



LONDON

CVS

NETWORK

IMPACT

REPORT

FEB 2023

LONDON CVS NETWORK

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The London CVS Network

London's Councils for Voluntary Services (CVSs) are the backbone of the voluntary and community sector at borough and community level. They support, connect, promote and represent local voluntary, community and faith organisations. [Find out more here.](#) They also champion local issues, sparking social action and change, together striving to create a better, fairer London for all.

CVSs provide advice, and support, capacity building, training, networking opportunities to a huge number of voluntary, community and faith organisations and groups. They link the sector to local authorities, the NHS, funders and other public and private sector organisations. They support the local voluntary and community sector crisis or emergency responses.

In addition, some CVSs deliver social prescribing services, fundraising and grant distribution and digital support as well as community development work with local residents. Some also deliver volunteering services including volunteer brokerage and Community Champion programmes, with just under half of London's CVSs hosting the local volunteer centre.

London's CVS Network brings together London's CVSs to share information, learning and good practice, and to work together on London-wide issues. Recent examples are London's recovery from Covid-19, work on addressing structural inequalities and the cost of living crisis. Most recently the network has set up a task group working on collective actions to mitigate the impact of the cost of living crisis; sharing information and good practice, key messages and exploring how the network can support funders to design relevant programmes.

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Reach and representation

London's CVSs have an extensive reach into the sector and into communities. In total London's CVSs have over **43,000 organisations in their networks**; with a newsletter distribution of nearly **38,000** and a social media following of almost **91,500**. This is based on 29 organisations. Based on averages, if there was a CVS in each of London's 32 boroughs, the total organisations within their networks would amount to **47,700**, newsletter distribution would be almost **42,000** and social media following approximately **100,900**.

The CVSs' extensive reach means they can communicate far and wide and gather insights from a very broad local base. Collating these local insights, together the network can establish trends and patterns, and build a picture of what's happening in London's communities, as well as representing their local sector and amplifying seldom-heard local voices to a wider audience.

38,000

**NEWSLETTER
RECIPIENTS**

91,500

**SOCIAL MEDIA
FOLLOWERS**

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Action and impact

In this report, the data used to demonstrate the network's activity and impact was taken from 2020/21. This was of course far from a typical year, but it does offer great examples of CVSs adapting to support local communities through unprecedented challenges and demands.

In 2020/21, London's CVSs leveraged an estimated **£24.1 million** into the voluntary and community sector. This is a remarkable sum, but this doesn't cover the whole of London. If there was a CVS in each of London's 32 boroughs, this figure could have reached an even more staggering estimated **£26.6 million**.

An estimated **10,700** organisations and community groups were actively engaged in infrastructure support from London's CVSs in 2020/21, in the form of advice, guidance and support, training, networking opportunities and other events. A total of **725 training sessions** were held in 2020/21, with **10,500 individuals attending**. In addition, CVSs held a further **725 forums and network events**, enabling information sharing and encouraging collaboration and partnership.

In 2020/21, volunteering services within London's CVSs placed an estimated **15,800 volunteers** into volunteering roles. Just under half of London's CVSs host their local volunteer centre and offer volunteer placement services. This therefore is not the full picture and does not include the volunteers placed in that time by London's independent volunteer centres. However, based on the average, if there was a volunteer centre in each of London's 32 boroughs (either independent or hosted by a CVS) this figure would be estimated at over **36,000 volunteer placements** in that year.

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REACH INTO LONDON'S COMMUNITIES

43,239

ORGANISATIONS ACROSS
DATABASES

24,737

VOLUNTARY & COMMUNITY
ORGANISATIONS



18,502

OTHER
ORGANISATIONS

**ORGANISATIONS
INCLUDE:**

- Voluntary organisations
- Community organisations
- Local Authorities
- NHS
- Statutory / Public bodies
- Funders
- Private sector organisations
- Individuals / General public



91,437

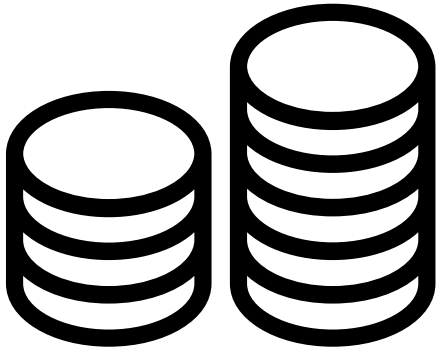
FOLLOWERS ACROSS
ALL SOCIAL PLATFORMS

Based on current CVS Network data. Figures are approximate. Where data was not available from the entire network, data has been aggregated to form a whole network picture.



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ACTIVITY AND IMPACT 2020/21

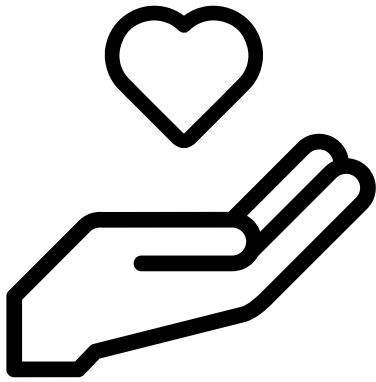


£24,106,673

LEVERAGED INTO THE
SECTOR

1,450

EVENTS AND TRAINING
SESSIONS



10,730

ORGANISATIONS DIRECTLY
SUPPORTED

15,805

VOLUNTEERS PLACED

(OF THE 13 THAT HOST A VOLUNTEER CENTRE)



Data collected from year 2020/21. Figures are approximate and where data was not available from the entire network, data has been aggregated to form a whole network picture.



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So what does this all mean?

Funding is key

Adequate, core funding is key to sustaining the sector and ensuring its resilience, and for the sector to work effectively, investing in local infrastructure is crucial. Funding is a significant challenge, in the current context of constrained public finances and further compounded by increasing costs and increased demand for services and support. However, with adequate investment, local infrastructure organisations such as CVSs can continue to strengthen the sector and build its capacity to better support the community, further reducing the pressure on public services.

The Covid-19 pandemic and the cost of living crisis are prime and recent examples of the critical role local infrastructure plays in convening and coordinating the sector, and connecting to partners in the statutory and health sectors, providing insights and channelling key messages to communities through VCSE networks as well as mobilising volunteers and delivering essential services. Both the pandemic and the cost of living crisis have also demonstrated why this coordinating role is ever-more needed. Both come with far-reaching and devastating impacts, and both highlight the significant inequalities that have left some communities experiencing the effects far more acutely.

Local infrastructure also has a critical role in supporting systems change and reducing inequality by bringing diverse communities together, amplifying their voices and co-ordinating social action. London's CVSs represent a vast range of diverse organisations (including community-based, equity-led, user-led and volunteer-run groups).

A final message to funders

As a network we are urging funders to look at the specific role that infrastructure can play. Community support is vital to bring about change, and the sector is vital to that support, particularly in the context of demands upon public services and rising costs. Local infrastructure is the glue that holds the sector together and enables it to work in the most effective, informed, connected, and coordinated way.

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The four functions of local infrastructure

It is recognised that the work of local infrastructure organisations is varied and diverse, however most activities fall within these four broad categories, as identified by NAVCA; Leadership and advocacy, Partnerships and collaboration, Capacity building, and Volunteering.

Below are some case studies from members of the network demonstrating these functions in action.

Case Study: Community Development (Kensington & Chelsea Social Council)

Kensington & Chelsea Social Council (KCSC) worked in partnership with Community Organisers to deliver 'Power and Participation' training for local VCS organisations and social action groups, with the aim of spreading good community development practice across the borough.

'We learnt that working in partnership with local organisations is invaluable... Local organisations know North Kensington best and know the response needed to any situation especially KCSC who have supported NK for many years.'

'Thank you very much for the training. I am looking forward to putting some of this into practice and bringing these ideas back to the charity I work for.'

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Case Study: Leveraging Money into the Sector (Hackney CVS)

When the pandemic hit, there was an urgent need to channel funds to community groups caring for Hackney's diverse communities through the crisis. Hackney CVS quickly adapted their existing community giving programme (Hackney Giving) to meet this need.

Through the course of the pandemic, Hackney CVS distributed over £1,100,000 to local organisations. They also led an alliance of youth organisations to secure £750,000 over two years supporting a number of youth projects delivering violence reduction work in the Hackney Wick area.

Early in the pandemic, local groups used the funding mostly to provide food and other necessities, to provide advice and ensure continued contact with residents during lockdown. As the pandemic continued, several further rounds of funding through Hackney Giving helped keep local people safe, by making sure that everyone had access to accurate and up to date public health information, and to support engagement at vaccine centres. Essential public health information was shared across the local community in over 30 languages.

The impact of the pandemic on mental health for all ages, across communities, was a significant concern. Existing mental health issues were exacerbated and new mental health inequalities emerged. As society began to reopen, funding was increasingly used to support wellbeing, reduce loneliness and isolation, and help people living with mental health issues.

'Without Coffee Afrik and Abdi, my family would not have survived. I had suicidal thoughts, no food and lost my job during COVID-19, they are like our family. Nobody else is helping like Coffee Afrik, they are the only Somali support.'



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Case Study: Capacity Building (Tower Hamlets CVS)

Capacity building input from Tower Hamlets CVS (together with Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets) had a positive impact on the development of Refugee Education for Equal Employment Opportunities (REFEO).

REFEO is a grass roots, BAME-led, wholly volunteer run, start-up organisation supporting refugees from a range of communities to successfully resettle and integrate through accessing employment and training opportunities, mentoring and peer support. Their beneficiaries are the among the most marginalised residents, facing enormous intersectional barriers to opportunities, and have the poorest outcomes across multiple measures in Tower Hamlets.

Through one to one work with Development Officers, THCVS supported REFEO with drafting and reviewing policies, business planning, Board development, funding advice, bid writing and application support, service design, co-design, budget planning, evaluation and monitoring tools and processes, digital support, partnership working advice and connections, as well as referrals for other support. THCVS also provided connections to a student volunteering programme through a local university.

In total, THCVS has supported REFEO to grow their annual income from £500 to £10,000, achieving in the space of one year £10,000 funding to deliver support to 35 LBTH residents into employment with mentoring, peer support, a digital forum, access to accredited learning, and a laptop. Additionally, the funder is supporting some core development cost to build Board governance.

'Thank you for all your support!'



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Case Study: Connecting and Convening (Hackney CVS)

Hackney CVS brought the community together to respond to Covid-19. They have a long history of investing in networks, which are at the heart of their work. Their networks bring organisations together to share community insight, raise issues with statutory organisations and work together to improve the lives of local residents.

These networks were critical when the pandemic hit:

Hackney Advice Forum
Hackney Refugee and Migrant Forum
LGBTQ+ Special Interest Group
Learning Disabled Special Interest Group
Mental Health Special Interest Group
Older People's Special Interest Group
Sexual Health Special Interest Group
Children and Families Forum
Connect Hackney, Ageing Better
Faith Community Network
Hackney Lunch Clubs Network
Safer Young Hackney/Young Londoners Fund network
Supported Employment Network



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Food Action for Communities (CommUNITY Barnet)

During lockdown CommUNITY Barnet partnered with London Plus, the GLA, Impact on the Street and City Bridge Trust to arrange for large-scale food donations to Barnet's foodbanks, providing food parcels to communities most at risk. This included to people needing culturally appropriate food, in the most deprived wards, and those who were clinically vulnerable and shielding. Statutory food provision did not meet the dietary or cultural of faith requirements of Black and Minority Ethnic communities.

Organisations such as Living Way raised public funds and used networks to create a food bank to source and deliver food, including Halal and Kosher food, to those who were shielding. Living Way reached 750 people per week. Aid Excel changed its delivery, and all staff supported volunteers to deliver food parcels in their area, including to isolated families with disabled children who had no other means to get food.

Through partnerships, food and other essential items were distributed to food banks and services for homeless people and refugees. CommUNITY Barnet partnered with Impact on the Street, to provide essentials for homeless people at a high risk of infection and transmission, including sleeping bags, thermos flasks, pants and socks, food and gloves. Theory Kitchen also supplied over 100 pots of nutritious soups to Age UK Barnet, Barnet Hospital, and a local food bank.



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Case Study: Food for All' (Kingston Voluntary Action)

One of the most pressing issues in Kingston, as a direct consequence of Covid-19, was food insecurity. Alongside pre-existing issues being illuminated and exacerbated, there was a 'new wave' of need, as residents faced unprecedented financial hardship, alongside isolation. This had a direct impact upon the health and wellbeing of community members, especially as it related to stress, stress management and the increased risk for children and young people and residents from Black and Minority Ethnic communities. In particular, for those who required a specific diet, for medical and/or cultural reasons, there was a dire and immediate need to ensure that community organisations worked together to respond directly the crisis.

Kingston Voluntary Action (KVA) formed a partnership with 5 small, mainly ethnic minority community organisations and raised funds to run a 6-month project which achieved the following:

- More people accessing community led food solutions with meals provided and distributed and a food co-op established. 58 tons of food were distributed in 6 months.
- Beneficiaries ate more healthily and having better access to financial support, information and advocacy services.
- Improved voice and awareness of the partnership's role, with recipe cards distributed and cooking videos released online.

Project legacy: Following the success of the project, this partnership led by KVA was awarded further funding to run the following projects:

- Continuation of the Good Food Group.
- Establishment of a food pantry in one of Kingston's libraries to address food poverty and obesity in that part of the borough.
- Grant distribution to 7 borough organisations in each year over the next 3 years to run community cooking classes addressing food insecurity as well as obesity, diabetes and mental health issues such as lack of sleep and anxiety.

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Case Study: Digital Poverty (CommUNITY Barnet)

During the Covid-19 lockdowns, CommUNITY Barnet became very concerned about poverty levels for school students in the most deprived wards (within the top 5% most deprived in England) that was resulting in students absent from school due to lack of devices, poverty-shame and isolation.

'I work across five schools, and some of the families are in such great need.'

Family Support Worker, Barnet

'Our children feel cut off and lost, they are worried they will never catch up on work they have missed. It causes a lot of stress for our family.'

A parent, Barnet

CommUNITY Barnet linked with New Citizen Gateway who said that recently arrived refugees were severely isolated with no family or online contact. They ran an intensive long-term crowdfunding and corporate donor appeal, raising £10,000 in data packages, laptops and tablets. These were distributed to school students, and in partnership with New Citizen Gateway, to refugees.

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Case Study: 'My Care My Way' (Kensington & Chelsea Social Council)

My Care My Way is a pioneering collaboration involving GP surgeries, hospitals, Health & Social Care Assistants and Case Managers, local community and social care services and the local VCS; it provides an integrated care service for anyone aged 65 or over to help keep them well, closer to home.

Kensington & Chelsea Social Council (KCSC) plays a key role as the programme manager with local VCS organisations funded through this programme to provide a wide range of wellbeing services. During 2020-21 all organisations adapted their services according to the changing Covid-19 guidelines by providing regular welfare calls to clients, IT support, safe transport, shopping and medication pick-ups as well as essential face to face visits. We know from our surveys with patients that 91% of felt that the wellbeing services they received were beneficial and 94% rated the service quality 'good' or 'excellent'.

The Social Prescribing service was previously evaluated for its social return on investment (2019) and found an annual resource saving for hospitals valued at £151,000 for 2018-2019. This was related to reduced need for hospital spells, emergency admissions (A&E) and outpatient visits, plus a 24% reduction in GP visits. If using 2018-2019 WLCCG unit cost prices for acute episodes, the social return on investment equated to approximately £3.80-£4.00 for every £1 invested.

**£151,000
HOSPITAL
SAVING**

**24%
FEWER GP
VISITS**

**£4 FOR
EVERY £1
INVESTED**

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Case Study: Medicine Pathway (Voluntary Action Camden)

Voluntary Action Camden (VAC) utilised existing structures in Camden such as GoodGym volunteers to become embedded in the NHS medical pathway. VAC had already been working with the Camden Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to develop a social prescribing approach, collaboratively with the local authority and other VCS organisations.

VAC's strong relationships with other charities and the connections built through the development of the SP service enabled a coherent collaborative 'pivot' during the Covid-19 emergency. This meant that VAC was involved as the first port of call in the medicine pathway for residents and able to meet emergency needs. Camden's Care Navigation (run by Age UK Camden) and Social Prescribing service were able to pivot quickly to take on food and medication deliveries to vulnerable residents through the existing pathway.


By April 2020 the medicine pathway was fully operational and worked efficiently through the height of the emergency response. Many pharmacies had stopped deliveries because of capacity issues. By the end of April, even Boots started referring people to the service to get a delivery organised! Whilst the demand started to drop from the end of July, it remained a consistent part of the Care Navigation and Social Prescribing offer. As contact tracing and testing developed, the service identified new people who were self-isolating and needed support with medication provision.

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Case Study: Befriending volunteer programme (Croydon Voluntary Action)

Croydon Voluntary Action's befriending volunteers provide emotional support for those who are feeling isolated, through face-to-face support, meeting in a public space and/or support to access activities and services. Befrienders make a real difference in the lives of individuals those they support, by meeting or speaking with them regularly and supporting them to access local services. CVA also offers a Telephone Befriending PLUS service to reduce isolation and provide support through a weekly telephone call. Telephone befrienders usually call the same person each week at the same time, to provide a listening ear, links to other services, and monitor general well-being. It is funded by Comic Relief and enables those with English as a second language to find befrienders as well.



'At the start of lockdown, I decided I wanted to become a volunteer. I wasn't sure what exactly, just to do something to help people and to keep busy during lockdown. It had to be something I could fit in around my full time job. And when I saw the details in Croydon Council's newsletter, it seemed it could be the perfect fit. I registered my interest, completed the pre-requisite online training, and was allocated two befriendees. During the course of the weekly conversations, I have grown really fond of my befriendees and we've formed a really strong bond. It has surprised me just how strong that bond can be with a person I've never met. It has been a real pleasure getting to know her and trying to gauge how she is coping. It hasn't always been easy, as I had been really concerned about how low she has felt at times, but the support provided by CVA has been great. They are always there to advise and offer additional support if required. The rewards are substantial; just knowing that my befriendees look forward to my calls is enough. But the icing on the cake is when she thanks me for cheering her up. We are both looking forward to being able to meet each other, hopefully in the not too distant future.'

Kara, befriending volunteer during COVID-19

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With thanks to:

[Barking & Dagenham CVS](#)

[BD Collective - Annual Review 2020-21](#)

[Inclusion Barnet - Annual Report 2020-21](#)

[CommUNITY Barnet - Annual Report 2020-21](#)

[Bexley Voluntary Service Council - Annual Report 2020-21](#)

[CVS Brent](#)

[Community Links Bromley - Annual Report 2020-21](#)

[Voluntary Action Camden - Annual Report 2020-21](#)

[Croydon Voluntary Action - Annual Report 2020-21 - Volunteer Centre Infographic](#)

[Ealing and Hounslow CVS](#)

[Enfield Voluntary Action - Impact Report 2020-21](#)

[METRO GAVS \(Greenwich\)](#)

[Hackney CVS - Impact Report 2020-21](#)

[The Bridge Renewal Trust \(Haringey\) - Impact Report](#)

[Voluntary Action Harrow Co-operative](#)

[Voluntary Action Islington](#)

[Kensington & Chelsea Social Council](#)

[Kingston Voluntary Action - Impact Report 2020-21](#)

[Lewisham Local - Annual Review 2020-21](#)

[Merton Connected](#)

[Compost Newham](#)

[One Newham](#)

[Redbridge CVS](#)

[Richmond CVS - Impact Report 2020-21](#)

[Community Southwark - Impact Report 2020-21](#)

[Community Action Sutton - Annual Report 2020-21](#)

[Tower Hamlets CVS - Annual Report 2020-21](#)

[Wandsworth Care Alliance - Annual Report 2020-21](#)

[One Westminster](#)