

Croydon Council

# Council Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector Strategy 2019-2023

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## Purpose of this strategy

The purpose of this strategy is primarily to inform the council's engagement with the voluntary and community sector (VCS) in Croydon and, in addition, to align how partner organisations in Croydon work jointly to support and develop the sector.

Through it, we are seeking to set out how we want to work in partnership with the VCS. The strategy has been informed by research and engagement across the sector and by the priorities of the council and its partnerships.

We want to see a thriving VCS, with improved community cohesion and the foundations of wellbeing and resilient, empowered, supportive communities. We will play our part to support the sector. However, this is not a strategy for the VCS; the sector is an equal and self-determining partner. But the priority outcomes set out here provide an open and honest framework for prioritising our support and resources for working in partnership with the VCS to deliver for Croydon.

## 1. Foreword

Croydon's voluntary and community sector is one for other parts of London and the UK to envy. Our borough benefits from a wonderfully diverse voluntary and community sector that makes a vital contribution to Croydon. More than a third of residents undertake some form of volunteering which represents a huge contribution to society and the local economy.

We value our rich and vibrant culture, which contributes significantly to our success. It should be no surprise that there are multiple references throughout the council's Corporate Plan to working with the voluntary and community sector. We will only be able to achieve the ambitious objectives that we have set out in the Corporate Plan by working together on an equal basis with our partners, especially the voluntary and community sector.

The voluntary sector is at work across all public services and beyond. I have had the pleasure of meeting staff, volunteers and service users across the sector. I have seen first-hand the positive impact that the work of charities, community groups, faith organisations and many others have on the lives of our residents. Often it is our most vulnerable residents who benefit the most and it is critical, therefore, that we continue to support the sector. This support includes a commitment not to reduce the overall financial contribution that the council makes to the sector, despite the continued reductions in funding that we face. Our support, however, will extend beyond grants and contracts, with advice, guidance and a commitment to work together for the benefit of Croydon.

There is, however, need for change. The continued reduction in government funding for local government shows no sign of ending. It is essential that the council secures the best value for money from our investment in the sector. We need to work with our partners such as health to align our approaches with the VCS to ensure the delivery of our joint plans, such as the Health and Care Transformation Plan, and to make best use of our resources for the people of Croydon. We need the voluntary and community sector to help us implement a different service model, focused on place based prevention, with services tailored to local needs to make them more effective.

Through this strategy we have sought to outline how we want to work with the sector in future and we welcome partners who work with the VCS in this way. The strategy is not about telling the sector how to operate – it is not our place to do so, and the sector is far too diverse and constantly evolving for one document to do this anyway. Instead, this framework seeks to outline the positive way in which we want to work with the sector, for the benefit for our residents and communities across Croydon.

Councillor Hamida Ali

**Cabinet Member for Safer Croydon and Communities**

## 2. The Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) in Croydon

### Who are the VCS?

The VCS is a fundamental part of Croydon. It is a key partner in delivering services and support to our residents. The VCS in Croydon is made up of a diverse range of socially driven, not-for profit, voluntary and community groups that have a unique role in supporting the borough at a neighbourhood or community level. Groups differ greatly in their size, area of operation and the users their services reach, but when referring to the VCS, this includes organisations such as:-

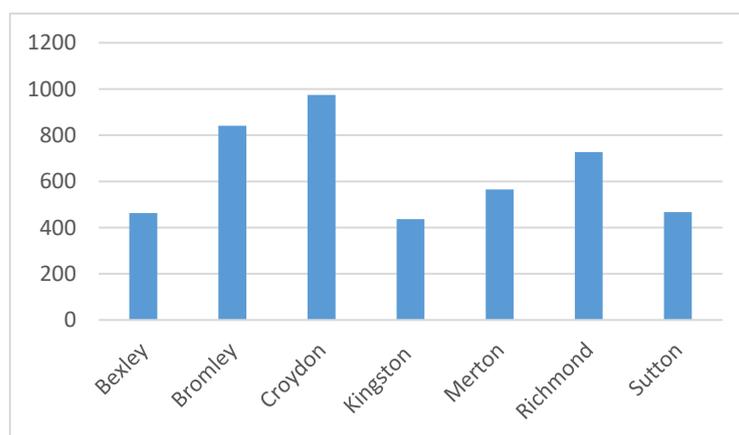
- Community associations
- Co-operatives
- Faith organisations
- Grant making trusts
- School/parent groups
- Tenants and residents' groups
- Sports, environmental, arts and heritage organisations
- Community groups
- 'Friends of' Groups
- Housing Associations
- Registered charities
- Charitable Incorporated Organisations
- Social enterprises
- Non-constituted groups of residents working together

We value a strong, independent VCS. It has developed in areas that statutory organisations have not reached. Its responsiveness to local need is a great strength. These are qualities that we hope to benefit from by working more closely with the sector in future.

### The size of the VCS

Data from 2016/17 suggests that the VCS in Croydon is the largest in outer South London, based on the number of registered charities operating in borough (see Chart 1).

**Chart 1: Number of registered charities in outer South London boroughs**



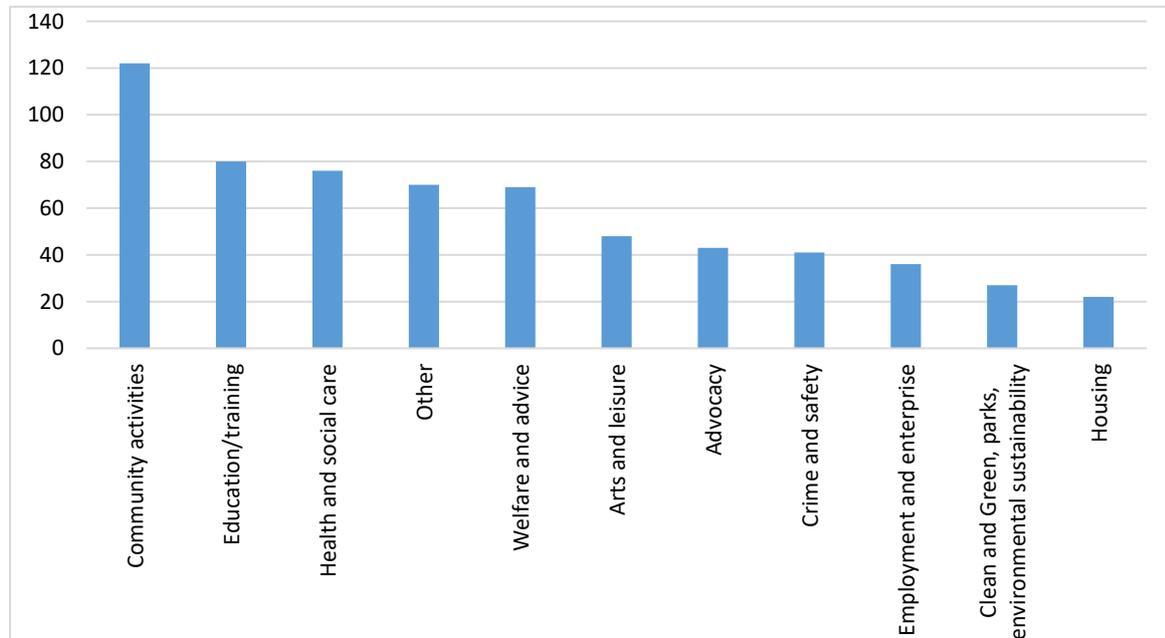
Data produced by National Council for Voluntary Organisations in conjunction with South London CVS Partnership and Croydon Voluntary Action based on Charity Commission data: registered charities operating in borough (excludes national and regional charities based outside each borough but operating services within it): <https://data.ncvo.org.uk/areas/croydon/intro>

We recognise that this is only a partial picture as it only considers registered charities; 35% of VCS organisations responding to the council's recent survey of the sector stated that they

were not registered. Nor does it include the many charities that are based outside Croydon but operate services within the borough.

VCS organisations provide a broad range of services and activities addressing a variety of needs in the borough, as evidenced by respondents to our survey (see Chart 2 below).

**Chart 2: Service sectors supported by VCS providers**



The size of organisations varies considerably. Among respondents to our survey, 37% had an annual turnover of less than £10,000, 41% had a turnover of between £10,000 and £249,000 a year, and 22% had an annual turnover of £250,000 and over.

### The importance of the VCS to Volunteering in Croydon

Whilst some VCS organisations will employ staff, most are reliant on volunteers, at least in part. 66% of respondents to our survey solely or mainly used volunteers. Only 7% did not rely on them at all. In recent years Croydon has benefited from an increase in volunteering levels. In the 3 years to 2015/16 (the most recent data available), the DCMS survey confirmed that 36% of people in Croydon had volunteered in the previous 12 months. This was the third highest level of volunteering in London, and an increase from 20% in 2011/12. Despite the positive trend in the rates of those undertaking volunteering, our engagement showed clearly that the need for more volunteers who were prepared to commit time regularly and reliably is one of the major challenges facing VCS groups in Croydon.

There are significant benefits to individuals who volunteer in terms of their sense of wellbeing and belonging, sense of purpose, and their health and that of their families. It can provide a route into work too. In addition, volunteering and the whole VCS promotes community cohesion in particular in a time and place where traditional family bonds and support are increasingly absent.

### How we work in partnership with the VCS

The council is a strong contributor to the VCS in Croydon, providing significant funding and staff support through various teams, our commissioning and procurement function and the One Croydon partnership. We also fund infrastructure organisations to deliver specialist support to the VCS. However, we also recognise that this support has met the needs of a relatively small proportion of the VCS, and that we need to reach and support more.

The council provides in excess of £4m in financial support to the VCS. Some of this is provided directly through the Community Fund, which delivers on our Corporate Plan outcomes and supports delivery of the recommendations made by Croydon's Opportunities and Fairness Commission; the Prevention Fund that funds support and activities to prevent social isolation and people requiring specialist support; and Community Small Grants. It also provides support indirectly through advice, guidance and the allocation of premises and associated subsidies, such as affordable rentals, rent subsidies and discretionary business rates relief. There is substantial multi-million pound additional investment that the VCS accesses through various commissioning programmes as part of our supply chain, for example delivering services for children and adults.

Our partners also provide substantial support: Croydon Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) provided funding totalling £4.7m in 2018/19, including its contribution to the One Croydon Alliance and the Alliance's Local Voluntary Partnerships with the VCS.

The different support mechanisms have their own focus and priorities but we will work in unison to ensure there is a robust offer to VCS organisations of all sizes.

### 3. Findings from the VCS consultation

#### Engagement Process

This strategy has been informed by strong evidence and engagement with a range of VCS organisations across Croydon. The council conducted a survey between 7 December 2018 and 8 February 2019 to seek feedback on a range of issues:

- Challenges and opportunities
- Support for the VCS
- Service sector and beneficiaries
- The size of VCS organisations
- Financial matters
- Geographical area of operation

In total, 216 responses were received.

In addition, meetings were held with the main infrastructure organisations in Croydon and engagement events were held on the 22 January 2019 and 5 February 2019, attended by a total of 113 representatives from VCS organisations and groups, both large and small. The aim of these events was to bring people together to look more extensively at the issues and feedback raised in the survey in small group discussions.

The main observations and recommendations made by VCS respondents are set out below.

#### Strengths of the Sector

Croydon benefits from a strong VCS which makes a vital contribution to the borough and provides support for some of Croydon's most vulnerable residents. The sector puts users at the heart of its work, supporting community cohesion, empowerment and resilience. Passionate and dedicated volunteers are the lifeblood of the sector.

VCS groups and organisations are able to reach places and people that statutory agencies often cannot and have a greater ability to adapt quickly to the evolving needs of the community. Their specialist knowledge and rich understanding of local communities, along with networks that have been developed over many years, are vital in delivering the prevention and early intervention that will address the complex needs of residents. In recent years, the sector has demonstrated its resilience in the face of reducing funding and come together in times of greatest need.

#### Issues raised by the Sector

Respondents to our survey also indicated where they thought some VCS organisations needed to improve. Some are unaware of funding available or lack bid writing and fundraising skills. Almost a fifth of respondents relied on one source of funding. Many lacked awareness or lacked the skills for generating income, though for some organisations this was not an option. They had difficulty in recruiting or retaining staff due to the low level of pay that they could offer. Some linked this to a concern about their ability to respond to increasing levels of demand.

With their higher reliance on volunteers, some smaller organisations were concerned about their ability to recruit and capacity to train volunteers. To this was added concern about the

difficulty of attracting trustees with the skills that they needed to ensure adequate governance.

It was felt that there was a lot of competition among VCS organisations for funding and increasing user numbers and that this could make them less inclined to collaborate. It was felt that there was scope for developing stronger partnerships and that this could strengthen bids. The lack of awareness of what services other VCS organisations provided limited opportunities for partnership as well as increasing the risk of duplication.

### Funding

This was identified as the biggest challenge facing VCS groups in Croydon. In the current financial environment, all VCS groups are having to explore different sources of revenue in order to sustain delivery of services.

It was a particular concern for smaller VCS groups and organisations that lack capacity to make bids and feel unable to compete with larger organisations that have more resources. Rejection often discouraged small organisations from applying; they would benefit from more support.

A key strength of the sector is to bring funding into Croydon for the benefit of our residents and communities. Alternative funding sources are available including Government programmes, the Greater London Authority, the National Lottery and charitable trusts. Maximising this alternative funding for the benefit of Croydon is critical

Whilst there was widespread support for collaborative bidding in theory, many expressed a concern that a lack of funding turned potential collaborators into competitors and this undermined attempts to work together. The council could better support collaboration through network events and allowing more time for VCS groups to come together and foster partnerships and consortiums. Training, mentoring and toolkits on how groups can develop and maintain effective partnerships would also be beneficial.

There is a lack of awareness in the sector about funding and support that is available. It was suggested that the council could update the VCS more effectively and regularly with information on different funding streams, amounts available, guidance and support and deadlines so that every organisation could have an equal opportunity to know what funding is available.

Information about organisations already receiving funding, where they are delivering services and who is benefitting from them, could help to identify gaps in the provision for certain needs and localities. This could help to avoid duplication in the sector.

### Premises

Availability of affordable premises and space for events was a major challenge for the VCS. It was suggested that a directory of available venues would be useful, allowing VCS groups to seek premises and venues for events. In order to increase the pool of premises available,

the council could encourage owners of long-term empty properties to offer them to VCS organisations for temporary use.

There was a desire for greater transparency and clearer guidelines about how and why organisations are allocated council premises or paid rent subsidy or Discretionary Rate Relief (DRR), when many others do not receive such support. The view was that support is allocated on a historical basis, rather than through a transparent process that offers all organisations an equal opportunity to apply.

There should be more monitoring of performance and usage of allocated premises and a mechanism for ending leases that are not being used appropriately.

### Volunteers

Despite data showing a high volunteering rate in Croydon, one of the largest challenges facing VCS groups and organisations is a lack of regular volunteers, putting a large strain on the organisations' ability to deliver services.

There was a need for a larger pool of volunteers and an improved offer from the sector to attract volunteers of all ages at different stages of life. Supporting organisations to recruit volunteers and match them with opportunities based on their interests and capabilities was therefore essential for a strong and sustainable VCS. Most VCS groups, particularly smaller ones, said they do not have the capacity to train volunteers and require support from the council or infrastructure groups.

### Infrastructure Support

The survey revealed that VCS groups and organisations received a range of support from infrastructure organisations. Most commonly, this included funding/commissioning information, training, developing consortiums and developing funding bids. Overall, 51% of respondents stated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the support they receive from infrastructure groups and the council. Only 15% were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

However, 72% of respondents to the survey stated that they had unmet support needs.

Further support needs were identified as:

- Advice, information and training
- Sustainable funding, paid promptly, with sufficient notice of decisions
- Affordable premises
- Capacity building / business planning
- Help with bid writing, fundraising, income generation and brokering sponsorship
- Marketing, IT, social media, finance, advice and guidance
- Sharing best practice, skills and knowledge.
- Partnership development, facilitation of collaboration.
- Recruitment and training of volunteers
- A peer review process.
- Up to date contacts of individuals who could provide support or information and share best practice.

VCS participants in engagement events said that there is insufficient support available, while others said that there was not enough publicity, preventing them from taking up support that did exist. The feedback stated that the role of infrastructure organisations needs to be more clearly defined and information about how to receive support should be made more accessible to VCS groups. It was felt that the responsibility to ensure this support is actually delivered should fall on the council.

There was also a perceived lack of knowledge about which VCS organisations are delivering what services, increasing the risk of duplication and lessening the opportunities for partnerships. This also makes it difficult for the public to know what is available. It was suggested that there is a need for significant asset mapping across the sector to support a more joined up approach.

### Opportunities for the VCS

Whilst we recognise that the VCS, like the public sector, faces many challenges, there are opportunities too. Many of these were identified by respondents to our survey:

- Collaboration with other VCS organisations
- Involving the community and service users
- The delivery of statutory services through VCS and the funding that goes with it
- Work on employment and skills
- Partnership work with the council and Croydon CCG
- Social prescribing and Local Voluntary Partnerships, the Delivery Fund to support them and potential income from adults on direct payments who can purchase services
- The high volunteering rate in Croydon and the possibility of tapping this potential source of support
- Locality meetings offering the opportunity of gaining knowledge of local provision and good practice and intelligence on local demand.
- Generating income through selling services, letting premises and crowd funding.
- Cross-borough delivery
- Tapping support that could be brought to the VCS through Corporate Social Responsibility.
- The income, business and people being brought into Central Croydon through regeneration.
- Sharing back office functions and premises to cut costs – and creating opportunities for collaboration.

### Role of the Council

The survey and feedback in engagement events suggested that the council should play a wide role in supporting the VCS sector as an equal partner:

- Facilitating collaboration and partnership, identifying useful contacts / connections
- Promoting the work, services and achievements of the VCS
- Providing access to space and premises that are affordable
- Providing information and signposting
- Recognising the importance and value of the VCS

- Funding
- Capacity building, allowing VCS to draw on advice and expertise
- Proportionate monitoring – with constructive feedback
- Challenging VCS organisations where the governance or services are poorly delivered and managed, or possibly duplicated.

### Our joint challenge

We have said that our aim is not to reduce the overall funding that the council gives to the VCS. We recognise that demand will continue to rise. So how to meet increasing demand when resources do not keep pace with it? It is not for us to tell VCS organisations how to respond, but we have implemented significant change to manage this, such as restructuring, increasing our efficiency, and transforming the way we work.

Some VCS organisations have been undergoing a similar transformation too, and some of the opportunities they listed (set out above) support this process. Other organisations have not. It has been, and will continue to be, a continuous process of change and re-evaluation. We will want to ensure that infrastructure support is available to provide access to guidance and good practice where VCS organisations want it.

The transformation we have done so far is not enough to enable us to meet our challenge. This strategy supports the next phase of change in the way we work. Partnership with the VCS is vital to unlock the power of individuals and communities, to prevent needs from arising, to enable necessary interventions to happen as early as possible. The feedback from VCS groups and organisations has informed the development of our strategy. However, as our funding and resources are outstripped by the demands we face, we have not been able to adopt all recommendations. We have had to make choices about where to focus our resources and will need to continue making such choices in future.

## 4. Why the VCS is an important partner

### Our Corporate Plan priorities

Croydon Council adopted a new Corporate Plan in October 2018. This plan sets out the council's promises to residents, business and partners across nine priority themes:

1. People live long, healthy, happy and independent lives
2. Our children and young people thrive and reach their full potential
3. Good, decent homes, affordable to all
4. Everyone feels safer in their street, neighbourhood and home
5. A cleaner and more sustainable environment
6. Everybody has the opportunity to work and build their career
7. Business moves here and invests, our existing businesses grow
8. An excellent transport network that is safe, reliable and accessible to all
9. We value the arts, culture, sports and activities

We can only deliver against these ambitious priorities by working with our partners, including the VCS and the community itself. Partnership work through the One Croydon Alliance and through our Local Strategic Partnership, including the Health and Well Being Board, will help to deliver many of these priorities. In particular, the Health and Wellbeing Strategy sets out how we will improve health and wellbeing in Croydon. Croydon's Health and Care Transformation Plan sets out the priorities for transforming our models of care and services to do that.

As well as One Croydon Alliance, other examples of partnerships already in place include Gateway, Don't Mess with Croydon, Choose your Future, Live Well Croydon and Community Connect/Food Stop. Work with our partners will help to reduce inequalities between people and places, ensuring that every resident and community has the opportunity to improve their health, happiness and independence. It will also lead to greater community cohesion, a sense of belonging and purpose and thus a greater sense of wellbeing and better mental health. The Corporate Plan commits to safeguard the most vulnerable Croydon residents and ensure that everyone has an equal chance of benefitting from the opportunities that living and working in this borough have to offer.

## How we want to work with the VCS and other partners

In order to achieve these priority outcomes, the council has developed an operating model with six themes, which collectively represent the way we will deliver services in partnership.



Whether it's integrating services, prevention and proactive care, or organising our services around localities, the driving force is to radically transform the way we work, ensuring that we respond to the needs and aspirations of Croydon's residents and communities. As council funding continues to decline while the demand for services becomes greater and more complex, we need to develop a joint approach with our partners to meet these objectives.

We understand, endorse and support the self-determination of the VCS sector. This strategy is not about telling VCS organisations and groups what to do. Its focus is on setting out how we can work together. We know that the sector has developed in areas that statutory organisations have not reached. We also know that VCS organisations bring their own expertise and desire to innovate. Indeed we want the VCS to help us to radically transform the way we work. The VCS will have a significant role in supporting both our priorities and our operating model, considering that VCS groups deliver services, support and advice that cut across different areas. The sector can also leverage additional external investment into the borough. Given the strength of the sector, we believe it is already well equipped to achieve this, given there is already a strong focus on prevention, locality, and resident-centred working amongst VCS groups.

To achieve our ambitious goals, we recognise the importance of collaboration, community-based networks and formal partnerships between the council, other public services, business and the VCS. These ways of working will be crucial in achieving a seamless system of information, engagement and service delivery in Croydon. We will also seek to foster

collaboration and partnerships between VCS groups/organisations in supporting a range of priorities, encouraging and supporting new entrants to the sector.

#### One Croydon Alliance: a partnership between statutory and VCS organisations

One Croydon Alliance is a good example of a partnership with statutory and VCS organisations. Formed in April 2017, it includes Age UK Croydon as an equal partner of our One Croydon Transformation Board. The focus to date has been designing and implementing integrated health and care services to support older people and those with complex needs and long term conditions to be as independent and healthy as possible; and providing seamless care at times of need, such as before, during and after an admission to hospital. Our Corporate Plan and our One Croydon Health and Transformation Care Plan commit us to further transformation and integration of health and social care services for our whole population. This means that we will need to engage the wider support of the VCS to focus on proactive interventions and supporting resilience to prevent increasing need for all ages and types of need. As we progress we will also consider how membership of the Alliance partnership needs to develop and the commercial structures and infrastructure support required to deliver new models of care.

At the heart of our progress towards integration is a focus on prevention and proactive care. We want to support local people before things become a problem and the VCS is well placed, rooted as it is in local communities, to be part of how we identify and support people early on. Unlocking the power of individuals and communities will help to keep people well and prevent escalating need in a number of ways. People stay fit and healthy for longer when they are connected with their neighbours and communities. Personalising care and using community-led, strengths and asset-based approaches will mean people have choice and control over the way their care is planned and delivered. A strong, vibrant VCS sector working with statutory services is an essential partnership in this new way of working.

The One Croydon's Integrated Community Networks model of care is being developed further around six GP networks, with wider council services delivered around its three localities (see the box below). Levels of need, types of care required and affordability will determine whether services should be delivered at a locality level, across localities or borough-wide. We will aim to fully integrate health and care services and develop a multi-skilled workforce that can work across professional boundaries. The model therefore includes an ambition to develop capacity and co-ordination of access to the VCS, so that people, particularly those with complex health and care needs, can be supported well with their non-medical issues, or those issues that exacerbate or cause long term conditions. The model of care design includes the development of Local Voluntary Partnerships to provide the support and coherence of access and information. One Croydon has been co-designing the Local Voluntary Partnerships model with the VCS and this work has helped to develop a platform for funding decisions to support additional direct local delivery or support and activity for Croydon residents. NHS funded social prescribing and Croydon's 'Social P' programme work in tandem with this, unlocking community resources and assets and

working with General Practice to provide support and activity for people with their social and emotional needs.

#### A Locality way of working: North Croydon

**We will increasingly work through place-based, integrated services, tailored to local need, to help residents find the information and support they need within their local community. It will mean all partners – children’s services, general practice, community health and social care services, pharmacies, mental health services, the VCS and the community itself - collaborating in new ways to integrate services where appropriate and build connections with and for people in their communities.**

We are starting in North Croydon. The data that we have informs us that there are an above average number of children and families who could benefit from extra support. So we aim to initially focus on early intervention and prevention work with children and families, building on existing work taking place in the area, often delivered or supported by the local VCS.

This locality way of working will require close working with small grass roots organisations as well as larger VCS organisations. Where appropriate, services will be delivered in the local area, from the most appropriate community space. This may include the use of assets such as Thornton Heath Library, which has had some cosmetic improvements to allow for flexible use. Examples of local partnerships include:

- Partnership Early Help, based at Winterbourne Youth Centre, which brings together council and partner services to support children, young people and their families
- Thornton Heath Library hosts job clubs, homework clubs, parent and baby classes and older people’s sessions
- NHS-led ‘Social Prescribing’, coordinated from the Parchmore Medical Centre, provides a range of non-medical interventions to patients
- Community Connect/Food Stop provides a single access point at Parchmore Methodist Church & Community Centre. A community-led, multi-agency alliance, it focuses on targeted early intervention and prevention and offers a range of tailored support including, homelessness prevention support, personal budgeting, benefits advice, housing options, debt management, job club, health and wellbeing advice. Food Stop shop membership helps families save money on their food shopping bills.
- Integrating our social work and social care workforce and community healthcare staff such as district nurses to work for the residents of Thornton Heath.

## 5. Priority outcomes which we want VCS organisations to support

Given the unprecedented budgetary pressures public sector organisations will continue to experience in the coming years, we will focus the allocation of our resources in the form of funding, subsidies or the use of our local estate, on VCS organisations that support our key priorities.

The organisations we support will be expected to work with others in localities, focussing on preventing issues before they become problems and intervening early. We will work with the VCS to design place-based, integrated offers to help residents to find the information and support they need within their local community and tailored to their local need.

Whilst we recognise it won't always be totally applicable, we will favour those bids for funding or other forms of support that can say yes to as many of the questions below as possible.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the bid involve collaboration with other VCS groups?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is it tackling particular need in a locality?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does it have a focus on prevention, early identification and intervention?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does it support the priority outcomes in this strategy?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the bid meet more than one of the priority outcomes?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is it evidence based?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is it innovative?</li> </ul>

The Table below sets out the priority outcomes we want the VCS to help us deliver and provides a framework for the work of the council and Croydon CCG with the VCS.

<b>Priority outcomes that VCS organisations can support</b> The examples given beneath each outcome are indicative and not exhaustive.
<p><b>1 People live long, healthy, happy and independent lives</b></p> <p><b>We want people to be able to stay well and to manage well. Should they need support or services they will be closer to home.</b></p> <p><b>a. Visible, cohesive and resilient communities</b></p> <p>Potential approaches that we are looking for from the VCS include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promoting community cohesion and resilience – activities to promote neighbourliness and intergenerational activities</li> <li>• Encouraging community festivals and local cultural activities that are inclusive and diverse, and develop pride in the community</li> <li>• Encouraging people to volunteer in their own communities</li> <li>• Encouraging and supporting local community networks to work in partnership with us, for example to ensure that regeneration plans best reflect local needs and result in sustainable positive outcomes for our communities</li> </ul>

### Priority outcomes that VCS organisations can support

The examples given beneath each outcome are indicative and not exhaustive.

- Enabling local community engagement

#### b. Croydon becomes a more equal place

Potential approaches that we are looking for from the VCS include:

- Accessible high quality information, advice and advocacy, including specialist advice on welfare benefits, debt, money management
- Community based support (e.g. buddies) to enable people to use digital technology and access financial services
- Tackling poverty, gaps in equality and inequality in life expectancy and in healthy life expectancy – supporting isolated and marginalised communities, combating food and fuel poverty through holistic services, networks and groups
- People actively involved in decisions over their care and support

#### c. Healthy, happy and independent lives: are lived by as many as possible for as long as possible

Potential approaches that we are looking for from the VCS include:

- Preventative, early intervention, enablement activities and interventions and supported living to help maintain physical and mental wellbeing and prevent illness
- Wrap around support for people living in their own homes, preventing or delaying any need to go into hospital, acute care settings, residential or nursing care.
- Community based approaches to reduce social isolation, loneliness and anxiety, e.g. activities, clubs, befriending, exercise and outings
- Safe and accessible community transport, including through Local Voluntary Partnerships and NHS funded social prescribing
- Approaches that build on the strengths and resources that individuals and communities already have

#### d. Access to effective health services and care services when needed

Potential approaches that we are looking for from the VCS include:

- Services that support the integration of health and social care to provide for seamless access to services and support
- Volunteer based community health and mental health champions
- Community support for people with particular conditions, including HIV and mental health conditions, for people with long term conditions and other issues such as dementia; and support or befriending for frail elderly with complex needs
- Actions that increase safeguarding engagement and referrals from BME communities
- Carers support services, including specialist advice, statutory carers assessments, information and advocacy, support networks, promotion of the physical and mental health of carers, and respite care networks

### Priority outcomes that VCS organisations can support

The examples given beneath each outcome are indicative and not exhaustive.

- Giving residents as wide a choice and control over their care and support options as is possible.

## 2 Our young people thrive and reach their full potential

### a. Children and young people in Croydon and their families are safe, healthy and happy; young people aspire to be the best they can be.

Potential approaches that we are looking for from the VCS include:

- Holistic evidence-based support for the physical and emotional wellbeing of children and their families, working in partnership with statutory services
- Volunteer mentoring schemes and support to take up work experience and development activities
- Raising awareness and support to reduce teenage conception
- Awareness raising and prevention of trafficking, exploitation and FGM

### b. Every child and young person can access high-quality education and youth facilities

Potential approaches that we are looking for from the VCS include:

- Free and/or low cost activities for children and young people, in particular 5-11 year olds
- Integrated youth work, involving young people at school, those excluded from school and those at risk of reoffending – this activity also supports the reduction of serious youth violence (see priority 4a)
- A diverse range of creative and innovative projects for adolescents
- Positive activities that meet the needs of young people in Croydon

### c. Getting more young people involved in taking part in local democracy and in tackling the issues that matter most to them

Potential approaches that we are looking for from the VCS include:

- Activities that engage young people and enable them to develop their leadership potential

## 3. Access to homes and prevention of homelessness: all have the opportunity to access a suitable home and avoid homelessness, with no one forced to sleep on the streets

Potential approaches that we are looking for from the VCS include:

- Specialist advice, advocacy and mediation services to prevent homelessness and enable people to live in a decent home
- Services to reduce street homelessness and enable people to move on from hostels and temporary accommodation to more long-term homes
- Support for EEA migrants with no recourse to public funds into employment or reconnection to their home country.

### Priority outcomes that VCS organisations can support

The examples given beneath each outcome are indicative and not exhaustive.

- Providing support, day services (such as advice, food, clothing, engagement activities) and access to health services for vulnerable homeless households, migrants and people with no recourse to public funds.
- Accessible accommodation for those with disabilities and specific needs.

#### 4 Everyone feels safer in their street, neighbourhood, home

##### We pledge to treat serious youth violence including knife crime as a public health issue

##### a. Working in partnership to reduce crime; including serious youth violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence, and hate crime

Potential approaches that we are looking for from the VCS include:

- Community responses to domestic abuse and sexual violence—prevention and support to those who have experienced abuse
- Integrated youth work and diversion activity to reduce serious youth violence including knife crime and gang violence (see other examples under priority 2 above)

##### b. Anti-social behaviour and environmental crime are reduced throughout the borough, through work with partners and local community involvement

Potential approaches that we are looking for from the VCS include:

- volunteering schemes to promote community safety and encourage the community to improve and protect the local environment

#### 5 Everybody has the opportunity to work and build their career

##### a. More residents can develop their skills through apprenticeships, academic and technical courses and access employment opportunities

Potential approaches that we are looking for from the VCS include:

- Create and promote opportunities for volunteering, work experience and traineeships – creating pathways into employment
- Work in partnership to support residents (in particular people with long term health conditions, disabilities, lone parents, care leavers, over 50s and long term unemployed) to access training and employment opportunities

#### 6 We value arts, culture, sports

##### a. Croydon's cultural offer enhances our town and creates places where people want to live, work and visit

Potential approaches that we are looking for from the VCS include:

- A rich, diverse and accessible range of cultural and arts activities
- Free and low cost activities available to ensure that all communities are able to access culture on their doorstep
- Collaborative work to increase access to street art, proven to reduce anti-social behaviour

**Priority outcomes that VCS organisations can support**

The examples given beneath each outcome are indicative and not exhaustive.

**b. Good, affordable and accessible sports and leisure facilities enable people to be as active and healthy as they want to be**

Potential approaches that we are looking for from the VCS include:

- Provide free and low cost opportunities promoting healthy lifestyle behaviours
- Co-design services and environments that stimulate participation in areas of need

**c. Our parks and open spaces are safe, pleasant, thriving places where everyone can exercise and have fun**

Potential approaches that we are looking for from the VCS include:

- Stimulating better use of open spaces and using streets as a safe place to play
- Cultural, sport and leisure events in parks and green spaces that are accessible for the community.

## 6. How we will support the VCS

We want the VCS in Croydon to thrive. We will support the VCS in a variety of ways to work with us and deliver against the priorities set out in this strategy. Whilst we will deliver some support directly, other support may be commissioned from another provider (including VCS organisations). We will also share regional and national support and advice.

### 1. Funding and commissioning

- **Our funding programmes.** We aim to maintain the overall level of funding to the VCS for the duration of this strategy, subject to matters beyond our control such as local government settlements. However, funding allocated to different programmes may vary and allocations will focus more on our priority outcomes. Our future commissioning will be governed by the following principles:
  - **outcome based:** commissioned services will support one or more of our priority outcomes and be able to demonstrate the value they bring to Croydon residents
  - **evidence based:** will follow the principles of best practice and be able to evidence outcomes achieved for people accessing them
  - **prevention and early intervention:** commissioned services will support the principles of prevention and early intervention and enable people to access the support they need in their local communities
  - **locality focussed:** commissioned services will be tailored to meet local needs; and be part of wider local networks of support;
  - **collaboration encouraged:** our funding terms will favour collaborative bids that make the best use of expertise available
  - **commissioning processes and monitoring are proportionate:** lower value funding amounts will receive less scrutiny than larger amounts and will follow simpler processes for accessing funds
  - **a balance between stability for the sector and the ability to respond to emerging needs:** not all funding will be allocated immediately; some will be held in reserve to enable support for the VCS to respond to emerging need
  - **support considered in the round:** applications for funding will be considered in the context of overall support given by us from various sources and services that are already funded to deliver in a similar way.
  
- **We will maintain funding for the VCS across a range of provision.** We are committed to working with the sector in shaping our commissioning plans. Ways to access this funding will vary:
  - **Community Fund**
  - **Small grants:** awards (usually one-off)
  - **Prevention Fund:** for support and activities to prevent social isolation and people requiring specialist support.
  - **One Croydon Alliance including the Local Voluntary Partnership.**
  - **Locality Fund:** to work towards establishing schemes that target funding as appropriate to localities

- **Other VCS funding programmes:** focussed on specific needs or issues with a focus on youth culture, young people not in education, employment and training, and other programmes as announced will have their own governance arrangements.
- **Coordinating our approaches across partners:** We will work with partners such as Croydon CCG to streamline processes and align funding opportunities where possible.
- **Information on our funding opportunities:** We will ensure that information on funding opportunities that we offer is easy to find, with clear guidance, funding amounts available, localities where services are needed and contacts for further information. We will promote these opportunities to the sector to ensure transparency and access, with a timescale that allows collaborative bids to develop. We will publish a list of services already funded, priority outcomes they support and the localities they serve. We will publish lists of successful bids as decisions are made.
- **Value Croydon** is our approach for delivering social value through our contractors. We are updating the Value Croydon website to advertise all opportunities and grants available to the VCSE sector and others. It will include support for VCS organisations to access tender opportunities with us and our contractor partners. We will actively engage with VCSE organisations in order to build market intelligence/understanding of what we need and what they can offer us. We will encourage other local anchor organisations, such as local hospitals and colleges, to offer supply chain opportunities to the VCS.

## 2. Facilitate collaborative working and partnership

- **Networking events:** We will hold regular networking events for VCS organisations and stakeholders. We will enable VCS organisations to share information, ideas, best practice and opportunities through support networks and themed networking events that bring together organisations that provide similar services or deliver to similar groups or localities.
- **We will work with the VCS to share information on available services across the sector** through the promotion, maintenance and provision of information and advice, a directory of services and transactable services using digital solutions such as the e-marketplace.
- **Share good data and intelligence about the needs of our local communities**
- **Develop joint bids between the council, partners and the VCS** to support priorities. We will notify VCS interest groups of opportunities, bringing together VCS physical and human assets, resources, volunteers and their project support into agreed outcomes and supplement our support with external funding, Corporate Social Responsibility approaches and crowd funding.

- **Support collaborative bids by VCS organisations:** we will facilitate the creation of partnerships for projects to access external funding bids
- **Co-production partnerships:** e.g. Local Voluntary Partnerships, One Croydon Alliance including the council and Croydon CCG are working with the VCS to co-design support services to reduce social isolation, loneliness and health inequality
- **Increasing our understanding of the work of the VCS** through targeted engagement by relevant councillors and officers
- **Consultations:** When we respond to Government consultations that affect the VCS, we will consult with the sector to inform our response.

### 3. Build the capacity of voluntary and community sector organisations and groups

- **We will continue to provide infrastructure support directly and indirectly through commissioned services, to make the following support and training available** for the VCS in Croydon, ensuring that VCS organisations and groups from all of the borough's diverse communities are aware of and able to access the support that they need
  - ***Support for bid writing, accessing fundraising opportunities, crowdfunding and developing ways of generating income:***
  - ***Skills and training*** on matters including starting up and developing project ideas, business planning, developing and managing partnerships, finance, marketing, IT, social media, creating digital resources and skills to respond to people with specialist needs and complex issues. This could include the facilitation of peer mentoring.
  - ***Governance and policy advice***, including on legal requirements on safeguarding, GDPR
- **We will promote and support volunteering** through matching volunteers with suitable volunteering opportunities and facilitating training for volunteers. We will encourage our partners to consider doing the same.
- **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)** The council currently allows its staff 14.4 hours a year paid time to volunteer. We will develop a policy on Corporate Social Responsibility in 2019/20 that will seek to harness our resources as an employer to support local communities including VCS organisations.
- **We will provide challenge and constructive feedback** on monitoring provided by funded VCS organisations where the governance or management and delivery of services could be improved

- **Brokering support from other sectors**
  - We are continuing to build relationships with the private sector to encourage them to provide support for VCS as part of their corporate social responsibility. The Social Enterprise Network meets quarterly to facilitate best practice, information sharing, learning and collaboration for our social enterprises and charities. Croydon Business Network provide monthly clinics that offer dedicated business advice and funding support.
  - Our ambition is to seek to link social value provided by our contractors more closely with the local VCS. Potentially this could be financial support for the VCS, or provision of surplus equipment or furniture, volunteering, mentoring or skills transfer. Just as the council is developing a CSR policy, we will ask them to consider doing the same.

#### 4. Premises: maximise use of assets for the VCS

- **To make best use of our community properties**, we will develop clear criteria for allocating properties and rent subsidy, requiring organisations to support our priorities and making the sharing of premises a desirable requirement. Allocations will be for a limited term. Performance and the level of use of the premises will be monitored regularly. To improve transparency we will transition from using peppercorn rents to market rents with rent subsidy.
- **We will encourage organisations to share available space** by amending our leases to allow occupiers to sublet to approved organisations and by developing proposals in 2019/20 to facilitate the exchange of information on spaces offered and spaces sought by VCS organisations
- **Community hubs**: we will increasingly deliver services with our statutory and VCS partners on a locality basis tailored to meet local needs. The approach will use existing community spaces owned by us (like the local library or youth centre), by other statutory organisations (like a health centre) and by the VCS. To prepare, we are mapping community assets in each area and will adapt libraries if appropriate to provide flexible community spaces. We will seek opportunities to develop further community hubs, ensuring that use is maximised, both during the day and into the evening. Where appropriate, we will consider short term 'meanwhile' letting uses that benefit the community.
- **VCS Incubator**: we will explore opportunities to develop a VCS Incubator in a property suitable for sharing, to support fledgling VCS organisations through access to small, extendible units for a time-limited period and an initially subsidised rent.
- **Community asset transfer (CAT)** – we will continue to consider the potential of existing properties in our local estate for CAT on a case by case basis.

- **Empty properties:** Where appropriate, we will encourage and work with owners of long-term empty commercial properties to accommodate temporary uses created by local VCS partners and broker opportunities with developers to create meanwhile uses for their development sites in partnership with the VCS.
- **Planning powers:** We will use opportunities arising from [Croydon's Local Plan 2018](#) policy and allocations to encourage the development and protection of new community facilities which are flexible, adaptable, accessible to the whole community and capable of multi-use as part of development projects.