



SUPPORTING CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL ACTION

The CVA Strategic Plan (2016-21)

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INTRODUCTION

In these turbulent times it's becoming ever more difficult for voluntary organisations to plan ahead and even more essential for them to be agile in adapting to a changing landscape. CVA's role for over one hundred years has been to support the voluntary efforts of local people, but that role is constantly adapting itself to find new and innovative ways to empower individuals to be more self-managing and communities to be more resilient. Our conviction that the best solutions are found locally is supported by a public service reform agenda that invites new approaches based on releasing the full power and potential of individuals to both care for themselves and care for their communities. Making the most of our greatest asset – local people – is where Croydon's voluntary groups and social enterprises come in, with CVA's role being to open up new opportunities for local communities to take on lead roles in hosting and running innovative services based on this empowering approach.

CVA's mission puts the focus on “promoting, supporting and developing effective voluntary action, community development and community activity for the benefit of the whole community within the London Borough of Croydon”. This stretches our remit across the whole of civil society, encompassing all those organisations and individuals that share a commitment to empowering local people and strengthening local communities. In pursuit of our mission we subscribe to the core values agreed by our national body (NAVCA):

- Collaboration - We can achieve more if we collaborate with others. A collaborative civil society contributes to greater equality and helps create a stronger, fairer and more co-operative economy
- Social justice - We speak out against disadvantage and discrimination and support a strong civil society which champions democratic renewal, civil liberty and human rights
- Diversity - We celebrate and champion the diversity of our society; everyone has a right to participate in decisions that affect their lives. By encouraging and supporting people to be involved in social action we confront inequality, challenge prejudice and help improve society

CVA puts its values into practice by performing four key roles - leadership, voluntary sector support, community empowerment and volunteer brokerage. In the leadership role CVA champions voluntary sector and community interests across the Croydon Strategic Partnership and beyond, negotiating sustainable investment in community-based services and activities. CVA's voluntary sector support targets information, training, property and fundraising services on a wide cross-section of social enterprises, large charities, neighbourhood groups and small-to-medium sized organisations. In empowering local communities CVA starts at the grassroots by nurturing peer-support and group activities at the street and neighbourhood levels and then uses networking and advocacy to bring

representative community voices into decision-making. CVA's volunteering role is delivered by a Volunteer Centre that recruits, trains and places individuals with organisations; alongside providing support to partner organisations on delivering quality volunteer experiences. This plan presents a further breakdown of our four core roles - with some headline facts and figures capturing the current scope and scale of our activity - followed by statements of strategic intent outlining CVA's priorities over the next five years.

Our planning is the culmination of a process that has involved our members, our staff and our Board of Trustees in assessing how CVA can support Croydon's civil society most effectively over the next five years. Two of CVA's key partners, Croydon Council and the Croydon CCG, have helped shape these plans and two other bodies exercising significant influence over events in Croydon, the Opportunities & Fairness Commission and the Croydon Partnership (Hammerson-Westfield), have also influenced our thinking.

Having taken great care to align our priorities with those of our key partners, CVA's task became one of capturing in this plan the unique contribution that we can make in Croydon over the next five years. The plan's implementation will still rely on the sort of creative partnership approach that Croydon specialises in, but the task of promoting social action across every level of Croydon's civil society is one that CVA is uniquely well placed to carry out.

March 2016

CVA'S STRATEGIC PLANS: 2016-21

LEADERSHIP

1 Voice of the sector - our representational role:

CVA takes a lead in championing Croydon's voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector on the Croydon Strategic Partnership (CSP) and at the Chief Executives Group meetings that focus local partners on the borough's key issues, recent examples being *Pathways to Employment* and *Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence*. Our job is to articulate a collective voice that exercises influence on behalf of Croydon's entire VCSE sector. CVA always qualifies its status as the 'voice of the voluntary sector' by pointing to the numerous voluntary and community sector interests that speak for themselves, many of them set up with CVA's support from the outset. However, CVA is the only organisation in Croydon representing every part of the VCSE sector. Ours is an impartial voice that has no special interest, client-based or geographical affiliation, inferring a legitimacy on our representative function that is unique.

1.1 What We Do - CVA currently:

- Champions Croydon's VCSE sector as a key partner at every level of Croydon's Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) and coordinates the VCSE's response to Croydon Congress annual priorities (i.e. pathways to employment; domestic abuse & sexual violence; child sexual exploitation)
- Represents VCSE interests at the bi-monthly LSP Chief Executive Group meetings, ensuring VCSE input to ongoing strategy development (i.e. the Community Strategy) and key policy agendas (i.e. the Opportunities & Fairness Commission)
- Advises the LSP thematic partnerships at quarterly meetings (Health & Wellbeing; Children's Partnership; Safer Croydon; Growth Board) on VCSE capacity and capabilities
- Supports the Croydon Voluntary Sector Alliance to underpin the LSP by achieving wide VCSE representation across the LSP via annual elections and ongoing support for the 32 VCSE representatives elected (in January 2016) on to the LSP and its sub-groups
- Supports effective VCSE consultations and engagement with the Council, Croydon CCG and all key partners on topical issues – from the impact of legislative change to the redevelopment of the town centre

1.2 Our 5 Year Plan – the priorities are to:

- Support Croydon's public service reform programmes by promoting a greater VCSE delivery role in key service areas – i.e. early intervention; the integration of health and social care – by winning support for local VCSE expertise in prevention; innovation; personalisation; tackling inequalities; and community empowerment

- Celebrate the VCSE’s collective community development values and the shared ethos of integrity, empathy and passion that contributes so much to its strengths and unique capabilities
- Negotiate VCSE interests through the Stronger Communities Partnership (SCP), engaging the whole VCSE sector in the process of implementing the SCP’s work plan to “advance the environment for a thriving VCSE” – i.e. by supporting equality of commissioning opportunities; the effective transfer of community assets; and the sector’s training & information needs

VOICE OF THE SECTOR

CVA represents the VCSE sector by:

- **Supporting 23 representatives of Croydon’s VCSE in LSP decision-making**
- **Hosting bi-monthly CVSA meetings, bringing the sectors together on Croydon’s big issues**

Within 5 years our aims are to:

- **Continue articulating the voice of a single, collective VCSE sector in Croydon across the LSP**
- **Support Croydon’s VCSE to realise its full potential – both as champion of local community interests and as innovator of personalised services**
- **Make collaboration, rather than competition, the watchword for success In Croydon’s VCSE**
- **Bring Croydon’s VCSE sector into public service reform by successfully bidding to deliver key local services – achieving preventative outcomes and demonstrating how social value can be achieved by local commissioning**

2 Attracting external funding – our fundraising role:

CVA has a great track record in successfully bringing funds into the borough to support local VCSE groups. We’ve forged a national reputation for winning funds to deliver flagship projects piloting new services - and with national transformation programmes now inviting the VCSE to deliver innovation on a larger scale, CVA is taking every opportunity to support Croydon’s VCSE in its service delivery role by leveraging funding into the borough and acting as the lead and accountable body for Croydon partnership bids.

CVA’s aim is to support VCSE organisations to work together in achieving positive outcomes for local people and our view is that VCSE providers are better able to retain their focus on preventative outcomes by working in partnership. In our experience partnership results in an even greater focus on the individual, whose needs are put first when partners commit to signposting, pooling resources and sharing expertise in order to deliver more rounded, person-centred services.

Greater funder interest in partnership bidding is enabling CVA to open up income streams to previously excluded groups, ensuring that reform programmes reach the most isolated people in the borough. Where gaps in provision exist CVA will take on a delivery role itself in setting up new services that often lead to the birth of new, independent providers.

2.1 What We Do - CVA currently:

- Delivers the Lottery-funded Croydon Family Power programme in partnership with Croydon Drop-In, Homestart, Off The Record, Mencap, Disability Croydon and The Wave Trust – the UK’s leading adviser on early intervention and family support
- Leads the Game-Changer partnership, a Sport-England funded consortium of 13 local community sports clubs making sports and physical activity – from football, rugby and tennis to martial arts, netball and dance - more accessible to young people all over Croydon
- Leads the Health & Employment Partnership, bidding for European Social Funding, with 8 partners – the Crystal Palace Foundation, Status Employment, Imagine, Evolve, Age UK, the Asian Resource Centre, Raising Great Aspirations and the Community FoodBank – supporting people to overcome the health barriers to employment

2.2 Our 5 Year Plan – the priorities are to:

- Identify major funding opportunities to support VCSE consortiums addressing five priority issues in Croydon - skills & employment; social regeneration; strong and cohesive communities; sports & active lifestyles; arts & culture
- Ensure wide provider representation across Croydon’s whole VCSE to deliver integrated partnership programmes – enabling smaller organisations to operate alongside the larger local and national charities

EXTERNAL FUNDRAISING

CVA has leveraged:

- **Just under £1 million to support family support services (Family Power) and just under half a million to increase participation in sports (Game-Changer)**
- **We fundraised over £400,000 to create the Grassroots Endowment Fund now administered in partnership with Croydon Commitment**

Within 5 years our aims are to:

- **Successfully deliver the £700,000 European Social Funding project Overcoming Health Barriers to Employment between August 2016 and 2018**
- **Continue to host and enable the Big Local Partnership to administer its £1 million budget in West Croydon**
- **Successfully apply to at least one flagship VCSE programme per year**

VCSE SUPPORT

1 Organisational Development

CVA is in the business of supporting VCSE organisations to realise their potential – by helping them to access resources and then manage them most effectively. With our overall purpose being to achieve quality of life outcomes for local people, CVA's specialism is in helping local VCSE organisations to deliver quality services. Our role is to set the standards for Croydon's VCSE, promoting good policy and practice on governance, financial management, business planning, volunteering, staff management and impact assessment.

CVA is associated with providing its VCSE support to new organisations, smaller groups and social enterprises that spring from communities tackling social exclusion. Our aim however is to support organisations irrespective of their size, constitutional status or longevity. Our priority is to focus on the innovative, enterprising and preventative approaches being taken across the VCSE. The groups we support typically bring with them a unique blend of close community links and personal experiences that inspire new, creative ways of supporting people to achieve their goals. A group's commitment to continuous improvement, working in partnership and an empowering ethos is most likely to bring it into contact with CVA. Our role is to nurture the preventative aims of organisations by supporting them to remain in touch with people not as clients but as individuals, whose personal circumstances and motivations influence the delivery of whatever services or activities they experience.

1.1 What We Do - CVA currently:

- Provides high quality one-to-one support to existing VCOs in a range of organisational development areas, with a strong focus on fundraising, good governance, project planning, and impact measurement
- Provides practical advice and support to charities on being more enterprising to diversify their income base, including support to set up social enterprise arms
- Provides high quality advice and guidance to new start-up organisations with a focus on choosing appropriate legal structures, market research, and project planning
- Provides impartial and constructive support to VCOs on mergers, collaborations, partnerships and forming consortia
- Works proactively with funders and investors to help their funding reach local VCSE projects more effectively, providing a fund management service – administering and distributing grants on behalf of funding bodies

1.2 Our 5 Year Plan – the priorities are to:

- Develop CVA's core capacity building service to meet the rising demand and promote excellence across the VCSE sector, providing the most comprehensive information service in Croydon; the most accessible training courses; the best fundraising advice and the most reliable start-up advice

- Establish a modernised training offer to individuals and groups through the establishment of a new Learning Centre providing training and bespoke consultancy support
- Provide needs-led learning opportunities to staff and volunteers in VCOs and social enterprises, through an innovative training offer that includes a range of specialist accredited and non-accredited training. The aim is also to skill up local people to meet the demand for jobs in the new town centre. Emphasis will be placed on providing training, skills and apprenticeship opportunities to those who are disadvantaged in the labour market and the training will be closely linked to the Council's new Jobs Brokerage Service
- Develop a strong consortium of training providers that can deliver accredited and non-accredited training for staff of employers in the town centre; provide support for individuals who are seeking employment through the new opportunities; and draw down funds, win contracts, and deliver valued social outcomes for local beneficiaries
- Support local people from disadvantaged communities to access employment opportunities; and local employers to develop a workforce with increased skills and awareness

ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

CVA strengthens the capacity and resilience of VCSE groups in Croydon by:

- **Providing customised support service via 180 bespoke 1:1 support sessions on average per year, as well as monthly workshops**
- **Keeping the sector informed via weekly e-bulletins to over 1700 members**
- **Delivering 30+ training courses for over 250 VCSE staff and volunteers**
- **Managing Funds and distributing small grants to local groups (i.e. £26,432 allocated to 26 local groups through Public Health Grants Programme and £12,030 through Grassroots Trust**

Within 5 years are our aim is to:

- **Establish a modernised training offer to individuals and groups, through the establishment of a new Learning Centre**
- **Double the reach of our training, fundraising and management consultancy services to meet the rising level of local demand**

2 Supporting Enterprise

Recently CVA has stretched its capacity building support in new directions by setting up the Enterprise Hub in response to the 2011 riots and extending its reach to small businesses and social entrepreneurs. This reflects the changing face of a civil society in which socially responsible businesses are working alongside the communities they are part of to achieve both social and economic regeneration. It also captures how CVA, in common with all VCSE organisations, is having to be more enterprising in order to sustain its core services.

2.1 What We Do - CVA currently:

- Provides a one-stop service that covers the whole range of support that sole traders, small and medium enterprises (SMEs), social enterprises and charitable companies require to make them competitive and sustainable – and successful in achieving social outcomes.

2.2 Our 5 Year Plan – the priorities are to:

- Build upon the success of the Enterprise Hub to extend CVA's offer around enterprise support and job creation to support economic and social regeneration, exploring opportunities to manage programmes in partnership with appropriate delivery partners
- Support the sustainability and growth of local enterprises; developing a more diverse mix of local SMEs taking up units in the town centre; and an increase in local enterprises gaining contracts to deliver goods and services
- Develop understanding across the VCSE sector of social finance and create opportunities for VCSE organisations to access social investment

SUPPORTING ENTERPRISE

In the past two years CVA has:

- **Provided support to over 100 existing businesses**
- **Helped create 58 new businesses and social enterprises**
- **Created 90 new jobs for Croydon businesses and provided 438 Croydon residents with practical 1:1 support**
- **Supported clients – with 79% from a BAME background; 52% women; over 50% from the north of the borough and almost half aged 40+, with 49 of the entrepreneurs supported having a disability**

Within 5 years our aims are to:

- **Build on CVA's status as a Social Enterprise Place to lever in support for Social Enterprises to support economic and social regeneration in Croydon's most deprived communities**
- **Create an Enterprise Hub within the redeveloped town centre complex to showcase Croydon's most innovative social enterprises**

3 Managing Community Assets

CVA has created an environment across its community centres that nurtures cooperation between VCSE groups and raises their collective profile. Our centres encourage the participation of local people, particularly from deprived areas, in a diverse range of activities that promote healthier lifestyles, overcome social exclusion and bond people together around highly-valued services. As well as running our own centres we advise partners on managing community assets in a way that breeds ownership among local people and achieves the efficiency savings required by new social enterprises.

3.1 What We Do - CVA currently:

- Manages an estate of community centres across the north of Croydon hosting a range of charitable, sports and leisure activities, with the Waterside Centre in South Norwood, Cornerstone House in Selhurst, the Healthy Living Centre at the Thornton Heath Leisure Centre and our headquarters – the CVA Resource Centre – in West Croydon
- Provides property advice and accommodation services, giving our partners practical advice on leasehold negotiations, hiring out facilities and letting unused office space
- Hosts satellite services for statutory bodies – i.e. NHS Croydon baby clinic, LBC Polling Station, foster carer training and the Community Payback Service

3.2 Our 5 Year Plan – the priorities are to:

- Modernise and diversify resources across CVA’s existing property portfolio to maximise occupancy and meet new and emerging needs in the community (recent examples include free schools and community cafes)
- Seek to broaden the CVA estate particularly in wards where CVA has no focal presence – i.e. Woodside, New Addington
- Ensure a high level VCSE presence in town centre redevelopment, acting as key VCSE stakeholder in development forums and planning meetings including the LSP Social Infrastructure Planning Group to ensure VCSE views are heard when resources are disposed and new resources identified
- Scrutinise LBC Asset Transfer policy and identify opportunities for VCSE groups to bid for community assets
- Provide our Property Advice & Accommodation Services to ensure a vibrant and tangible community sector presence in Croydon

MANAGING ASSETS

CVA’s Property Team:

- **Supports 210 different groups to hire our centres – including social enterprises and resident associations**
- **Delivers a property advice service to 25 VCSE clients on average per year**
- **Provides office space for 50 VCSE clients at our main community centres – Cornerstone House, Waterside Centre and the CVA Resource Centre - from renting exclusive office spaces to renting one desk in a shared office for one day a week; as well as virtual office space**

Within 5 years our aims are to:

- **Tackle inequalities in Croydon by hosting social activities across our community facilities that combat exclusion and reduce social isolation**
- **Improve health and wellbeing in Croydon by hosting groups and activities that focus on prevention and healthy active lifestyles**

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

1 Networks and Forums

CVA's community empowerment role crosses another spectrum, supporting professional VCSE advocates on strategic partnerships at one level and volunteer community representatives on our street and neighbourhood-level projects at the other. In both cases CVA's role is to build communities of interest to create an environment in which people can speak and act for themselves, working in partnership where necessary and opening up opportunities for communities to be more enterprising, inclusive and sharing.

CVA's responsibility is to every community and every organisation in Croydon irrespective of its size or stage of development. Our community networks - including the Croydon Voluntary Sector Alliance (CVSA), the Children, Families & Young People's Network, the Mental Health & Well Being Forum and Faiths Together – create collective interest and promote the benefits of collaboration and shared leadership across the whole sector. In hosting the networks and in holding elections for VCSE positions on the Croydon Strategic Partnership, CVA is oiling the wheels of participatory democracy and ensuring that all sections of the community have a voice and gain access to local funders and decision-makers.

1.1 What We Do - CVA currently:

- Supports the community networks to develop VCSE consortiums, enabling Croydon's VCSE organisations to work together towards common goals by pooling their resources, sharing expertise, forming partnerships and bidding for funds
- Provides a collective voice for the sector by championing VCSE input and engagement in local decision making and strategic discussions influencing local commissioning and policy

1.2 Our 5 Year Plan – the priorities are to:

- Champion digital inclusion within communities, targeting the most socially isolated people in our communities
- Promote the use of online communication tools for signposting and referrals across VCSE agencies; marketing purposes; and for supporting impact assessment
- Support Faiths Together in Croydon (FTiC) to unite diverse faith communities around shared values for positive change by actively promoting mutual understanding and compassion, sensitively challenging issues of shared concern and providing a strong, coherent voice on faith

NETWORKS & FORUMS

CVA supports Croydon's VCSE sector and its diverse range of communities to participate in the full life of the borough and influence the big issues by:

- **Hosting 24 community network meetings every year, with an average of over 70 community representatives at each meeting**
- **Supporting 75 Health Champions every year to represent vulnerable communities**
- **Supporting our partner organisations - the BME Forum, Croydon the Asian Resource Centre and the Croydon Neighbourhood Care Association – to promote and represent community interests**

Within 5 years our aims are to:

- **Gain national recognition for the strength, reach and influence of Croydon's VCSE voice in improving outcomes for local residents**
- **Set up new networks to support partnership working in growth VCSE sectors – Social Enterprise; Skills & Employment; Sports and Physical Activity; and Arts & Culture**

2 Asset Based Community Development (ABCD)

CVA's ABCD projects reach people who may not have heard of the Croydon Strategic Partnership but are tackling issues like domestic violence, social isolation and poverty on a daily basis by interacting with their friends and neighbours. By building on the connections, passions and expertise of local people CVA's ABCD projects are tending to the community grassroots by helping peer support and innovation to grow. The ABCD approach appeals to those reformers whose aim is to put what matters most to local people at the heart of local services. Community building works on the basis that to find out what people care about the most, the key is to ask in a way that empowers them to act on their answers. This approach enables local people to become the authors of their own stories and the strength of our ABCD work is testimony to how many people are prepared to take the initiative in supporting their neighbours and helping to set up local activities. CVA, as the only organisation in Croydon with a track record in delivering ABCD projects, has gained a national reputation for its work, having woven its community building approach into flagship programmes, from the NHS England backed project bringing ABCD into primary care settings to support local GPs, to Croydon Family Power - the Lottery funded programme tackling early intervention by surrounding young families with peer-support and healthy-lifestyle choices. CVA's ABCD projects have been singled out by the DLCG and endorsed by Croydon's Opportunities and Fairness Commission. In rallying for a wider uptake of the ABCD methodology, CVA has delivered masterclasses for South London CCG Commissioners, Croydon CCG's Senior Management Team, the Croydon's GP networks and at Croydon's Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Partnership. CVA is a founding member of ABCD Europe and mentored by a faculty member of the ABCD Institute, Cormac Russell (the CEO of UK Nurture Development).

2.1 What We Do - CVA currently:

- Enable on average 60 community-led projects to emerge every year through the ABCD activity
- Contributes to an asset sharing culture across the VCSE sector, particularly relating to use of space, skill and information sharing
- Hosts the Big Local project mobilising local people on the London Road, backed by a £1 million Lottery investment
- Runs the Croydon CCG-backed project based in New Addington and Fieldway, based in GP surgeries, partnering local pharmacies and leading development of the new Healthy Living Hub on Central Parade
- Leads the Digital inclusion project funded through Best Start programme, using online networks to map local activity, connect people and build stronger communities
- Pilots a MOPAC-funded victim-support project supporting young people experiencing crime to find positive, life-affirming responses

2.2 Our 5 Year Plan – the priorities are to:

- Bring about Community Building where it's needed most by upscaling ABCD activity to benefit the communities where inequalities are most severe (priority wards currently Fairfield, West Thornton and Bensham Manor)
- Lead and deliver on ABCD partnership bids to deliver transformative and integrated services – for example through the Best Start programme – by supporting cultural change through public service reform, resulting in self-supporting, resilient communities
- Support Primary Care to bring about behaviour change and avoid costly waste, consolidating our base in GP surgeries to link GPs with community activity in a way that cannot be achieved through social prescribing
- Further develop and promote our training and monitoring programme enabling more VSCE partners to learn to deliver the ABCD methodology effectively
- Engage local people in formulating their own ABCD Community Plans – enabling citizens to create the lives they want
- Provide a collective VCSE voice on Mental Health and Wellbeing, instigating ABCD activities to bring about meaningful change at a neighbourhood level
- Embed ABCD methodology in all 5 of the CCG's GP Networks whilst creating an evidence base to capture the impact of ABCD on the health and wellbeing in communities
- Promote further adoption of the asset-based approach in Croydon by supporting commissioners, funders and providers to achieve health and well-being, safety, happiness, economic development and employment by backing those contributions that only the community can make.
- Continue demonstrating that community building creates the momentum for a form of community-led activity that enables statutory bodies to step back and wait to be invited to add value

ASSET BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

In its first 6 months the CCG-backed project in New Addington achieved:

- **600 people engaged by various ABCD activities**
- **424 service users connected to local self-help activities & networks**
- **41 new self- help activities set up**
- **40 volunteers enlisted as ABCD Connectors**
- **400 local VCSE activities captured on asset map**
- **2 pioneer sites set up - Parkway and Fieldway GP surgeries - supporting local residents to become actively engaged in self-care projects and social activity**
- **51 patients signposted to community initiatives from the 2 GP pioneer sites**
- **6 community meetings organized for health practitioners and local residents**
- **25 health practitioners building community links**

Within 5 years our aims are to:

- **Reduce social isolation in Croydon by extending the ABCD services to every corner of the borough, from Kenley to Norbury, to connect local people up and build stronger and more enterprising communities (for example by aligning with the Outcomes Based Commissioning programme and Croydon University Hospital's Reablement programme)**
- **Train and support VCSE partner agencies in adopting the ABCD**

VOLUNTEERING

1 Brokerage and good practice

Whether it's an unemployed person returning to work, a highly-paid professional giving back to the community or just someone who loves to volunteer, the individual will benefit most from volunteering when it's non-compulsory and attached to an activity that people value and feel part of. CVA regards voluntary work as an end in itself, an activity that rewards the individual in many ways and enhances the reach and effectiveness of services through the unique insight, experience and empathy that volunteers can bring. As such volunteering is a strategy for both personal development and social change, serving as the lifeblood of Croydon's VCSE.

Its benefits can stretch further and volunteering is now highly valued as one of the key routeways into training and employment. For younger people compiling their CVs, parents returning to work and older people coping with redundancy, volunteering provides an opportunity to gain experience, regain confidence and sharpen up skills. A particular challenge is to support the people who are furthest away from the jobs market and for ex-offenders, people with mental health issues, homeless people and lone parents, being supported throughout their volunteering experience can make a big difference. The Volunteer Centre's task is similar to a jobs brokerage service in that our assessment process, rather than profiling job-seekers and matching them with employers, results in people being matched with the right volunteering role. Equally, in the same way that a jobs brokerage service supports employers to source and manage vacancies, the Volunteer Centre's challenge is to support VCSE organisations to source and manage high-quality volunteer placements.

1.1 What We Do - CVA currently:

- Carries out the lead role on volunteering in Croydon as the borough's Nationally Accredited Volunteer Centre, promoting volunteering as good for both the individual and the community
- Provides both face to face advice and an online brokerage service to local people looking to volunteer in Croydon
- Maintains an online database of live volunteering opportunities across the borough
- Keeps a high profile for volunteering in Croydon at our highly accessible town centre location in Centrale – courtesy of the Croydon Partnership
- Convenes quarterly meetings of the Volunteer Managers Forum to enable volunteer-involving organisations to network, share ideas and information; advising them on managing volunteers; reviewing their volunteer policies and procedures; and developing quality volunteering opportunities

- Provides the leading volunteer management skills and training (accredited and non-accredited) service in Croydon - ensuring good practice in volunteer management; recruitment and safeguarding
- Fills strategic gaps in provision and innovates new roles for volunteers by running specialist *Supported Volunteering* projects – i.e. the Appropriate Adult Volunteers Scheme; and the Women’s Court and Mentoring Support projects
- Demonstrates best practice through our in-house volunteering opportunities

1.2 Our 5 Year Plan – the priorities are to:

- Promote and develop support for volunteers who are using volunteering as a route to employment – providing a *Volunteer Brokerage Service* linked to Croydon’s training and employment services
- Engage the business sector as partners and supporters – i.e. to develop a *Reward & Recognition* discount card for volunteers; by working in partnership with Croydon Commitment
- Provide support and training on using impact assessment to measure the full value and benefits of volunteering
- Develop a Volunteering HR Advice and Support service, offering accessible DBS checking service and ID checks for smaller organisations
- Promote our Volunteer Management System with volunteer-involving organisations as a way to increase engagement with volunteers

BROKERAGE & GOOD PRACTICE

CVA’s Volunteer Centre:

- Sees over 5,000 people a year walk through the Team Croydon doors in Centrale
- Responds to a further 3,500+ online enquiries
- Trains and supports over 60 VCSE groups every year to recruit volunteers
- Delivers accredited Volunteer Management training up to level 3
- Showcases Croydon’s VCSE sector – 22 local groups profiled in Centrale shop window to promote volunteering opportunities
- Trains and supports our in-house band of volunteers Team Croydon to (i) support up to 30 events every year – from the Ambition Festival to AGMs; (ii) support over 100 people every year being detained in custody; (iii) support over 250 women every year at risk of offending; (iv) support over 100 people every year recovering from mental illness; (v) carry out over 6,500 hours of office-based volunteering to the economic value alone of £170,000

Within 5 years our aim is to:

- Have built volunteering into the heart of the new town centre development
- Have raised awareness across the borough of the full variety of volunteering opportunities on offer

IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

1 Good Governance

Responsibility for implementing the 2016-21 Strategic Plan rests with CVA's Board of Trustees. The annual Business Plan, drawn up by senior management for trustee approval, sets out the key performance indicators attached to our strategic objectives. Reviewed quarterly at every Board meeting, the Business Plan provides trustees with an ongoing tool for strategic planning and performance review.

Financing the Strategic Plan is a regular item at CVA's Finance & Audit Committee, where budget-setting encompasses new plans for financing CVA activities and for restructuring the workforce where necessary to deliver on our strategic goals. CVA has implemented a series of measures since 2011 to reduce its back office. The main purpose has been to reduce central costs and achieve greater efficiencies and CVA has now linked its austerity programme to the strategic planning process in order to ensure that an affordable and effective staffing structure is in place to deliver on our strategic priorities. In developing the Strategic Plan against the backdrop of CVA's financial profile for future years, the trustees will continue to place a particular focus on new funding opportunities; the scope for income generation and social enterprise; and on strategies for overcoming ongoing financial pressures (funding cuts; overhead costs; pension liabilities).

2 Multi-tasking Workforce

In common with so many other agencies in both the public and voluntary sectors, CVA is having to transform its business in order to both keep within budget and to achieve the efficiencies that will provide our members with practical support services that offer quality, affordability and easy access to specialist advice.

The challenge for CVA since its core funding was withdrawn has been to maintain its level of activity in the priority areas – leadership; VCSE support; community empowerment and volunteering – with a strong enough infrastructure in place to sustain a portfolio of projects. The strategies found to meet this challenge have involved the outsourcing of CVA's back-office – HR, finance and ICT – and the development of a multi-tasking workforce operating across the four key roles. With a much smaller workforce in place, CVA's joined up staff team is managing not only to maintain the current levels of service but to innovate new ways of working across the whole of Croydon's civil society. Modernising involves using new communications to maximise and promote CVA's service-offer; and providing high-quality volunteering opportunities across the whole organisation. CVA's aim is to provide its staff team with quality support (i.e. by finding the most effective IT solutions), providing regular opportunities for skills-development. The emphasis is always on team-work and on harnessing the expertise and adaptability of the staff-team in implementing our plans.

AFTERWORD

For further information on CVA's VCSE Support, Community Empowerment and Volunteering services please visit CVA's website via cvalive.org.uk where you will also find regular news and information on our leadership activities and partnership working.

To discuss the contents of this plan contact CVA's Chief Executive, Steve Phaure, on 02082531260 or steve.phaure@cvalive.org.uk

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- Carole Short, Capacity Building Officer
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