put in place measures to promote their involvement
- Act as an advocate for service users, members, volunteers and other stakeholders, where appropriate.

- When representing the VCS on partnerships and project groups, ensure there are opportunities for feeding back to others within the sector about decisions that have been taken and potential future issues.
- Maintain an independent and critical perspective to provide direct input and constructive feedback on the development of policy and services.
- Put in place policies for ensuring equality of opportunity in employment practice, involvement of volunteers and access to services.

5. Making better use of the Borough's community assets

What is the change we want to see?

- A coordinated approach to affordable and available VCS property across the borough.
- Improvements to tenure for the VCS to allow property work sustainability
- Provision of clear information about accessing premises.
- Better support, information and training on how to manage community spaces well and set out clearly all the responsibilities therein.

Shared responsibilities – See VCS Property Strategy

- The Council/public sector and VCS partners working together to ensure benefits for Lambeth residents are maximised, and inclusiveness remains central to use of community spaces.
- Work towards greater standardisation of future offers of tenure to provide transparency, fairness and consistency, and build on the partnership approach between the Council/public sector and the VCS sector.
- Wherever possible, the Council/public sector will work together with VCS partners to take full opportunity to lever in funding from external sources.
- Look more creatively at using existing spaces that are currently underutilised.

Role of Council/public Sector

- To recognise social value and community benefit created by VCS managed assets.
- Understand the capacity and potential of VCS organisations as well as their current and future accommodation needs.

Role of the VCS

- To operate well run spaces for the benefit of Lambeth residents, harnessing the value of the borough's assets to improve wellbeing, engagement and community cohesion.
- To ensure full compliance with the expanding range of statutory requirements arising from health and safety considerations.
- To extend opportunities to smaller and new groups to utilise existing community spaces.
- To create sustainable community spaces.

How we will deliver the aims of the strategy

Both the VCS and public sector will take responsibility for this strategy being implemented and will jointly monitor its implementation and hold each other to account.

A VCS Partnership Group will be established that will meet at least three times per year to oversee the implementation of the strategy (and any associated contracts for the delivery of strategic support services to the VCS that are commissioned by the council – dependent on model chosen).

The key targets that will be monitored to see whether the strategy is being successfully implemented are:

- Proportion of council expenditure that is spent with the VCS
- Value of funding brought into the borough from external funding
- VCS representation on strategic partnerships
- VCS forums are meeting and have an interconnectedness
- From a survey of VCS organisations, the following measures show positive trends:
 - VCS organisations are able to source volunteers and trustees who are skilled and qualified
 - VCS organisations feel their leaders and trustees have appropriate finance, fundraising and marketing skills
 - VCS organisations provide mutual support to each other
 - VCS organisations feel well informed
 - VCS organisations feel involved in the development of local services

Borough plan what we know

1 Enable sustainable growth and development

we will ensure all the homes we build are designed, built and delivered in a way that supports sustainable growth and development. We will encourage sustainable development in the borough, including in the areas of digital, health, life sciences, business, and financial services.

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2 Increase community resilience

we will ensure that all children and young people in the borough have access to high quality education, training and employment opportunities. We will also ensure that all young people in the borough have access to high quality health and social care services.

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3 Promote care and independence by reforming services

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4 Make Lambeth a place where people want to live, work and invest

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