

VOLUNTARY SUPPORT NORTH SURREY REPORT FOR SURREY HEATH BOROUGH COUNCIL

5 September 2023

WHO ARE WE AND WHAT DO WE DO

Voluntary Support North Surrey (VSNS) is the Council of Voluntary Service for Surrey Heath. It is a registered charity whose main purpose is to improve the lives of residents in the Borough. To do this, VSNS:

- works with charities so that there is a strong and vibrant voluntary sector offering a wide variety of voluntary services;
- enables charities in turn to work with those most at risk of social exclusion to enable individuals to contribute to public life and the development of their communities;
- attracts funding which is not available to the public sector;
- builds third sector capacity in the Borough, by supporting charities with governance, charity commission compliance, fundraising, organisational management and demonstrating impact and social value; and
- recruits volunteers on behalf of the sector and matches them to local need.

In Surrey Heath VSNS supports approximately 450 charities.

VSNS FUNDING

Core: of the £30,000 granted by SHBC for VSNS;

- £10,000 goes to VSNS core funds
- £10,000 is returned to the Council for our office rental costs at the Ian Goodchild Centre.
- £10,000 is for project funding (Befriending, Time 2 Talk)

For the year 2022/2023 VSNS has been able to use its £10,000 of available core funds to bring £200,000 into Surrey Heath (see below) meaning that the return on core funding received from the Council in the amount of £20,000 has been ten-fold.

VSNS has had to adapt to a one-third cut in core funding by SHBC for the current year. Core funding is fundamental to the success of VSNS as it pays for the necessary resources used to generate project funds. VSNS was initially informed that it would lose its funding in its entirety and the Board and lobbied councillors for a change of decision. An impact statement on the loss of funding was only requested after an initial decision to de-fund VSNS completely was taken. Customer facing work had to be halted to allow staff to work on the statement. The threat to funding also had a demotivating effect on staff who see firsthand the impact of VSNS's work on Borough residents.

The Board was forced to make the difficult decision of using Surrey Heath Community Fund monies to cover the loss in income, meaning that less funding was available for Surrey Heath charities. This is not a solution that can be repeated: any future cuts will necessitate a reduction of VSNS's activities in the Borough.

Project: VSNS successfully brings external funds from county and national grants into the Borough. Over the last twelve months VSNS has successfully bid for project funds to benefit residents in the order of £156,000 with a further £45,000 pending.

Project Funding source	Purpose	Amount
The National Lottery	Embedded capacity building for local groups	£ 34,000
Better Care Fund	Supporting Surrey Heath voluntary sector organisations	£ 39,000
Integrated Care Board (ICB) Surrey Heartlands	Time 2 Talk befriending project	£ 25,000
SPARKS	Funds we allocate to voluntary groups for SCC	£ 20,000
Time 2 Change	Promoting youth volunteering in Surrey Heath	£ 15,000
STEP	Supporting Ukrainian refugees to find employment or volunteering opportunities	£ 15,000
NAVCA	Supporting Ukrainian people	£ 5,000
Community Foundation	Post-Covid funds	£ 3,000

In addition to the project funds listed above – through VSNS’s tripartite agreement with SHBC, Surrey County Council (SCC) and the ICB, VSNS attracted a further income of £43,000 into Surrey Heath to provide core support to some 450 local charities.

SOCIAL VALUE

The annual social value of VSNS in Surrey Heath is estimated at £960,000. This is calculated as follows:

- Direct funding - £180,000
- In-direct funding to other charities - £300,000 (assuming 10,000 per organisation assisted)
- Befriending - £72,000
- Volunteering - £150,000
- Corporate Volunteering - £8,000
- Lakeside Covid Volunteers - £200,000
- Corporate Giving - £20,000
- Training - £32,000

When set against annual core funding of £20,000 this gives a pound-for-pound multiplier of 1:48.

This is achieved through:

Fundraising Support: a sizeable proportion of local groups are thriving due to the regular and thorough support offered by VSNS around raising funds including groups such as the Citizen’s Advice Bureau and Hope Hub. VSNS has worked with many of the groups since their inception and their impact for residents as a result of VSNS support would be difficult to measure in its totality. We have been instrumental over the years in establishing many charities that have previously or now deliver core services in Surrey Heath including The Hope Hub, CSSEF, Alzheimer’s Café, Sparklers, Field of Gold, and the Memory Café. The saving

to Health alone is in the £100,000s in prevention and intervention services provided. A specialist funding advisor offers high quality free training in Application Writing, Digital Fundraising and Legacies.

In the last year VSNS administered in the region of £30,000 to local groups through Sparks funds (money originating from SCC) or the VSNS Community Funds helping a dozen local groups to access additional funding. Sparks funding is a grant programme that cover the twenty-one areas of focus defined by the Health and Wellbeing strategy, within Surrey Heath this is linked to the Old Dean, whereby the grants (indicated value of £33,000) can galvanise community action and look to support important activities, such as Club Dean.

VSNS has assisted an additional thirty groups with one-to-one funding initiative - whether seed or longer-term funds - and helped to identify suitable grants and trusts using funding software and tools which are used on a one-to-one basis to help groups identify suitable funding options and get advice on fundraising strategies and plans. VSNS's training outlines the importance of research and a wholistic approach to raising funds. We offer the groups an application review prior to submitting a bid or application and groups with inexperienced fundraisers or limited capacity find this invaluable. The importance of simple language and a demonstration of impact are key.

A bi-monthly fundraising newsletter (in addition to the general newsletter) identifies new funds and deadlines and gives local fundraisers tips and motivation when seeking funds. Our community of support for fundraisers is a valuable network to identify and access a range of funding streams using a range of mediums (e.g., e-bulletins), supporting and facilitating collaboration where this approach is deemed most appropriate. The charity is adept at highlighting new funds and identifying short term opportunities for its groups, applying, a targeted approach to individual groups.

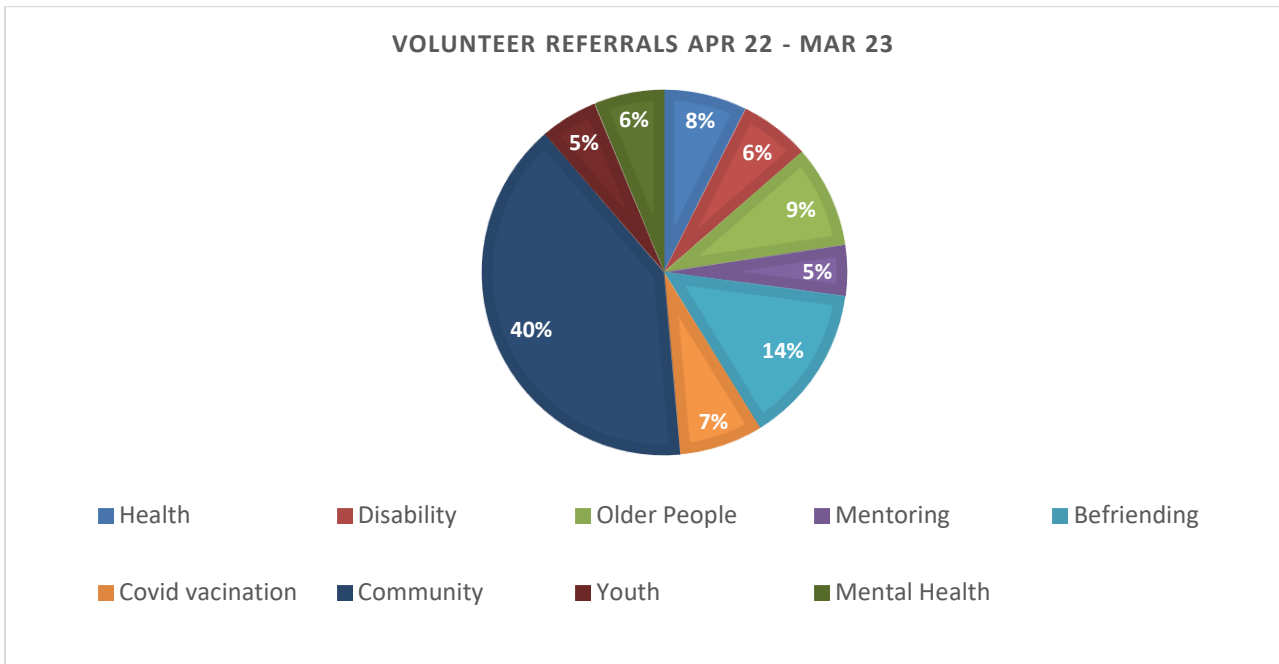
VSNS has recently recruited a staff member who will write applications on behalf of groups that do not have the capacity and we expect that this will further impact the success and growth of voluntary organisations in the Borough (funded by The National Lottery).

Befriending: Time to Talk is a successful and reliable befriending scheme which recruits, trains, manages, and develops up to fifty volunteers at any given time. Since its inception, upwards of two hundred lonely, vulnerable, and isolated Borough residents have benefitted from the offering. VSNS remained agile and supportive throughout the Covid pandemic and diligently and respectfully dealt with safeguarding issues that we identified. We have saved lives and kept people well supporting the health prevention agenda. There is always a small waiting list for this service, which we do not broadly advertise. Referrals typically come via health and social prescribers.

The National Lottery project: in October 2022 VSNS entered into an agreement with the Fund to strengthen support for identified local groups, most needed by their communities, and most impacted by the Covid epidemic. These funds allow VSNS to allocate individuals from its team to sit alongside twenty groups per year and assist them with their work. The impact is such that they become unstuck - often groups do not thrive because of limitations in skills and capacity to make things happen or progress plans. By planting someone firmly in the group VSNS takes away the burden of daily activities enabling the organisation to concentrate on longer terms strategies. This initiative is the first of its kind for The National Lottery and they are hoping to use this pilot to springboard other such initiatives. Worth £450,000 over

three years, the project and its funds are split between the three Boroughs of Surrey Heath, Runnymede and Spelthorne, with 7 organisations engaged so far.

Volunteering Support: in 2022/2023 VSNS referred 177 volunteers to roles in Surrey Heath:



VSNS continued to support the vaccination centre at Lakeside with volunteers and volunteer scheduling up until May 2023 and with resources from within our team. Between 1st April 2021 and 31st March 2022, VSNS coordinated 5,011 volunteer shifts at Lakeside, totalling 20,044 hours, which saved the NHS an estimated £280,616.

Corporate Engagement and Volunteering: in the last year VSNS placed 818 volunteers in ninety-four corporate events, collected and administered 2,500 easter eggs and £10,500 worth of Christmas gifts which is a ten-fold increase since the inception of The Angel Tree project. VSNS administered £50,000 in financial gifts on behalf of twenty-five corporates, adding four new corporate partners during the year, and launched a newsletter specifically for corporates.

A total of seventy volunteers have been involved in corporate or employee volunteering support in Surrey Heath between April 2022 and March 2023. The businesses involved in delivering this volunteering were Enterprise, Milestone infrastructure, SCJ, Fordway, Hyster Yale, Overbury and Jagermeister.

Mental Health Forum: managed by VSNS and comprising more than thirty groups is important at a time when the country is experiencing a national mental health crisis. The Forum ensures *inter alia* that gaps in service provision are identified and met, guides best practice, and helps to prioritise and optimise invaluable resources.

Levelling-up: VSNS is a member of the Old Dean Community Group committee and is actively involved in event planning, finding volunteers and support for the Old Dean. VSNS also collaborates directly with councillors on alleviating poverty in Surrey Heath.

Training for capacity building: local groups benefit from VSNS learning opportunities that support the personal and professional development of their workforce while trustees are supported to develop into high quality leaders through VSNS training, one to one meetings and trustee networking opportunities.

In the last year VSNS delivered sixteen free training courses for 128 Surrey Heath participants allowing VSNS to connect more closely with the groups it supports and enabling a window into where they may need additional support. Courses included;

- Get Started on social media
- Spotlight in funding x 3
- Introduction to social media
- First Aid Training x 2
- First Steps to Successful volunteer management
- Volunteer and the Law
- Charity Law for Trustees
- Charity Networking Event x 3
- Volunteer managers forum
- Grants and Trusts Application workshop x 3

Surrey VCSE Alliance: VSNS's role as a leader in the local VCSE Alliance for both Surrey Heartlands and the Frimley System gives the charity the ability to influence policies, plans and practices that have an impact on local organisations and beneficiaries. Specifically, by attending the VCSE alliance and partner meetings VSNS supported groups are better informed about the potential impact of emerging policies, plans and practices on their organisations and beneficiaries.

Networking events: VSNS has continued to hold quarterly networking events that were each attended by as many as ninety groups and space is now offered on a first-come first-served basis. Speakers are sourced from Councils, funders and key partners such as The National Lottery.

Volunteer awards: VSNS also deliver an annual volunteer award ceremony, supported by the Surrey Heath Mayor, where over one hundred local Surrey Heath volunteers attend to receive numerous awards to acknowledge their advocacy and help to others in our community. This type of annual event promotes the philanthropic reach that recognises the existing volunteers and can work to draw in new recruits, underpinning the local volunteers who deliver so many frontline services to help support those who are amongst the most vulnerable. The 2022 awards, organised by VSNS, were held in December at Pine Ridge Golf Club with Helen Whitcroft, in attendance.

Re-Brand: VSNS has recently rebranded and launched a new website in order to stay relevant and attract a younger audience. This work has been done in-house utilising the skills of a Ukrainian employee and communications specialist so spend has been kept to a minimum. Reaction to the new look has been very positive.

REQUESTS TO THE COUNCIL

VSNS – its Board and staff – stands ready to engage with any councillor who wishes to know more about its work and, in particular, to provide links to any organisations or residents who may benefit from its work. VSNS asks that any consideration of future changes to its funding be managed as a dialogue and that the Council consider the introduction of multi-year funding agreements to enable VSNS to be able to plan its work on the basis of predictable financing.