

# Stronger Together for London: Impact Report 2025/26

London Plus – July 2026

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## Contents

|                                                                                                                      |    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Stronger Together for London: Impact Report 2025/26 .....                                                            | 1  |
| Welcome from our Chief Executive and Chair .....                                                                     | 3  |
| Connecting, supporting, and advocating for charities, community groups, and local infrastructure across London ..... | 4  |
| Who we are .....                                                                                                     | 4  |
| Why we do it .....                                                                                                   | 4  |
| Our networks .....                                                                                                   | 6  |
| London Councils for Voluntary Services Network .....                                                                 | 6  |
| What is a CVS? .....                                                                                                 | 6  |
| London Volunteer Centre Network .....                                                                                | 6  |
| What is a Volunteer Centre? .....                                                                                    | 6  |
| London Volunteering Strategy Group .....                                                                             | 6  |
| London Communities Emergencies Partnership .....                                                                     | 6  |
| Connecting .....                                                                                                     | 8  |
| What does connecting look like in practice? .....                                                                    | 9  |
| Strengthening access to community accountancy in London .....                                                        | 9  |
| LCEP Ready Together 2026 .....                                                                                       | 10 |
| Supporting .....                                                                                                     | 12 |
| What does supporting look like in practice? .....                                                                    | 13 |
| Building the Community Development Programme .....                                                                   | 13 |
| Advocating .....                                                                                                     | 14 |
| Advocating for sustainable sector investment .....                                                                   | 14 |
| Championing volunteering across London .....                                                                         | 14 |
| Influencing national policy .....                                                                                    | 14 |
| Confronting community tensions and strengthening social cohesion .....                                               | 15 |
| Evidence and Insight .....                                                                                           | 17 |

|                                                                                           |    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| What does using evidence and insight look like in practice? .....                         | 18 |
| Adopting and evidencing the impact of Creative Health in Lewisham<br>neighbourhoods ..... | 18 |
| Supporting London's charities and community groups to use data .....                      | 20 |
| Addressing health inequalities in London .....                                            | 22 |
| Supporting an equitable, diverse, and inclusive city .....                                | 24 |
| What's changed since our last Impact Report? .....                                        | 26 |
| Looking ahead .....                                                                       | 27 |
| Acknowledgements .....                                                                    | 28 |
| Funders.....                                                                              | 28 |
| Guest speakers.....                                                                       | 28 |
| Collaborators .....                                                                       | 28 |

## **Welcome from our Chief Executive and Chair**

Welcome to London Plus's Impact Report 2025/26. It has been a busy and purposeful year for our small team as we have continued to champion the vital role of the voluntary, community, and faith sector (VCFS) in improving life for Londoners, and driving change that makes a real difference to our city.

This report captures a year of connection, collaboration, and collective action across London. Through networks and events, sharing evidence and insights, distributing funding, and advocacy, we have helped strengthen charities, community groups, and local voluntary sector infrastructure so that they can in turn strengthen our communities.

At a time of global instability, change, and challenge, our work has responded to emerging pressures and challenges. This year we have had a particular focus on what is needed to build a more connected and cohesive city and to strengthen the voluntary sector's ability to respond to community tensions. In doing this we have been able to build on the expertise and insight from our work in delivering the London Communities Emergencies Partnership (LCEP).

We have also been highlighting the vital role of the sector in NHS and health system changes which aim to reduce health inequalities and wellbeing across the capital. We know that London's biggest challenges can only be addressed through trusted relationships, shared ambition, and collective action. Effective partnerships between the public and voluntary sectors are an essential part of this.

We are grateful to our partners and funders across London, who make this work possible. Their insight, energy, and commitment continue to deepen our impact. We are proud of what we have achieved this year, but we know there is more to do. As London changes, so do the opportunities and challenges for the VCFS. London Plus will remain focused on championing and challenging the sector, supporting collaboration and partnership, and ensuring that our work also changes and adapts to remain focused on what Londoners need to thrive.

**Geethika Jayatilaka, Chief Executive, London Plus**

**Sarah Mulley, Chair, London Plus**

# Connecting, supporting, and advocating for charities, community groups, and local infrastructure across London

## Who we are

London Plus exists so that London's charities, community groups, and local voluntary sector infrastructure can be sustainable, well-connected, and empowered. We act as a strategic pan-London voice, influencing positive systems change for a stronger, more resilient London so that everyone can thrive. Working across all of London's boroughs, we host a range of networks for charities, community groups, and local voluntary sector infrastructure organisations.

Through our work we:

- **Connect** people and organisations, bringing them together to learn, collaborate, and share expertise.
- **Support** people and organisations to strengthen their practice, build confidence, and clearly demonstrate their role, value, and impact.
- **Advocate** on behalf of the sector, championing London's charities, community groups, and local infrastructure, ensuring their voices are heard in decision-making spaces.

**Insights are also at the heart of our work.** We gather, use, and share evidence and insights to better understand and advocate for the sector's needs, while highlighting the impact and value of the charities, community groups, and local voluntary sector infrastructure organisations we support.

Our approach is simple but effective:

- **We're passionate:** Everything we do celebrates and empowers charities, community groups, and local infrastructure.
- **We're informed:** We gather evidence, data, and insights to understand the sector, so we can advocate confidently on their behalf.
- **We're flexible:** We learn and adapt to the continually changing landscape in which the sector operates.
- **We're here to help:** We listen to people and organisations and offer support when it's needed.

## Why we do it

Charities, community groups, and local voluntary sector infrastructure are the backbone of London. Their work strengthens communities, tackles disadvantage, and helps the city flourish. We want them to be recognised and valued, because when these organisations thrive, London thrives.

Since our beginnings in 2018 under Greater London Volunteering, we have grown into a small but influential charity. Today, London Plus is the go-to place for

supporting charities, community groups, and local infrastructure to strengthen their work and connect with one another. Through our work, we bring about positive change for Londoners, and make London a city where everyone belongs.

## **Our networks**

At London Plus, we host a variety of networks that bring people together, enabling a strategic approach to community challenges across London.

### **London Councils for Voluntary Services Network**

The London Councils for Voluntary Services (CVS) Network brings together borough-based local infrastructure organisations to strengthen voluntary action across the capital. It connects them through a supportive peer network, enabling knowledge-sharing, promoting the value of local infrastructure, and representing the voice of the voluntary, community, and faith sector (VCFS).

#### **What is a CVS?**

A CVS supports and brings together local charities and community groups. In London, CVSs are borough-based and often include a local Volunteer Centre or volunteering support.

### **London Volunteer Centre Network**

The London Volunteer Centre Network brings together Volunteer Centres across the capital to strengthen volunteering infrastructure at both local and regional levels. It enables peer support, knowledge-sharing, promoting the value and impact of volunteering, and representing the voices of Volunteer Centres and the organisations and communities they serve.

#### **What is a Volunteer Centre?**

Volunteer Centres are the go-to organisations for volunteering locally, connecting people with opportunities and supporting local organisations. They are typically borough-based.

Our relationships with London's local voluntary sector infrastructure enable us to support and represent the collective interests of more than 30,500 charities and community groups across London.

### **London Volunteering Strategy Group**

The London Volunteering Strategy Group, or LVSG, exists to champion and support all forms of volunteering across London. It was set up in 2021 to provide a space for regional networking and collaboration to support, promote and develop volunteering and its infrastructure in the capital.

The group is made up of over 65 people across more than 50 local, regional, and national organisations with volunteering at the heart of their work.

### **London Communities Emergencies Partnership**

The London Communities Emergencies Partnership, or LCEP, supports over 200 cross-sector organisations in London to prepare for, respond to, and learn from

emergencies. It does this by building trusted connections, sharing knowledge and insight, and strengthening preparedness.

LCEP is co-chaired by London Plus and the Voluntary and Community Sector Emergencies Partnership, and is supported by City Bridge Foundation and the Greater London Authority.

## Connecting

We connect people and organisations to create trusted spaces where relationships can grow and ideas can develop into action.

This year we:

- Connected with over 580 people from more than 280 organisations across all London boroughs to learn, collaborate, and share expertise.
- Hosted 15 network meetings, bringing together over 400 partners on key issues of importance, including infrastructure and funding, health integration, volunteering, tackling hate crime, and systems change.
- Delivered 15 targeted events, engaging over 290 partners in focused discussions
- Themes explored this year included community space pressures, approaches to evidencing impact, and strengthening resilience in response to seasonal and environmental health challenges
- Strengthened connections through online channels, including WhatsApp, creating an active network of more than 240 people who share insights, opportunities, and support in real time.

We also act as a bridge between London's voluntary, community and faith sector (VCFS) and funders, policymakers, and key stakeholders, enabling stronger connection and understanding between them to shape more responsive, informed, and equitable decisions.

"London Plus's work plays an important role in bringing together insight and data from across the sector to help funders understand emerging needs, gaps and opportunities and to communicate with the sector. Their ability to understand and share these during a fast changing and uncertain time has made them a trusted partner for London Funders."

James Banks, Chief Executive, London Funders

Strong connections give credibility to our voice and influence, as well as the voice and influence of the charities, community groups, and local infrastructure organisations we support. By nurturing these connections into trusted relationships, we strengthen understanding across the sector and support organisations to work together on shared solutions to London's challenges.

## **What does connecting look like in practice?**

### **Strengthening access to community accountancy in London**

Community accountancy is often provided by local infrastructure organisations and offers specialist financial management support to charities and community groups, helping them to meet compliance requirements, manage finances confidently, and maintain funder trust. However, funding cuts have reduced the availability of these services at a time of increasing demand, leaving many voluntary, community, and faith sector (VCFS) organisations without support, risking their long-term sustainability and the resilience of local communities.

In response to this widening gap, the London CVS Network and CEO of Community Southwark, Anood Al-Samerai, convened a sub-group of interested local infrastructure organisations to better understand the scale of the problem, identify what support already existed, and explore opportunities for collective action.

An initial survey confirmed the scale of the issue, finding that only three local infrastructure organisations in London were offering community accountancy support at the time, all reporting high demand and limited capacity.

The sub-group explored solutions such as linking volunteer accountants and universities to provide broader coverage, and connecting with specialists through introductions facilitated by Inclusive Governance Consultant Penny Wilson.

### **What difference did we make?**

We helped local infrastructure organisations move beyond isolated conversations by creating space to explore a shared concern, and begin developing a collective understanding of community accountancy needs across London.

We are currently developing a resource outlining existing community accountancy support for those needing finance and accounting help. It will also signpost additional opportunities, such as training from the Association of Charity Independent Examiners. This work is being linked with national activity through NAVCA to ensure alignment and enable shared learning.

Through networking and engagement with experts, partners now have:

- A stronger evidence base to inform future funding bids or feasibility work.
- New relationships with specialists and national bodies working in this area.

### **What did we learn?**

- Bringing people together, holding momentum, and supporting collaboration has laid the groundwork for a piece of work that will grow over time, strengthening support for London's VCFS.

- Supporting local organisations doesn't always mean creating something new. Sometimes, we add the most value by pausing, understanding the landscape, and connecting people with existing expertise.
- Local infrastructure organisations have also highlighted how crucial it is to get this right. Community accountancy underpins compliance and financial governance, and errors and oversights can have serious consequences for small VCFS organisations, particularly in the absence of this support.

"Many thanks to all the infrastructure organisations who have fed in expertise and ideas about demand and existing services. We look forward to continuing to bring organisations, services, and volunteers together to give London's VCS access to high quality affordable community accountancy."

Anood Al-Samerai, CEO, Community Southwark

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## **LCEP Ready Together 2026**

In March 2026, the **LCEP Ready Together event** brought together over 80 partners from London's community resilience network, including statutory agencies, community and faith groups, equality organisations, charities, and government partners, for a day centred on connection, learning, and knowledge exchange. The event featured thoughtfully designed thematic sessions led by experienced practitioners and sector leaders.

Ready Together 2026 was designed to amplify diverse voices and ensure that all attendees, regardless of size or sector, had the opportunity to prepare for the challenges ahead in emergency planning and disaster recovery.

### **What difference did we make?**

- Nearly 4 in 5 attendees made a new connection with someone they would contact again in the future.
- One quarter of attendees were from the statutory sector, offering an important chance to build relationships across sectors and raise awareness with first responders and emergency planners about the role of the VCFS in resilience planning, response, and recovery.
- Attendee details were shared with permission to encourage ongoing collaboration after the event, with many attendees continuing conversation throughout the day via a dedicated WhatsApp group, demonstrating an appetite for ongoing connection beyond the event itself.

### **What did we learn?**

- Ready Together 2026 reinforced the unique value of in-person connection, giving partners the time and space to listen, learn, and build relationships around a shared purpose. By coming together in this way, partners

strengthened their own readiness for emergencies and London's collective resilience as a whole.

- Collaboration across organisations and sectors thrives in open, inclusive, and intentional spaces where diverse voices can share expertise and experience.

*“Events like Ready Together showed the importance of bringing grassroots organisations, faith groups, local authorities and emergency partners into the same space to build understanding before crises happen, not during them.”*

Mubeen Hussain, Islamic Relief UK

For more information on Ready Together 2026, visit our event page.

## Supporting

We support London's charities, community groups, and local voluntary sector infrastructure organisations to strengthen their practice and resilience, build confidence, and clearly demonstrate their role, value, and impact.

This year we:

- Distributed over £350,000 to 30 organisations, directly supporting local charities, community groups, and voluntary sector infrastructure.
- Published 12 newsletters, reaching over 4,500 readers.
- Produced 64 new blogs, sharing case studies, practical resources, event highlights, sector insights, and funding opportunities to over 8,900 people, supporting learning and building sector capacity.

Through our networks, we share relevant, timely, and practical insights that help organisations understand the issues affecting their work and the wider sector, and support them to act on this knowledge within their own organisations.

Our support is rooted in what partners need. We identify emerging challenges and priorities and bring people together in ways that help maintain momentum and drive progress on issues that matter to the sector.

# **What does supporting look like in practice?**

## **Building the Community Development Programme**

Across London's local infrastructure organisations, a consistent challenge is around recruiting, retaining, and developing staff, particularly in community development roles. This is exacerbated by funding pressures which make it hard to provide stability and training, limiting opportunities for staff to build skills and confidence.

This year, we worked with members of the London CVS Network to identify shared training needs and skills gaps, building a clearer picture of where targeted support could have the greatest impact. Caroline Rouse, one of our network members from Compost London, drew on her longstanding relationship with Birkbeck University of London to open up conversations about how learning and development could address workforce challenges in community development roles.

With input from a small group of network members and Birkbeck colleagues, we co-designed a five-week certificated programme: Community Leadership: Empowering Communities to Make Change.

## **What difference did we make?**

Grounded in the practical knowledge of local infrastructure organisations, the programme supports new and aspiring community development staff to build skills, strengthen leadership, and apply learning directly in their roles.

Delivered by Birkbeck's Community Development teaching team, the pilot launched in June 2026 and will be evaluated, with learning used to shape a future programme that can reach more people across London.

“Without infrastructure help many charities would struggle to start and flourish - but the need for skilled and experienced staff in infrastructure organisations is vital. Which is why a course like this is so badly needed.”

Caroline Rouse, Director, Compost London

## **What did we learn?**

- Creating space for organisations to articulate shared challenges, and supporting collaboration with an academic partner, helped move the network from conversation to a practical sector-led solution.
- Co-design matters. Shaping the programme with those closest to communities ensures it reflects the realities of community development roles and supports people at the right stage in their careers.
- Supporting organisations does not always mean delivering training and services directly. Often, it means convening the right people, building relationships, and staying with an idea long enough for it to grow into something genuinely useful for the sector.

## **Advocating**

We advocate on behalf of the sector, using evidence and the collective voice of London's charities, community groups, and local voluntary sector infrastructure to ensure their perspectives shape decision-making and positive change in the systems in which they operate.

This year, we represented the sector in 21 strategic forums, consultations, working groups, and advisory groups, bringing insight from across our networks into conversations so that the voluntary, community, and faith sector (VCFS) are recognised and valued as equal partners.

### **Advocating for sustainable sector investment**

Building a more resilient and well-resourced sector is a core focus of our advocacy. At a time of ongoing funding uncertainty and growing pressure on local government budgets, we have continued to advocate for sustained investment in the sector. This has included engagement with individual funders and key London stakeholders, as well as discussions with ministers and parliamentarians, to highlight the challenges facing VCFS organisations and the role they play in supporting London's local communities.

This year, we have been gathering information and insights to develop a series of reports advocating for London's voluntary sector infrastructure. The series, *A System at Risk: London's Voluntary Sector Infrastructure*, will be published throughout 2026, examining the current challenges facing infrastructure organisations, the conditions needed to strengthen their financial sustainability, and the role, value, and collective impact they bring, ensuring they are better recognised by key funders, policymakers, and stakeholders.

[For more information on the System at Risk report series, visit our webpage.](#)

### **Championing volunteering across London**

Alongside this, we have continued to advocate for the future of volunteering in London, raising the profile of recommendations from the [London Vision for Volunteering](#). We have focused particularly on the importance of sustainable investment which will enable volunteering to thrive across the capital, and improving access to volunteering for underrepresented groups.

In addition, the London Volunteer Centre Network developed a [collective response to the Home Office consultation](#) on migrant volunteering, championing the fundamental role of volunteering and the importance of protecting inclusive access to it.

### **Influencing national policy**

The Civil Society Covenant published in July 2025 aimed to reset the relationship between Government and civil society. Since its launch, London Plus have been

sharing insights into how policy and practice in London is changing as a result of the covenant and where there is further change needed to deliver on the ambitions.

This has included meeting with Charities Minister Stephanie Peacock, and speaking at national meetings such as the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Charities and Volunteering, where our Chief Executive, Geethika Jayatilaka, contributed to discussions on how councils and charities can work together to improve outcomes for communities.

We highlighted the important role that local voluntary sector infrastructure organisations play in place-building and the need to invest in the foundations of a strong civil society - including the critical role of local voluntary sector infrastructure. To bring this to life, we shared powerful London-based examples such as the London Communities Emergencies Partnership (LCEP) and the London Health Mission, where the VCFS sits alongside statutory partners to shape strategic responses.

## **Confronting community tensions and strengthening social cohesion**

Throughout the year, we have been very aware of the rise in community tensions across London. We have continued to work with equity-led community groups to better support and amplify their voices. In November, we convened the Strength and Solidarity Roundtable, bringing together leaders from the VCFS, the Greater London Authority, national government, funders, and the Deputy Mayor for Communities and Social Justice, Debbie Weekes-Bernard.

The roundtable provided a safe and constructive space to explore strategic approaches and practical action to address racism, anti-migrant hostility, and rising community tensions. Key priorities that emerged included greater resource sharing across the sector, as well as developing and strengthening the skills to hold difficult conversations, and better support for communities directly experiencing emerging divisions.

We have made progress since the roundtable. This includes updating LCEP's resources for organisations supporting communities feeling vulnerable, supporting conversations with faith communities, and working with the Greater London Authority to shape the Loved and Wanted campaign, which secured £1.8 million for a network of welcoming community spaces and hubs designed to combat social isolation, foster unity, and ensure all Londoners feel safe and valued.

“During these uncertain times, we know the importance of our community partners in helping to build belonging in London. London Plus have been valued partners - ensuring that experiences and insights from the voluntary and community sector are heard and help shape action to build and bolster social cohesion in London, support the VCS in the work they are doing and ensure all Londoners feel welcome.”

Debbie Weekes-Bernard, London's Deputy Mayor for Communities and Social Justice

At the heart of our advocacy is a commitment to creating the conditions for lasting systems change. This means bringing a diverse range of voices into strategic spaces and advocating for approaches that centre trust, equity, and lived experience. We know that change takes time, but by convening cross-sector leadership and ensuring VCFS perspectives shape decisions, London Plus continues to strengthen recognition of the vital role London's charities, community groups, and local voluntary sector infrastructure play in building a fairer, more resilient city.

## Evidence and Insight

Insights sit at the heart of our work with London's charities, community groups, and local voluntary sector infrastructure organisations. We ensure our activity is informed by evidence, learning, and lived experience, using insight to understand the sector's needs, advocate on its behalf, and highlight the value and impact of the organisations we support.

Our Research and Data Strategy sets out five priorities that guide this work to help build a stronger, more inclusive, and resilient sector:

1. Understanding and evidencing the impact and value of London's charities, community groups, and local infrastructure.
2. Investigating underexplored and underrepresented areas within the sector.
3. Creating an environment where data is an opportunity for everyone.
4. Promoting a culture of continuous learning and insight sharing.
5. Evidencing and strengthening London Plus's role as a connector, supporter, and advocate.

### **This year we:**

- Expanded access to research and learning by distributing our [Research Roundup](#) to over 800 cross-sector professionals.
- Improved access to evidence through [rapid evidence reviews](#) on emerging themes, and the launch of the [Voluntary Sector Infrastructure Insights Hub](#) and the [Volunteering Data and Research Library](#).
- Strengthened the sector's voice in London by applying evidence and insights to London Plus's advocacy and influencing work, supporting clearer representation of the sector's needs across the capital.

# **What does using evidence and insight look like in practice?**

## **Adopting and evidencing the impact of Creative Health in Lewisham neighbourhoods**

In March 2025, we published the [Creative Health Impact Framework](#), a practical set of tools to help arts, cultural, and voluntary and community sector organisations plan, evaluate, and communicate their impact in ways that resonate with health partners and commissioners. This case study explores its early use in Lewisham and how it is helping make the value of community-led creative health more visible and actionable.

### **What happened?**

Across Lewisham, Health Equity Teams are already working with communities to co-produce creative approaches to cardiovascular health, using methods such as cartooning, visual arts, and gardening, to engage communities that traditional healthcare often fails to reach. The challenge is not proving the impact of these approaches, but clearly articulating it within health system priorities. The Creative Health Impact Framework supports this by providing a shared structure to describe outcomes, plan evaluation, and build a compelling case for investment, position

### **What are Health Equity Teams?**

Health Equity Teams are embedded within Lewisham's long-term Integrated Neighbourhood Team vision. Their mission is to reduce cardiovascular inequalities in Black and underserved communities in Lewisham.

Each of the six Primary Care Networks in Lewisham hosts a Health Equity Team, comprising a Black-led voluntary and community sector organisation and a GP health equity fellow. Together, they co-produce and lead projects to improve access and equity-focused quality improvement related to cardiovascular health.

[Visit the webpage on Health Equity Teams for more information](#)

In July 2025, the Framework was introduced to Lewisham's Health Equity Teams through a workshop focused on its three core functions (plan, evaluate, and communicate) alongside practical tools such as the Creative Health Logic Model and a scaled approach to evaluation. A second session, delivered in October 2025 by Health Innovation Network South London and London Arts and Health supported teams to develop practical evaluation plans with tailored guidance. Follow-up one-to-one support was then offered to all six Health Equity Teams to help apply the Framework to their projects.

### **What was the impact?**

Surveys following the workshops showed that while one approach to training and support does not serve everyone equally, the Creative Health Impact Framework is

most valuable where creativity is central to the delivery model and there is capacity to consider how creative elements of projects are evidenced and communicated. Responses also highlighted the strength of creative approaches in building culturally relevant, trust-based engagement.

The Framework was then shared more widely by partners from Lewisham Council and the NHS South East London Integrated Care System across Lewisham's creative, voluntary, and health sectors, building confidence and enabling peer learning. After one workshop, confidence in evaluating creative health projects rose from 25% to 94%, with participants valuing its clarity and accessibility.

Insights from Lewisham's Integrated Neighbourhood Team also showed that creative approaches were often already in use but not formally recognised. The Framework helped name and validate this work, supporting more intentional use.

Early learning highlights that the Framework is most effective when it is used at the start of projects. The Framework also highlights the visibility of the often overlooked strengths of community-led, creative approaches, and provides a shared language across teams, partners and commissioners, bringing them into alignment.

### **What happens next?**

The Lewisham programme represents one of the first real-world applications of the Creative Health Impact Framework in an NHS-aligned setting. While still early, it offers a strong indication of what is possible: a system where creative health is recognised, understood, and sustainably supported. Looking ahead, the priority is to build on this momentum. This means continuing to provide support, developing more real-world examples, and growing a community of practice.

“From community gardening programmes, creative co-design workshops in GP surgeries and barber shop outreach sessions, creative approaches are not “add-on” or “nice to have” but rather are a crucial mechanism for reaching communities and addressing health inequalities, as we are seeing with cardiovascular disease prevention in the borough of Lewisham.”

Flora Faith-Kelly, Creative Health Programme Manager, NHS South East London

[Read the full report Adopting Creative Health in Lewisham Neighbourhoods: Utilising the Creative Health Impact Framework here](#)

[For more information on the Creative Health Impact Framework, visit our webpage here](#)

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## Supporting London's charities and community groups to use data

In October 2025, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government released updated Indices of Deprivation, including the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), which provides a place-based picture of deprivation across England.

Recognising the need for a London-specific view, we analysed the data to highlight where deprivation is most concentrated, what this means for communities, and the critical role of London's VCFS in responding. The findings pointed to a familiar but pressing picture: deep-rooted inequalities, challenges that vary borough by borough, and clear opportunities to use data to help target resources more effectively and support community action where it can have the greatest impact.

In January 2026, we partnered with Superhighways (a Kingston Voluntary Action programme), DataKind UK, OCSI, and Trust for London to help small charities and community groups engage with the data, sharing practical tools and creating space to compare insights with lived experience of working in local neighbourhoods.

### What difference did we make?

The event brought together 59 people from across 20 London boroughs, including grassroots groups, charities of all sizes, local infrastructure organisations, and local authorities. Attendees told us they are already using IMD data in a range of practical and strategic ways, from evidencing need in funding applications, to shaping services, identifying emerging issues, and understanding how different forms of deprivation intersect in their communities. For many, the updated IMD data helped evidence what they see every day in their work.

Attendees told us they plan to:

- Share the data with colleagues and partners
- Run learning sessions to build confidence using the data
- Use the data to pinpoint service provision
- Strengthen funding bids and strategic planning

*"Using data to support the need for our work is hugely important in our funding applications and in the strategic planning of our services and it backs up what our staff are seeing on a daily basis."*

Event attendee

Our blogs [Index of Multiple Deprivation 2025: London Insights](#) and [How are London's charities and community groups using the Index of Multiple Deprivation?](#) have now been viewed over 130 times, helping to extend learning beyond the event itself.

### What did we learn?

- We heard clearly how important open data is, especially when it is supported by tools that make it easier to explore and apply in real-life contexts.

- Skills, confidence, and capacity to engage with data matter. When smaller VCFS organisations are supported to use data well, they are better able to participate on an equal footing with larger organisations and public sector bodies, strengthening their voice and influence in local decision-making.
- Charities and community groups play an important role in understanding and responding to local needs, and collaboration between sectors can help ensure that data is used in ways that genuinely support communities at the local level.

For organisations wanting further support, Superhighways continues to offer practical tools, training, and guidance to help groups build confidence in using data.

## Addressing health inequalities in London

London Plus has continued to play a key strategic role, engaging the voluntary, community, and faith sector (VCFS) in improving the health of Londoners throughout 2025/26.

Health and care services are undergoing significant change. Recent NHS developments, including reforms to Integrated Care Board structures and the publication of the 10-Year Health Plan, have brought renewed focus in London on tackling the entrenched health inequalities faced by communities across the capital. Key policy documents such as London Case for Change recognise the important role the voluntary, community, and faith sector (VCFS) will play in improving population health outcomes, but delivering this in practice amidst a fast changing environment is not easy.

In July 2025, we convened London's local voluntary sector infrastructure leaders together with those responsible for shaping the next steps of London's health policy to explore what these changes would mean in practice and how the VCFS can engage effectively. The majority (84%) of local infrastructure leaders reported being prepared to take part in the planning, co-design, or delivery of Neighbourhood Health Services and saw the opportunity for the changes to unlock the sector's full potential.

"The VCS has working in neighbourhoods at its heart - rooted in local communities and tackling inequalities in a holistic way."

Meeting attendee

Critical enablers to this work include sustained investment, simpler and more accessible commissioning routes, and the ability to shape decisions with statutory partners. Partners warned that ongoing system reform combined with delays to funding decisions could further destabilise an already fragile VCFS, leading to the loss of trusted organisations and undermining neighbourhood-based health reforms.

Additionally, we represent the VCFS on London's Health Mission which aims to "significantly close the gap in health inequalities in our city, utilising London's innovation and digital transformation opportunities by 2035". With support from the Health Mission, we have established a Health Reference Group to provide a VCFS sounding board and to share insights, ideas, and challenges from across the sector. Through this work, we help ensure that the voices of charities, community groups, and local voluntary sector infrastructure are reflected in London wide efforts to tackle health inequalities and that new initiatives learn from the experience of previous programmes of work.

This year, we also partnered with London Councils and the NHS to support a cross-sector System Leadership Programme, bringing together senior leaders from the NHS, local government, and the VCFS across London. The programme aims to strengthen the understanding of the principles and theory of system change, and

build confidence and connections to tackle complex challenges that cannot be solved by any one organisation acting alone.

Alongside developing their leadership practice in complex settings, participants worked collaboratively in small groups on specific system change projects. Feedback from those on the programme was overwhelmingly positive, highlighting changes to mindset, behaviour, and cross-sector collaboration - who were also a cohort of advocates for this way of working. This was particularly powerful given the challenging context of significant restructuring and change within the NHS, which affected many participants personally and professionally. The positive outcomes from this pilot has led to a further two cohorts being funded, with some changes to the structure of the programme in response to feedback.

## **Supporting an equitable, diverse, and inclusive city**

We are proud of our diverse city, however we recognise that despite its diversity, prejudice and discrimination exists in a myriad of different forms, systems, processes, and social norms that lead to and perpetuate significant inequality in our society, and significant disadvantage for certain groups.

At London Plus we are committed to building our understanding of privilege and prejudice, so we can better recognise and play our part in dismantling the deep-rooted systemic and structural inequalities that exist in our city.

This year, we continued to participate in the London Anti-Racism Collaboration for Health (LARCH). We provided feedback on the Race Equity Maturity Index (REMI), a tool designed to help health and care organisations address systemic inequalities. Building on our input, a version of the tool was adapted by LARCH to better reflect the realities of smaller community VCFS organisations, simplifying language, refining indicators, and adding more accessible guidance. Following this work, this dedicated VCFS version of the REMI was further developed and piloted, ensuring that London's charities and community groups can more effectively engage with and apply anti-racist practice.

We have also supported with the Campaign for Disability Justice, supporting the development of their Theory of Change, and providing advice and support on communications to encourage people to share and follow the campaign.

“London Plus have shown real allyship by taking the time to engage with and support the Campaign for Disability Justice, and by promoting its work to their membership. We are very grateful for their commitment to disability justice.”

Caroline Collier, CEO, Inclusion Barnet

This year we have strengthened our approach to event accessibility, ensuring our work reaches as many people as possible. At this year's LCEP Ready Together event, accessibility was central to the design, enabling all attendees to participate fully and comfortably.

As a result, 100% of attendees felt the event was accessible and inclusive, supported by features including:

- A step-free venue
- Live subtitles
- Braille stickers and large-print materials
- Dedicated rest and prayer spaces

As one attendee reflected:

“One thing really stood out... The room. So many different organisations, sectors and perspectives all in one space, all thinking about how we respond better when it matters most.”

We recognise that delivering on this commitment is an ongoing journey, and we remain committed to learning, reflecting, and improving as we go.

[For more information, read our Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Statement here.](#)

## **What's changed since our last Impact Report?**

The insights our partners shared with us through our Partner Survey in 2024/25 have played an important role in shaping how we have worked this year. Your feedback continues to guide our decisions, and we remain committed to listening closely and acting on what you tell us.

This year we:

- Introduced interactive tools (e.g. Mentimeter) in online meetings to surface a wider range of voices and make discussions more inclusive, leading to increased engagement from partners such as the London Health Mission.
- Convened roundtables and cross-sector conversations to strengthen relationships between the VCFS and public and private sector stakeholders.
- Streamlined communication channels, including introducing WhatsApp groups for LCEP, improving real-time information sharing and coordination during emergencies.

Across our work, our commitment at London Plus remains the same: to listen carefully to our partners, turn insight into action, and continue shaping our approach in ways that strengthen collaboration and support the sector.

## Looking ahead

This year, we have focused on strengthening the voice and influence of the voluntary, community, and faith sector (VCFS) in building a stronger, healthier and more cohesive London, grounding our efforts in high-quality data, research, and targeted advocacy to deliver meaningful impact.

Looking to the year ahead, reducing health inequalities and improving health and wellbeing remains a key priority for us. We want to bring the insight and experience held within the VCFS to shape Neighbourhood Health and new ways of working to ensure that all Londoners are able to benefit from the changes within the NHS. We also want to expand the cohort of leaders across Local Government, the NHS and the VCFS who see themselves as “system leaders”, confident and skilled in working across organisational boundaries to resolve complex issues.

Similarly, we will continue to explore the ways in which the VCFS can contribute to bringing communities together and building strong relationships at a time where the risks of polarisation and conflict are a growing concern. This is challenging work, which requires trust and patience and one where the VCFS has an important role to play at a time when faith in many public institutions is falling.

Alongside this, we will continue to support the networks of London’s Councils for Voluntary Services (CVSs) and Volunteer Centres that provide the essential foundations for a strong VCFS across London. A key focus for the year will be raising awareness of the challenging financial climate and building the case for sustained investment. We will also work with partners in the London Volunteering Strategy Group to create a positive environment for London’s volunteers and encourage the growth of inclusive volunteering.

2026 also marks ten years since The Way Ahead - a cross-sector collaboration between civil society, funders and policymakers in London. The report recommended creating a “London Hub,” which led to the establishment of London Plus as a strategic, pan-London voice for the sector and a bridge between the VCFS, funders, and policymakers. Given the pace and extent of change in recent years, this anniversary offers an important opportunity to engage internal and external stakeholders on their needs, and to reflect on both the successes and challenges to help shape our strategy and priorities for the future.

**Geethika Jayatilaka, Chief Executive, London Plus**

## **Acknowledgements**

We extend our sincere thanks to all contributors and partners who have engaged with us in 2025/26.

### **Funders**

- City Bridge Foundation
- Greater London Authority
- CW+
- NHS Charities Together
- NHS England

### **Guest speakers**

- Simon Taylor from the Ethical Property Foundation
- Habiba Begum and Tina Shamuyarira from the East London Business Alliance (ELBA)
- Carla Garnelas, GLA
- Angus Jackson, Volunteer Centre Kensington & Chelsea
- Kristina Glenn, London's Giving
- Kate White, Superhighways (Kingston Voluntary Action)
- Dave Stott, Royal Voluntary Service
- Cath Bavage, Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets

### **Collaborators**

We would like to highlight and recognise some of the organisations we have worked closely with through meaningful partnership across 2025/26.

- London Funders
- VCS Emergencies Partnership
- Anood Al-Samerai and Alex Wells, Community Southwark
- Joy-Caron Canter, One Newham
- Dominic Pinkney, Volunteer Centres Camden and Hammersmith & Fulham
- Karen Chillman, Croydon Voluntary Action
- Caroline Rouse, Compost Newham
- Laura Bradnam and David Tross, Birkbeck University of London
- Penny Wilson
- Sara Milocco and Sarah Burns Croydon Voluntary Action
- Kate White and Sorrel Parsons, Superhighways
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