



croydon**voluntary**action
celebrating 100 years

Annual Report & Accounts (2011/12)

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From The Chair

Ghazala Mirza

In 2011 Croydon was one of the areas hit hardest by the rioting that broke out across the country. The riots highlighted major social problems in the UK, such as the disaffection experienced by so many young people. Problems like this can't be fixed overnight. They need integrated solutions that, in this case, bring together creative opportunities for young people that lead to training and employment, along with preventative services to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour.



This is where Croydon Voluntary Action (CVA) and the voluntary and community sector (VCS) comes in - finding solutions that respond to new and emerging needs. Over the course of the year CVA succeeded in bringing local VCS groups into two key preventative programmes, one focusing on early intervention for troubled families and the other on ending gangs and youth violence. By the end of the year CVA was in negotiations with Croydon Council to bring VCS providers into the delivery of a post-riots social recovery programme financed from the £23 million allocated to Croydon by the London Mayor.

As well as supporting local groups to play a full part in the fight back, CVA championed the tremendous work of Croydon's volunteers who led the community response after the rioting. CVA's Volunteer Centre staff worked tirelessly to co-ordinate the volunteers' efforts, setting up an emergency service in the Whitgift Centre and finding new roles for many of those who came forward to take part in the clean-up campaign. At a time when the profile of volunteering reached new heights, CVA was at the centre of promoting its value – by matching volunteers and opportunities, training and selecting

suitable people and actively getting involved ourselves.

The riots also highlighted CVA's role in shaping how a community comes together to influence and take part in local decision-making. When CVA hosted the first meeting of the new West Croydon Community Forum (WCCF) our conference room was packed with local community representatives, together with local residents from all over the borough offering their support. By the end of the year the WCCF had established itself as a body that both the Council and the Police were keen to do business with.

CVA's roles will always include supporting volunteering and acting as the engine room for community groups in the borough. Recruiting volunteers, supporting groups to fundraise and access finance, setting up consortiums to deliver integrated, community-facing services and liaising with statutory bodies to negotiate VCS interests – these are our core roles. However, our response to the 2011 riots brought into focus CVA's wider role in supporting the whole of Croydon's civil society, from charities and volunteers to residents' associations, social enterprises, faith groups and local neighbourhood support groups. Our work in 2011 focused on the role within civil society of informal volunteers, community connectors and family navigators – in other words, all those people who support each other in their community and get things done. By nurturing these assets at both the street and the neighbourhood level, and by supporting local people in activities that bind their communities together, we're confident at CVA of keeping the volunteering spirit that surfaced after the riots (and resurfaced again at the 2012 Games) alive and well in Croydon.

ABOUT US

CVA is a charity and a company limited by guarantee, providing strategic and practical support services to its membership of voluntary and community organisations (VCOs) – numbering over 800 in Croydon.

CVA is governed by a Board of ten trustees. New trustees are appointed by the Board on the recommendation of a recruitment panel and newly-recruited trustees are inducted by the honorary officers on their roles and responsibilities.

CVA's Board is responsible for the strategic direction and policy of the charity and in this capacity draw on the guidance published by the Charity Commission on public benefit when reviewing the organisation's strategic aims and in planning future activities. The Board regularly reviews the major risks to which the charity is exposed and ensures that systems are in place to mitigate these.

A Chief Executive is appointed to manage CVA's day-to-day operations and, supported by the staff team, ensures that the organisation delivers the services and activities specified in its funding agreements. Volunteers play a significant role in supporting CVA's work by enhancing the content of the service we provide.

CVA has a close working relationship with Croydon Council, NHS Croydon and all our fellow members on the Local Strategic Partnership. CVA plays a lead role on Croydon's Chief Executives' Group; hosts the Croydon Voluntary Sector Alliance and related community forums; and supports VCS representatives involved across the family of partnerships coordinated through the Croydon Congress.

What We Do

2011/12 Highlights

- CVA secured Big Lottery funding - £899,991 over 3 years for Croydon Family Power project benefiting over 3000 people in Croydon
- CVA formed the West Croydon Community Forum to tackle post-riots recovery
- CVA coordinated the post-riots public donation to support the resettlement of 65 local residents and organised the Clear Up Day with 122 young people - attended by the Prince of Wales and Duchess of Cornwall
- CVA negotiated to secure the investment of £1 million in Broad Green and £3.3 million in West Croydon from outside the borough
- CVA's Croydon Xpress project received Civic Award
- CVA awarded Healthwatch Pathfinder Status for the Croydon LINK
- CVA set up seven Community First Panels to award Government funds to local groups
- CVA's Volunteer Centre acted as London Ambassador Recruitment Centre, interviewing and recommending over 900 volunteers for the Olympics
- CVA launched the Croydon Voluntary Sector Alliance in May 2011 with keynote presentation from Leader of the Council
- CVA formed the VCS delegation advising the Scrutiny Committee review on Croydon Council's 2011 VCS commissioning rounds

CVA's principal activity is to promote charitable purposes for the benefit of the community in Croydon and its surrounding areas. CVA carries out its leadership role by promoting a bigger role for VCOs in the life of the borough and by supporting local people to represent their community's interests and to negotiate on its behalf. CVA's mission statement focuses the organisation 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". CVA's priority areas - capacity building, community empowerment, volunteering and leadership - provide distinct but complementary routes into achieving this mission.

Our strategic aims in these areas are:

- To build and strengthen capacity within Croydon's VCS
- To support individuals, communities and VCOs to be involved and to have a say
- To support and promote volunteering in Croydon
- To negotiate Croydon VCS interests through leadership and policy development

In achieving these aims we set out in 2011/12 to:

- Be at the forefront of providing timely information on all aspects of Croydon's civil society via effective communications
- Provide the leading property management service for VCOs in Croydon
- Provide VCOs with a high-quality and low-cost solution for the production of all types of marketing and promotional materials
- Provide one-to-one and on-line support for VCOs on starting-up and running activities
- Manage small grants programmes that support local grassroots organisations in finding solutions to social problems
- Be the leading VCS learning provider in South London
- Be a central resource for coordinating, sustaining and growing community empowerment in Croydon with links to informal and formal political engagement

- Establish a stronger and more connected independent civil society with clear pathways to civic participation
- Enhance community networking and provide a range of platforms for connecting and strengthening local VCOs and local resident activists
- Increase the number of people involved in the community, including those without any experience of volunteering, through formal and informal volunteering
- Increase the effectiveness of volunteer and community participation by supporting volunteer involving organisations to manage more effectively
- Carry out innovative work to support volunteering throughout Croydon
- Work with local commissioners to ensure that there is a fair environment in which the VCS can access opportunities to provide services to local people
- Continue to be regarded as the 'voice of the voluntary sector' and support any initiatives that raise the profile of civil society and lead to better services for the people of Croydon

This year's report gives an overview of our performance under each theme, selecting some highlights from the year and highlighting our future priorities.

What CVA's Achieved

1. Capacity Building

During 2011/12 CVA's Capacity Building Team delivered projects under the following themes:

Community Development:

2011-12 was an unusual year for community development work in Croydon. The civil unrest of August 2011 was a catalyst for many groups and ordinary individuals wanting to take action to help prevent future riots and more importantly address the causes of the unrest.

CVA was at the forefront of the recovery and played a crucial role in rallying groups, volunteers and agencies particularly those based in the West Croydon area. CVA was commended by the Council and the Police for its work in mobilising residents, businesses, and community organisations to come together under the umbrella of the newly-formed West Croydon Community Forum (WCCF). The WCCF was officially launched on 1 May 2012 but had established itself as a credible and representative voice for people of West Croydon by the end of 2011. The WCCF successfully organised the 'Healing The Streets' football tournament on the first anniversary of the riots and staged the first 'Carnival of Cultures' in September 2012. CVA has encouraged the WCCF to have a strong voice and campaign for hard cash to come to the area to be spent on what local people want. £50k+ was secured for the Carnival and for initiatives to support enterprise in the area. £3.3 million has been secured from the Greater London Authority for physical improvements to the area. £1million+ over the next 10 years has been ring-fenced for Broad Green from the Big Local Trust.

CVA hosted a successful visit to Croydon of the Home Affairs Select Committee looking into the riots, chaired by Keith Vaz MP. CVA was also privileged to host two visits from HRH Prince Charles and the Duchess of Cornwall in 2011 and 2012 who came to acknowledge the dedication and co-operation local people and businesses have demonstrated since the riots.

Organisational Development:

Unsurprisingly, a considerable amount of time and energy was devoted to community development work in West Croydon. But, notwithstanding this, CVA continued to maintain a capacity building service to groups. In 2011, CVA provided a funding advice service; supported groups with bespoke one-to-one advice or training; and produced an impressive weekly information e-bulletin. All this was well-received - not only by the voluntary sector but also by colleagues within the Local Strategic Partnership and other stakeholders. The e-bulletin currently has a circulation of more than 2000 and is continuing to grow.

Much of CVA's service to groups over the past year has been around crisis management – helping groups to fundraise for rent, meeting space for volunteers and even basic expenses for volunteers. Even the larger, well established organisations have had to consolidate services, re-locate or implement tough austerity measures to stay in business. Some are now considering the possibilities of mergers and shared resources amongst member groups and CVA is supporting those groups wishing to go down this path.

As the year in review came to a close, 16 BME and refugee groups were facing a 100% cut to their Community Languages and Supplementary Education grants. CVA is now working with the Croydon BME Forum to support the groups affected.

CVA provides practical capacity building support to over 120 Croydon groups”

“CVA circulates weekly information / funding e-bulletin to 2000 contacts”

Print and Design:

CVA's practical support services include print and design. Now in its 20th year, the service produces annual reports, leaflets and exhibition materials for Croydon's voluntary sector. During the year 181 print & design projects were undertaken on behalf of 65 VCOs. Work ranged from flyers and the annual magazine for the Hare Krishna temple; bespoke 'Oyster card' holders for PLUG (Peer-Led User Group); to banners, leaflets, reports and exhibition materials designed for the London Learning Consortium. CVA also took on work from clients outside Croydon including those based in Haringey, Lambeth, Merton, Sutton, Islington and as far afield as Harrow.

“CVA supports 65 VCOs with their print and design needs”

Property Services:

CVA continued to manage its estate efficiently, with the CVA Resource Centre, Cornerstone House, Waterside Centre and Thornton Heath Healthy Living Centre all, in spite of the difficult economic climate, maintaining impressive occupancy rates for the office accommodation. During the past year 43 voluntary and social enterprise groups rented office space at one of CVA's centres with 143 different voluntary groups using the centres for various activities ranging from steel band practice to luncheon clubs. Statutory colleagues also hired CVA's facilities on many occasions including the setting up of a temporary one-stop shop at the Resource Centre after the August riots.

CVA conducted a survey of its property users in January 2012. Of the 67 groups who participated in the survey:

- 89% of respondents rated CVA centre facilities as good or excellent
- 94% found the centres safe and accessible
- 86% said charges were affordable; and
- 83% said that sharing premises with other groups encouraged real partnership working

In addition to providing affordable office and meeting space, CVA has continued to provide a free advice service to over 30 groups on leasing arrangements, health and safety, and managing their own buildings. CVA has also supported VCOs that don't have their own buildings but are looking to take on premises, such as the Stanley Peoples Initiative in their bid to manage Stanley Halls.

“CVA provides affordable office space to 43 local VCOs and affordable meeting/ activity space to 143 different VCOs”

Fund Management:

In 2011-12 CVA did not have any substantial funds to distribute or directly manage as in previous years so instead focused on supporting VCOs to apply to available funding streams. More than 30 groups were supported to apply to Croydon Council's Small Grants Fund and to the Integrated Youth Support Service's Localities funding. CVA also worked closely with Croydon Commitment to invite and put forward ten local groups to benefit from the Evening Standard's Dispossessed Fund. Successful recipients included CSEP (£9000); Potential (£9,000); Lives Not Knives (£5,000); Rise Media (£5,000); Nightwatch (£5,000) and Brenda Kirby Cancer Centre (£5,000).

CVA worked to a tight deadline to establish six Community First Ward Panels, helping them to draw down government monies for Croydon in Selhurst, Thornton Heath, Woodside, Broad Green, South Norwood, and West Thornton. There will be a new round of funding at the end of October 2012, when Ashburton will also have funds to award to local grassroots projects.

In 2012 CVA worked with the Police, Probation Service and Croydon Council's Community Safety team to distribute £50k in small grants to ten local projects under the Ending Gangs and Youth Violence programme. A further £140k will be distributed in Autumn 2012 to four local consortia to build upon those projects.

Consortium-building:

Over the past year, and with the increasing scarcity of traditional grant funding, VCOs have been hearing more and more about contracts and commissioning. CVA has worked hard to keep the sector informed of new commissioning developments and opportunities, working with local commissioners at the Council to ensure that VCOs have a fair chance to bid (see below). CVA also organised a learning session on changes in the NHS, looking at how VCOs can be commissioned to deliver services through the new Clinical Commissioning Groups.

Consortia and partnerships are fast becoming the established routes through which commissioning bodies expect to deliver more local services. In response to this, CVA has facilitated local groups to come together in small and large partnerships. In 2011 CVA supported groups to bid in partnership for Early Intervention and Family Support (EIFS) contracts. CVA also led the VCS consortium (15 VCOs taking part) that was unsuccessful at its first attempt (but has since re-applied following a retendering exercise). If successful, this work will complement the other large consortium that CVA has assembled – the £900k Croydon Family Power programme.

CVA's highly successful approach to consortium-building was recognised nationally by NAVCA and in early 2012 CVA took part in a training programme to share good practice with other umbrella organisations from around the South East. CVA's successful consortium-building programme also bore fruit with a successful bid to the Big Fund for the Transforming Local Infrastructure programme (£400k) - a joint collaboration with Croydon BME Forum, Asian Resource Centre Croydon and the Croydon Neighbourhood Care Association. The consortium will look for practical solutions to strengthen VCOs in a sustainable manner through consolidation of back-office functions and joined-up capacity building support services.

“CVA wins national recognition for approach to consortium building”

Training:

CVA's training facilities and services have been supported by funding from the Big Lottery's BASIS programme. Last year CVA provided more than 80 learning opportunities benefitting more than 600 learners from just under 100 different organisations. Courses ranged from Emergency First Aid to Teacher Training. Most were short courses targeted at staff and volunteers from VCOs. The most popular workshops were those devoted to Bid Writing and Start-up which were run on a bi-monthly cycle. CVA was also successful at gaining approval from various Awarding Bodies to run accredited learning programmes. These included Mental Health First Aid and Preparing To Teach in The Lifelong Learning Sector (PTLLS), accredited by the National Open College Network. During the past year, 27 learners have successfully gained a PTLLS qualification at level 3 or 4.

CVA was also successful at getting approval to run the Certificate in Volunteer Management, accredited by the Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM). After a rigorous Quality check by the ILM, the 8-week Volunteer Management course was delivered in-house by our own Volunteer Centre. Building on the success of the first course, CVA will be offering a higher Certificate in Volunteer Management from the autumn of 2012. At the time of writing, sixteen learners had already signed up and we hope to attract funding for the course by working with CALAT to draw down funds from the Skills Funding Agency (SFA). Our new PTLLS Level 4 course should also draw down funds from the SFA via a sub-contracting arrangement with the London Learning Consortium. We've also gained approval to run community volunteering accredited short courses via ASDAN.

One of the strengths of CVA's training department has been its ability to work in partnership with other agencies and individuals, often negotiating free training or subsidised fees for trainers. The public, private and community partners engaged with over the past year include Croydon Libraries, CALAT, John Ruskin College, Carshalton College, Metro Bank, HSBC, Nat West Bank, HMRC, London Ambulance Service, Croydon Council, Genesis Training, Federation of Community Development and Learning, NAVCA, Balance Global and All Inclusive. For CVA's latest training brochure see <http://www.cvalive.org.uk/Groups/CVAtraining.aspx>

“CVA delivers 80 courses or workshops benefitting almost 100 organisations and 600+ learners”

“CVA delivers formal accredited learning courses for National Open College Network, Institute of Leadership and Management and Mental Health First Aid”

2. Community Empowerment

During 2011/12 CVA's Community Involvement Team delivered 12 projects under the following themes:

Organised and connected communities of interest:

CVA hosts seven face-to-face networks that reach both communities of interest and civil society organisations to provide learning and lobbying opportunities. They are: Croydon Voluntary Sector Alliance (CVSA); Children, Young People and Families Network (CYPFN); Faiths Together (FTIC) in Croydon; Croydon Healthwatch Pathfinder (formerly the Local Involvement Network -LINK); Croydon Mental Health Forum (CMHF); Croydon Older People's Network (OPeN) and the Volunteer Organisers Forum (VOF). CVA also worked with Croydon Citizen Advice Bureau in launching a new Advice Providers Together Network and further assisted the Women's Network, the Environment Network and the Refugee Forum in their development.

CYPFN, now in its fifteenth year, is one of CVA's longest-standing and most active networks, boasting a membership of both the largest and smallest VCOs working together to improve support for children and their families. This year it has worked to influence the commissioning process, from co-design through to delivery, and affected changes in key strategies including youth crime, early intervention and child poverty. In all, 26 partnership representatives and 276 members were able to participating and engage through regular e-bulletins and lobbying.

CVA also hosts the Croydon Healthwatch Pathfinder and has established strong links with the Clinical Commissioning Group in influencing the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and recent Care Quality Commission reports. The Healthwatch Pathfinder now has 833 members; 56 active participants of whom 16 are trained community researchers and authorised representatives; 60 young people participate regularly and 6 Steering Group members in leadership roles.

CVA is continuing to make innovative use of E-democracy via open source online involvement at www.talk2croydon.co.uk, Twitter, Youtube and Facebook. This year we launched two new websites that use the talk2 site as a platform – Croydon Xpress and Faiths Together in Croydon. Croydon Xpress and the Healthwatch Pathfinder have regular followers on Youtube, Facebook and twitter. Twitter is also used in our ABCD work, supporting neighbours to make connections and build stronger communities.

***“CVA attracts 50% of all
www.talk2croydon.co.uk users
as new users”***

**A stronger voice for local people,
community leaders and civil society:**

Our work with VCOs is complemented by our participation projects involving both younger and older people. Croydon Xpress is funded by Croydon Police and employs a team of dedicated young sessional workers who specialise in reaching the 8-25 age group. At the other end of the age spectrum, Croydon's older activists have worked through the Older People's Network (OPeN) to challenge public transport and lobby for better care services, developing their internet and mobile phone skills to make better use of new technology.

CVA has provided tailored and accredited programmes for budding community leaders through the Health Champions, Community Researchers and ABCD

***“CVA's Children,
Young People and
Families Network
elects 26 VCS
representatives
to influence local
policy”***

***“CVA introduces
Clinical
Commissioners to
Croydon VCS at
major conference”***

***“CVA's Older
People's Network
(OPeN) campaigns
for improvements
in London
Transport”***

Community Connectors schemes. This year CVA trained 10 OCN accredited Health Champions, 16 LINK Community Researchers and 30 local Community Connectors. 10 people have completed an intensive 'Effective Representative' programme for which we have a positive external evaluation; 10 young leaders were trained to initiate new projects; and 116 individuals attended 11 People Power Sessions on Effective Representation, Community Organisers, Influencing Through Parliament, Community Rights Made Real, Starfish Community Development, Young Space Shapers and Mentoring for Young Leaders. The Croydon Health Champions ran its sixth and final programme with 10 people successfully completing a 10 day OCN accredited community development and health improvement course before going on to become Health Guides working on a sessional basis for NHS South West London.

After completing the first stage of the 'ABCD' neighbourhood-based project reaching 300 people in Thornton Heath, Cormac Russell - Director of ABCD Europe - commended CVA on mobilising such a "significant amount of citizen-led action supporting people to co-produce better health outcomes". CVA also submitted a proposal for strengthening representation through the partnership structures, positioning CVSA to speak for voluntary groups, faith groups, local networks and activists.

“CVA involves 300 Thornton Heath Residents in their community through new ‘ABCD’ project”

“CVA’s People Power programme benefits 116 community leaders - 10 Health Champions are OCN accredited; 10 Young Leaders are trained and 6 OPeN members trained to use new technology”

Growing opportunities for new communities and seldom heard voices:

CVA builds bridges for people to interact with political leaders at both local and national levels. People Power learning seminars were held on the new Community Rights, the national Community Organisers Programme and on Parliamentary processes, partnering with the Urban Forum, Locality and the Parliamentary Outreach team. Croydon Xpress has provided guidance through its Young Leaders Programme on influencing planning decisions using the 'Space-Shaper' tool. CVA also helps people to represent themselves, by supporting self-advocacy groups to represent their communities of interest through the Health Champions, Mental Health Forum, Faiths Together, Croydon Xpress and Healthwatch Pathfinder projects (in supporting the Local NHS to meet its Equality Duty the Healthwatch Pathfinder has worked closely with homeless people to help identify priority needs). We also deliver one-off projects - such as training police officers on working with young people and enabling the JSNA process to engage with service users.

“CVA and CAB launch Advice Providers Together network”

3. Volunteering

The Volunteer Centre's main aim is to increase the number of people volunteering in Croydon. As part of a national network of volunteer centres accredited by Volunteering England it has six core functions - brokerage; marketing; good practice; opportunities; campaigning and strategic development – and all of the services delivered by the 5 staff and 36 volunteers are based around them. Its projects were delivered under the following themes:

Formal and informal volunteering:

Throughout the year VCC consistently had more than 300 opportunities listed on the national volunteering database www.do-it.org.uk and 1015 individuals confirmed that they had started regular volunteering. Our staff and/or volunteers conducted 755 one-to-one advice sessions and 22 group advice sessions, as well as attending 11 outreach events. We now also promote more informal volunteering opportunities using our website, twitter and Facebook pages and we actively promote initiatives such as SEWA DAY and the 'BIG LUNCH'. This year also saw the launch of our 'Positive People Positive place' campaign, capturing hundreds of photos of individuals who give their time for free to support others in their communities.

Our Volunteer Recruitment Fair saw the highest number of attendees ever - with 48 organisations looking for volunteers and over 200 individuals looking for opportunities. We also held a number of Volunteering Information Sessions (Stepping Stones) to help people decide if they wanted to volunteer – many of whom were referred to us by Job Centre Plus. These sessions were used to enthuse people and demonstrate the benefits of volunteering as a route to employment. 45% of those attending went on to volunteer and we are tracking them to see if this improves their employment chances.

“Volunteer Centre places over 1000 individuals in regular volunteering opportunities”

“Volunteer Centre's recruitment fair attended by 45 groups and 250 potential new volunteers”

Innovative work to support volunteering:

The Volunteer Bank project has a website that profiles volunteers with specialist skills, advertising what they have to offer to local VCOs. This year Forward Ltd - an ICT specialist company - has supported further development of the site. Fifty-two volunteers were matched with VCOs during this period providing IT support; HR support; Health & Safety advice and guidance; research and impact assessment skills.

The South London and Maudsley Trust (SLAM) funds the Volunteer Centre to support mental health service users to volunteer as a route to recovery or social inclusion. There were 57 referrals by SLAM and other mental health organisations and 93 self referrals to the project, with 15 accessing regular volunteering after being involved in the Volunteer Pool - a project finding in-house volunteer placements. Since April 2011, 100 opportunities have been identified through the Volunteer Pool serving as a stepping-stone for people with mental health issues to access other mainstream volunteering opportunities. 65% of the volunteers reported an increase

in confidence, self-esteem and overall personal development, with 11 going into paid employment.

The Volunteer Centre is now working more with offenders and ex-offenders, supporting women in the courts to access volunteering opportunities and sign-posting them to other services to both divert them from reoffending and help with the root cause of their problems. Volunteer Centre staff also sit within the Probation Service 'hub' offering volunteer brokerage to young offenders (18-24) who need support in building up character references, enabling them to gain skills, build self-esteem and confidence and, in the future, gain employment opportunities. The third strand of this work is training and providing volunteer mentors to support offenders on probation.

“Volunteer Centre sets up new project working with women offenders in Croydon Magistrates Court”

Supporting volunteer-involving organisations to manage more effectively:

Our Good Practice Project offers one-to-one support to VCOs and social enterprises to: help develop good practice in working with volunteers; enhance their capacity to recruit and retain volunteers; and to help them demonstrate to funders that they have the necessary systems in place to ensure good volunteer management.

Five Volunteer Co-ordinator Forums are held each year providing an opportunity to share ideas and information about volunteer management, covering topics like managing difficult situations; fundraising; induction; saying thank you to volunteers; increasing volunteer retention; and the law. In addition, five training courses were delivered, including the one-day Key Elements of Volunteer Management courses and the 10 week, VRQ-accredited Management of Volunteers course. 26 people attended and 14 organisations were given intense one-to-one support to develop and improve their volunteer involvement programmes.

The Volunteer Centre has signed up to the London Volunteering Management Charter and is encouraging all organisations that involve volunteers to sign up as well. The charter demonstrates an organisation's commitment to providing high quality volunteering opportunities and allows them to access even more support.

“Volunteer Centre partners London Libraries project working to increase volunteering in libraries”

Strategic approach to volunteering in Croydon:

One of the three priorities set out in Croydon's Stronger Community Strategy 2011-14 is around promoting strong and active communities. To support this, a key action for the year ahead was to launch a borough-wide volunteering and community action programme. The Volunteer Centre partnered with the BME Forum, CNCA, Croydon Commitment and members of the business community in supporting the Council to facilitate two seminars on the direction of volunteering and corporate social responsibility (CSR) in Croydon.

Volunteer Centre Croydon response to unrest in August 2011:

Following the unrest in August 2011 more than 50 people, most of whom had never volunteered before, came forward to take part in the clean-up campaign. In the week following the riots 122 young people from uniformed organisations helped launch our Positive People-Positive Place campaign, cleaning up and collecting messages of support which were passed on to the local shop-keepers. In the following eight weeks 30 people continued to volunteer helping to coordinate the offers of help, support and donated goods from around the borough. Some have stayed with us at the Volunteer Centre and are now supporting others to volunteer.

CVA's drop-off shop in the Whitgift Centre served as an example of how VCOs and private businesses can come together to make a difference. Managed by the Volunteer Centre, the shop was run by volunteers, providing a pick up point for victims of the riots to obtain items donated by members of the public. We collected sofas, beds, bookcases, exercise equipment, crockery, glassware, bedding, curtains, toiletries, kitchen equipment, toys and clothing from all over Croydon and distributed them to those in the greatest need. We also had electrical equipment including washing machines, fridges, freezers, TVs, Hifi and DVD players – and those that passed the PAT testing were delivered to families. Most of the families we reached were overwhelmed by the support given to them by the volunteers and the items they received acted as a lifeline in some cases. The Rotary Club donated funds to support the volunteers at the shop claiming expenses for travel and UCKG assisted by providing volunteers to help with deliveries to victims.

“Volunteer Centre recruits and trains 20 mentors to support ex-offenders on probation”

2012 Games:

The Volunteer Centre Croydon was proud to be part of the Team London Ambassadors programme, recruiting and preparing volunteers to welcome visitors to London during the Olympics and Paralympics Games this summer.

4. LEADERSHIP

In 2011/12 CVA's leadership role put us at the forefront of Croydon's post-riots response (see above). But it was the events of the previous summer that focused CVA in its strategic role as the champion of VCOs in Croydon.

Shift to Commissioning:

The period under review was bookended by two pivotal presentations at CVA by the Council on its proposed shift to commissioning. In May 2011, at the inaugural meeting of the Croydon Voluntary Sector Alliance (CVSA), the Leader of the Council announced two things; firstly the Council's intention to develop its new commissioning strategy and second the imminence of new commissioning rounds - for early intervention and youth services - that were expected to provide opportunities for VCS bidders. By March the next year the commissioning strategy was launched at the CVSA meeting and the Council's Scrutiny Committee had conducted a review of the 2011 commissioning rounds to gauge their impact on VCS providers.

2010 saw unprecedented cuts to VCS budgets in Croydon, the withdrawal of area-based grants targeting VCS provision and, cumulatively, significant strain being put on the historically strong Council/VCS relations. The light at the end of the tunnel offered by the shift to commissioning - accompanied by expectations that this could result in more rather than less Council funding for the VCS - was dimmed by the concern that competitive tendering might disadvantage local groups and pit them against each other.

CVA's objective became clear - to influence drafting of the new commissioning strategy and to give the Council constructive feedback on how VCS providers experience commissioning. With the Council in the process of assembling its new Strategy Commissioning Procurement and Performance (SCPP) team based on an alliance of category managers and commissioning managers, its staff were on as much of a learning curve as those VCS bidders working to become 'commissioning ready'.

As the commissioning strategy began to take shape, with CVA facilitating VCS representation on the Task & Finish Group appointed to guide its development, the experience of commissioning on the ground remained varied. The VCS challenge became two-fold: as well as gaining an understanding of the new commissioning rules, local groups were responding to the 'more for less' imperative by forming new bidding consortiums. CVA played a hands-on role throughout (see Capacity Building above) both in negotiating with the Council and in working directly with VCS Consortiums to submit bids.

The early intervention and youth services commissioning in 2011 took place before the Council had formulated its strategy - and at times this showed. Innovation was brought to the process by officers, but it challenged VCS providers throughout as the initial service specifications overlooked proven services in the community like home-visiting in favour of new 'evidence-based' imports. The pre-qualification-questionnaire (PQQ) requirements were also found to be onerous, while the lack of time for consortium negotiations, technical difficulties with the portal and poor communications with unsuccessful groups caused further difficulties.

“CVA hosts launch of Council's new Commissioning Strategy in March 2012”

Some issues amounted to teething problems but others suggested the need for an approach that recognised the social value that VCOs bring. Over a period of four months CVA led in engaging Croydon's VCS in a positive dialogue with the Council. In December we hosted a workshop providing CVSA members with an opportunity to influence the new commissioning strategy. In the same month the Council's Chief Executive submitted a report to the Scrutiny Committee on The Voluntary Sector and Croydon's Commissioning Framework. CVA organised the VCS representation in the scrutiny process, resulting in seven VCS 'witnesses' appearing before the Committee to give evidence. In February 2012 the Committee reported its strategic recommendations as:

- The commissioning process for the lowest levels of funding be dramatically simplified to enable smaller voluntary organisations to bid more easily
- Additional weighting should be given to any bid, from the voluntary sector or any other sector, that demonstrates potential for developing social capital within the borough
- Whenever possible, the bidding process should not coincide with summer holidays, so that small voluntary groups, which may rely on one person with fundraising skills, are not impeded by the timetable from bidding to provide local services

In March 2012 the focus returned to the operational with another workshop at CVA tutoring CVSA members on using the portal and completing PQQs. Later that month the commissioning strategy was launched at CVA by the Council's cabinet member, Cllr Vidhi Mohan, and a decision was taken to extend the life of the VCS Task & Finish Group to oversee the transition from policy to practice. With work on the Social Value Toolkit now underway, CVA's objective remains one of ensuring that commissioning in Croydon delivered on what the Council leadership predicted would be increased levels of VCS funding in the borough.

“CVA negotiates community interests in response to Local Riot Panel report released in February 2012”

2012/13 and Beyond

Priorities

CVA's Capacity Building plans are to:

- Step up the work in West Croydon through the WCCF and Big Local Trust
- Continue proactive work with local groups to build strong VCS consortia
- Develop further expertise around supporting VCOs through commissioning
- Re-introduce a community accountancy service for back-office finance support
- Fundraise for capacity building staff to work on the ground with VCOs
- Develop the CVA website and other electronic tools to offer an accessible virtual capacity building service
- Build on CVA's training offer for the VCS
- Ensure CVA's charged services remain needs-led, affordable and of high quality
- Leverage more funds to Croydon to support local VCOs

CVA's Community Empowerment plans are to promote the following projects:

- Croydon Family Power: With £899,991 CVA will support 12 Croydon based VCS partners, a Lewisham based VCS partner, our local Council in Croydon, Wave Trust, Roots of Empathy and Nurture Development to explore new ways of using a 'think family approach'. Starting in May 2012 and running for 3 years this project will directly benefit over 3000 people in the borough
- Children, Young People and Families Network (CYP&FN): Having been at the heart of successful partnership bids (including Croydon Family Power) CYP&FN is expanding to help the VCS influence developments in play, early intervention, criminal justice and domestic violence
- Neighbourhood Based Community Development: CVA will lead the Asset Based Community Development element of the Social Recovery Project in North Croydon
- Croydon Xpress: CVA's flagship children and young people's participation service is growing its sessional work team to meet new demand for its expert services
- Health Watch Pathfinder: CVA will work with local partners to develop Croydon's new Healthwatch arrangements from April 2013

CVA's Volunteer Centre plans are to encourage the most professional of volunteers – and also those who don't consider themselves to be volunteers:

- Team Croydon: the Volunteer Centre will sign up as many of the Games Makers and London Ambassadors from the summer Games as possible, making a pool of volunteers in Croydon who are on standby to help out both at times of great opportunity and at times of crisis. Opportunities will come in the form of royal visits, cultural festivals, or similar events and celebrations that give us a chance to showcase all the good things happening in the borough. Team Croydon will also deal with emergencies, be they natural disasters or ones we bring on ourselves. This project will support the people of Croydon to come together in helping to make things right.
- Volunteer Bank: retired executives who still want to make a difference in the community are just one of the groups that the Volunteer Centre will be targeting through its Volunteer Bank – bringing expertise and specialist skills into VCOs that are working with the most vulnerable people in the borough
- Working with marginalised groups: the Volunteer Centre will continue to provide new volunteering opportunities for people looking for a new direction in life - individuals recovering from mental illness; offenders and ex-offenders, including

women entering the criminal justice system for the first time and people acting as mentors

CVA's leadership responsibilities spread across the volunteering, community empowerment and capacity building themes.

The Volunteer Centre's challenge in volunteering is straight-forward – to support more people to volunteer in Croydon. Some people need support in finding the right volunteer opportunities whereas others, referred to now as informal volunteers, define their own roles by taking on responsibilities for themselves. In its leadership role, CVA will seek to maximise the impact that volunteers in Croydon make by promoting the benefits and value of volunteering, raising its profile and coordinating the efforts of all volunteer-involving agencies.

CVA's role in empowering communities works on two levels: it takes volunteering a step further by supporting individuals to join together in finding ways to improve their local area; and it improves the communication channels between local people and the service-providers and decision-makers who impact on their lives. In its leadership role, CVA needs to make Localism work in Croydon by assisting communities to make the most of their assets, helping them to organise effectively and working with the decision-makers on being responsive to community input.

On capacity building and in its role as the “voice of Croydon's VCS”, CVA's main leadership challenge is to enable VCOs to (i) continue in their unique roles as local innovators operating in, for and with communities and (ii) work in partnership with other VCS providers to make their services more accessible to local people and more relevant to their needs. CVA's aim is to ensure that competition drives up performance in the VCS, without driving a wedge between the large and small groups – the ‘commissioning-ready’ and the less well-connected.

In 2012/13 CVA's leadership plans are to:

- Bring all VCOs under the banner of the Croydon Voluntary Sector Alliance to promote VCS services and represent community interests to decision-makers
- Continue to support VCS consortium delivery and “commissioning-readiness” by accessing funding and brokering joined-up working
- Negotiate a new Compact with the local authority and other statutory partners
- Campaign for the VCS expertise in preventative work to figure large in the post-riots investment in Croydon's social recovery

From The Treasurer

Ashok Kumar



CVA's income fell considerably in 2011/12 in the wake of significant local authority cuts that reduced our core funding and affected a range of CVA services. For example, after losing the £400,000 Local Enterprise (LEGI) funding, CVA had to close its flagship social enterprise support and advice service (Comensse). Funding for our Grassroots (small grants), Community Accountancy (financial advice) and New Routes (supporting ex-offenders) projects also came to an end, at the same time as our income from other charitable activities fell by £45,585, itself a consequence of the cuts in funding to many of our service users.

The financial statements opposite show the current state of CVA's finances. In relation to the outflow of £373,495, it should be noted that last year's summarised accounts showed a surplus of £210,926 - a figure that was partly made up of restricted funding for spend in this financial year. The figure in this statement that trustees place greater emphasis on - after taking into account the amount carried over from restricted funding (£110,162) and the large one-off amount spent on property (£87,815) - is the net outflow of £175,022 in unrestricted funding. This figure represents both the impact of the 40% cut in CVA's income in 2010/11 (after which the Board instigated a series of staff redundancies and dipped into its reserves) but also the unforeseen events that overtook the Board's remedial austerity measures.

Knowing that CVA would be operating with reduced funding in 2011/12, the Board's main strategies for balancing its budget were (i) to outsource CVA's finance function and (ii) to let CVA's headquarters on Thornton Heath High Street. A double blow was struck when Charity Business, the company that we selected to deliver our financial services, went out of business in January 2012; and successive prospective tenants for 97 High Street were found to be in breach of contract.

The disruption to CVA's finances actually began before Charity Business folded with the delays in the transition process resulting in us having to reassemble our own finance team, begin back-processing and operate for a time with basic management accounts. After Charity Business went into administration it became necessary to incur yet more expense in order to adopt a new accounting system. Meanwhile, bad luck struck twice at 97 High Street with the first prospective tenants blaming the riots for pulling out of their agreement and the second failing to comply with their leasehold obligations.

At the start of 2011/12 the Board took a strategic decision to make use of its reserves in order to support key services most affected by the cuts. This strategy succeeded both in easing the impact of the cuts on our members and in buying the management team sufficient time to bring in new projects. By the end of 2011/12 as CVA's income streams began to show recovery, the Board was able to set a more balanced budget for the following year (2012/13) based on further 'back-office' reductions and a steady build-up of project activity.

The recovery is far from complete with the challenge being to provide 'more for less' at the same time as coping with sustained pressure on the finances. In this climate, the CVA Board is reconciled to continuing its austerity programme, while doing all that it can to maintain the level and quality of support services that CVA provides to its members.

CVA Summarised Accounts For The Year Ended 31 March 2012

| INCOME & EXPENDITURE | 2011-12 £ | 2010-11 £ |
|---|------------------|------------------|
| Incoming Resources | | |
| Voluntary Income | 457 | 1,564 |
| Investment Income | 2,256 | 2,624 |
| Grants Received | 1,110,898 | 2,165,407 |
| Chargeable charity activities | 250,861 | 296,446 |
| TOTAL INCOME | 1,364,472 | 2,466,041 |
| Outgoing Resources | | |
| Personnel | 1,065,142 | 1,246,018 |
| Accommodation | 250,238 | 242,365 |
| General Office | 114,522 | 121,430 |
| Project Costs | 94,724 | 101,854 |
| Funding Distributed | 210,165 | 545,189 |
| Financial Costs | 2,679 | 2,067 |
| TOTAL EXPENDITURE | 1,737,470 | 2,258,923 |
| Net Incoming/(Outgoing) Resources | (372,998) | 207,118 |
| Realised and unrealised gains/(losses) on investments | (497) | 3,808 |
| Net Movement in Funds | (373,495) | 210,926 |
| Balances Brought Forward 1 April 2011 | 2,658,016 | 2,447,090 |
| Balances Carried Forward 31 March 2012 | 2,284,521 | 2,658,016 |
| Funds represented by | | |
| Fixed Assets and Investments | 1,779,485 | 1,848,806 |
| Bank Deposits & Debtors | 779,008 | 999,693 |
| Creditors | (273,972) | (190,483) |
| NET ASSETS | 2,284,521 | 2,658,016 |
| Funds | | |
| Unrestricted Funds | 391,647 | 567,166 |
| Designated Funds | 1,806,899 | 1,894,713 |
| Restricted Funds | 85,975 | 196,137 |
| TOTAL FUNDS | 2,284,521 | 2,658,016 |

CVA's Financial Statements for 2011-12 were approved by the Trustees on the 17th October 2012. The financial information shown here, which the auditors have confirmed is consistent with the financial statements on which they have given an unqualified opinion. These figures are not statutory accounts, but a summary of information relating to the SOFA and balance sheet. They may not contain sufficient information to allow a full understanding of the financial affairs of Croydon Voluntary Action. For further information, the full Director's financial statements should be consulted. Copies of these can be obtained from: "Croydon Voluntary Action, 82 London Road, Croydon, Surrey CR0 2TB". Tel: 0208 253 7060. The full accounts will be submitted to the Charity Commission before the statutory due date.

Signed on behalf of the Board of Trustees

Ghazala Mirza,
Chairperson

Ashok Kumar,
Honorary Treasurer

In our opinion the summarized financial statements above, consisting of extracts from the SOFA and balance sheet, are consistent with the full accounts.

Wilkins Kennedy
Greytown House, 221/227 High Street, Orpington, Kent BR6 0NZ

CVA receives vital funding from Croydon Council towards its infrastructure costs and supplements this with fee income and overhead charges to projects. This enables CVA to attract funding from outside the borough to deliver new projects and to provide general funding for the rest of Croydon's VCS. CVA needs to demonstrate to new and existing funders that it is offering value for money and it does this by providing evidence of high quality services and sound financial management. CVA's funders should never have reason to doubt that their money is being properly, effectively and efficiently managed.

CVA thanks its funders for contributing to the success of our projects:

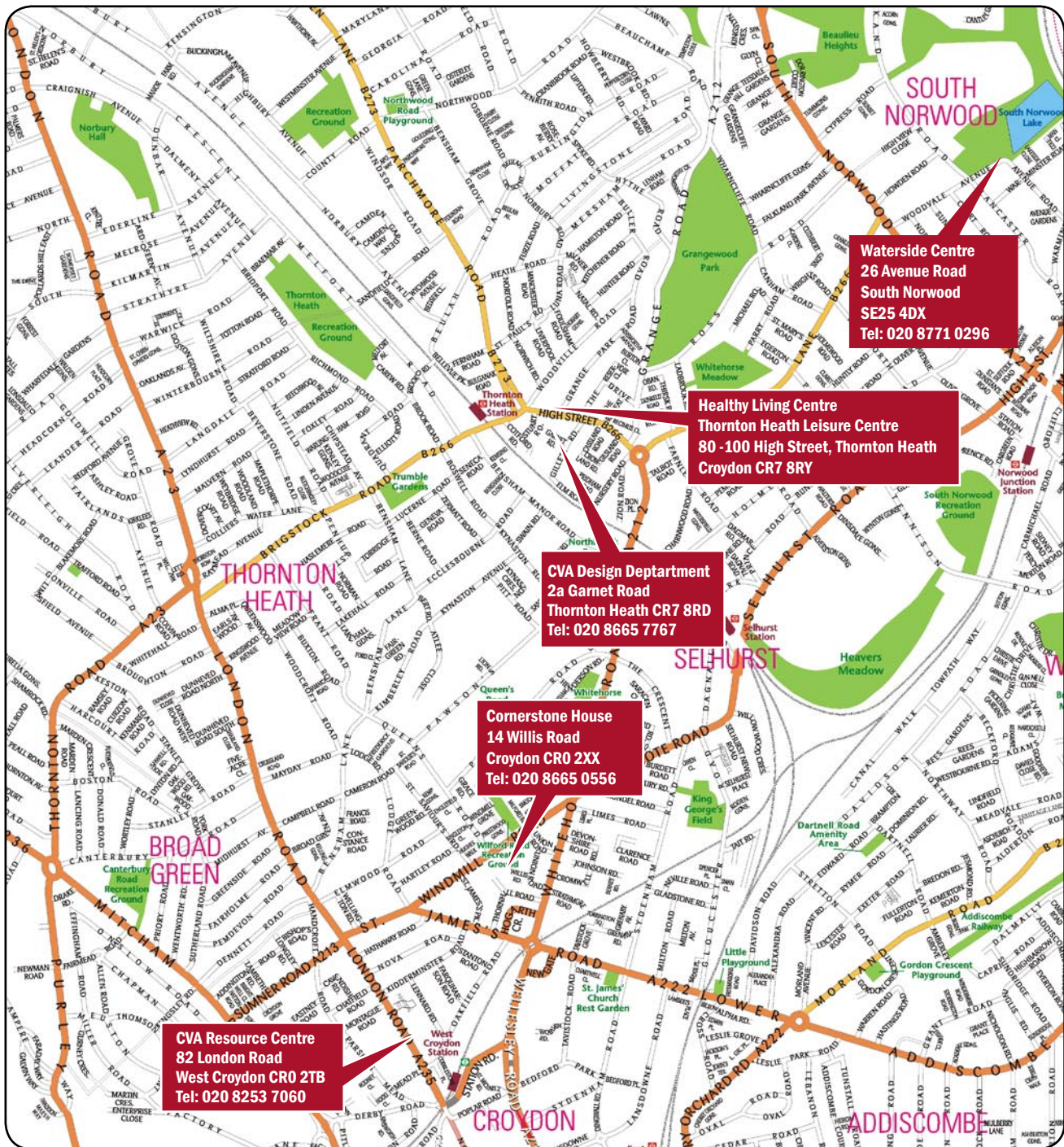


- **Big Lottery** - £166,099 towards Croydon Basis Project and £10,000 towards the Improving Futures Project
- **City Bridge Trust** - £26,585 for the Good Practice project with £12,710 through Merton (lead agency) and £13,875 from Bromley for the secondment of CVA's Good Practice worker.
- **Community Development Foundation and The Evening Standard** - £49,923 with £47,379 distributed to external projects as small grants
- **Croydon Council** - £220,000 towards Stronger Communities Projects; £11,000 towards Faiths Together; £47,000 towards Children and Young People's Network; £167,490 towards the Link and £49,000 towards the Older People's Network
- **Croydon PCT** - £25,000 towards the Health Champions project
- **Government Office for Civil Society** - £22,000 towards the Transforming Local Infrastructure Project
- **London Councils** - £34,158 for 'Accountability', the multi-borough Community Accountancy project (£21,144 of the funding was distributed to CVA's partners in Bromley, Merton, Lambeth and Sutton)
- **London Probation** - £21,000 towards the Women's Based Court Worker
- **South London & Maudsley Trust (SLAM)** - £23,279 towards the Supported Volunteering Project

During 2011-12 CVA's investments depreciated in value from £50,095 to £48,999 and income from the shares was £1,816 (2011-£2,257).

The Board seeks to achieve a level of free reserves that is equivalent to three months' expenditure. Based on its latest budget, three months of expenditure gives CVA a target of £422,961, with the level of free reserves at 31 March 2012 standing at £391,647. The Board will continue to review the reserves policy on an annual basis.

How to Contact Us



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CVA Resource Centre
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Registered Charity No. 1060157
 Company Limited by Guarantee No. 3271298
 Registered in England & Wales
 Registered for VAT No. 881 8821 85
 Presidents: The Mayor & Mayoress of Croydon
 Member of: the National Association of Councils for Voluntary Service



croydonvoluntaryaction
celebrating 100 years

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