

VOLUNTARY ACTION ARUN AND CHICHESTER



OUR IMPACT 2024/2025



Driving Voluntary Action and Active Communities



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Welcome from the Chair



It is clear that the charity and voluntary sector continue to face significant pressures—from rising costs and declining donations to volunteer shortages and growing demand. These challenges reflect a wider climate of uncertainty and change.

Yet there are signs of hope. The latest *Charities Aid Foundation UK Giving Report* details that while only half of UK adults donated to charity last year, 83% engaged in charitable activity—and locally, in West Sussex over 60% donated, exceeding the national average. This shows that goodwill remains strong. Our opportunity lies in how we connect with people, especially younger generations and so inspire meaningful support.

Reading through this year's Impact Report I feel it showcases the many diverse areas that our staff at VAAC work and have an impact on. The team has again been incredibly busy this past year, supporting our membership and the wider VCSE sector. Funding, volunteer support and training for our members are just some of these areas. This year the team also used their knowledge and skills to intensively work with three of our members to ensure their future sustainability, so important for their communities. Volunteers are at the heart of the VCSE sector and so supporting them on their volunteer journeys through placements and advice is particularly satisfying.

Our enhanced focus on training and development will deliver results for our members, increasing knowledge in areas such as risk management, safeguarding, fundraising amongst many others. Staff at VAAC are also key partners in research projects which give a vital voice to our sector, informing bodies such as the NHS, Local Government, The Kings Fund and University of Sussex. Working collaboratively within and outside our sector enables VAAC to make the best use of its resources for the benefit of our members and local VCSE sector.

As a Board, over this last year, we took time for reflection, looking closely at how we work and how we can better support our staff, members and sector. We reviewed our governance, strategic priorities, financial planning and risks, feeding this into the development of VAAC's 2025–30 Strategy. We also began exploring how emerging technologies—like AI—might enhance our effectiveness. Supporting young trustees at the start of their journey is an exciting avenue we are looking into as well as the further diversification of our Board to add to our skill base.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend my sincere thanks to our staff for their hard work, dedication and expertise. I'm equally grateful to our volunteers, trustees, partners and funders whose contributions are invaluable. This report reflects the real impact they have all made possible.

At VAAC, our mission and sense of purpose continues to guide us. As we prepare for local government reorganisation and devolution, this focus will become even more important to enable us to support and advocate for our sector.

*Dr Sarah Morgan
Chair, VAAC
August 2025*

VAAC's Vision

To see a thriving, inclusive and strong Voluntary, Community Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector that unites, supports, inspires, and empowers individuals and communities driving transformative change towards an equitable society.

The Mission /Our Purpose

Our purpose is to ensure the VCSE sector thrives and delivers in response to local needs. We facilitate solutions to community issues, overcoming challenges and advocating for impactful, sustainable change – benefiting each person, each organisation and every community we serve.

We are focused on:

- **Enriching communities**
- **Inspiring volunteers**
- **Strengthening the Voluntary sectors voice and recognition**
- **Equity, inclusion and diversity**

Our Performance 2024 /2025



£622,000

monies
SECURED
with our
members

1-2-1
advice
and
support
with VCSE organisations

85

52



training
& events

140



Volunteers
RECRUITED for our
members

621

VCSE
members



5 PROJECTS
commissioned
& delivered

Our delivery and impact:

Community Investment and Membership

We pride ourselves in being a responsive local support service that is highly visible, well-respected and integral to the local VCSE sector. This entails direct and indirect support to our members on a range of issues including, governance, fundraising, development & growth. Specifically on funding and fundraising, we provide guidance and advice so that organisations are successful in attracting funding to support their services from a range of different sources and are able to adapt to new opportunities and challenges. In the last year we have:

- Secured funding on the basis of work with our members totalling **£622,000** from a wide range of sources.
- Supported **85** VCSE organisations with 1-2-1 support this includes complex governance issues.
- Devised **12** case studies/videos to demonstrate the value and contribution of the sector and how our work develops and sustains voluntary organisations.
- Undertaken intensive work with **3** VAAC members regarding, strategy, sustainability and fundraising – these organisations are now more financially resilient and future focused.
- Increased our membership by a further **39** organisations with a total VAAC membership of **621** at the end of March 2025, this builds our reach and influence.
- Devised and circulated **10** themed Funding Focus bulletins and feedback from which is consistently positive.
- Issued **60** e-bulletins covering a range of topics and issues to ensure members are up to date on opportunities and challenges that are relevant to the VCSE sector.



"I will support my fundraising team more effectively and engage other trustees to do so too".

4Sight Vision Support - November 2024



"Without your help we wouldn't have written our constitution. You also helped us with various stages and requirements such as ways of getting funding, insurance and how to open a bank account".

Littlehampton Community Growers - March 2025

Volunteering advice, support and development

Our work in relation to volunteers is focused on promotion of volunteering, recruitment of volunteers and embedding best practice. This year we have:

- Placed **140** volunteers with our members and promoted the Get Volunteering App to target younger volunteers.
- Provided an advisory service to Volunteer Co-ordinators to ensure best practice and positive volunteer experiences.
- Delivered a VAAC Volunteer Fair with **35** organisations and attended a Rotary Volunteer Fair, with a total attendance of **240** participants over the 2 events – which demonstrated positive local interest in volunteering.
- Partnered with University of Chichester on work placements opportunities and hosted **4** students ourselves who gained first hand experience of the sector and developed a local social value tool that VAAC members could adopt.

Training and Networking

This year we have invested staffing resources in training and development for the VCSE sector. Our achievements include:

- Involvement in **29** events, and delivered **23** training opportunities with overall **283** attendees.
- On behalf of West Sussex Links devised and circulated 3 West Sussex VCSE Training Digests with average click rate of **397** amongst VAAC members.
- Delivered VCSE fundraising training via pro bono support of Lucy Stone with attendances of **154** over the **7** sessions.
- Organised a range of networking opportunities based on geography, themes, or demographics, and linked into other collaborative forums. We know face to face connection build partnership approaches.



"Really helpful advice regarding possible grant applications and other fundraising suggestions, which will hopefully ensure we continue to exist"

Chichester Foodbank - January 2025

Research, community engagement and equity

Our work is rooted in research, community engagement and co-design. We ensure equity, diversity and inclusion is at the heart of all the projects we are involved in. In 2024/25 we have achieved:

- A range of commissioned projects, including: Research Engagement Network with University of Sussex, climate adaptation with Meadow Blue Community Energy, and the initial work on framing Rethinking Our Health with Here & The Kings Fund. Continued to deliver and evidence the impact of our Community Connectors peer to peer health programme.
- Advocated for and supported accessibility in Chichester and access to the beach in East Preston and Bognor.
- Continued to build our Ukrainian community development work via Ukrainian Hearts Together (Bognor Regis), Starshine (Chichester) and educational initiatives including the presentation of a paper to Chichester Universities Childhood, Inclusion and Society – the state of Ukrainian children before the war, at the beginning of the invasion and the present moment.
- Initiated a closer relationship with University of Chichester’s ‘Adversity to University’ programme in relation to local recruitment in Arun.



“From the very beginning, your team has been incredibly supportive — guiding us through the process of creating a Constitution, and helping with the long and complex task of opening a bank account. Your advice and practical assistance have been essential for our development.

VAAC is a wonderful organisation run by dedicated people whose work truly makes a difference. We are deeply grateful to everyone involved, and especially to Nina, VAAC’s Ukrainian Coordinator, with whom we have built a close and friendly cooperation.”

Maryna, Ukrainian Hearts Together

Partnerships, Collaborations, and Representation

We work across the community, voluntary, enterprise, public and corporate sectors. All our activities are collaborative, and we represent the sector on a range of partnerships and networks. We also facilitate and encourage voluntary sector partnerships to avoid duplication and share knowledge. Our key achievements include:

- Nationally we partner and signpost to a number of key organisations including NAVCA, NCVO and Charity Excellence.
- Progression of West Sussex Links (a partnership of VCSE support organisations across West Sussex) and lead for Continuing Professional Development.
- Input into Arun District Council, Chichester District Council, West Sussex County Council priority themes of:

Health and Wellbeing	Financial and food security
Digital Inclusion and online safety	Young People
Community safety and community cohesion	Equity, inclusion and diversity
Devolution and Local Government reorganisation	Skills, employment and economic development
Net zero and climate change and community resilience	Across systems early intervention/prevention

- Lead VCSE organisation on Integrated Community Teams (NHS, Local Government and the Voluntary Sector neighbourhood level partnerships) in Arun and Chichester ensuring that the sector voice influences priorities and direction.

Looking Ahead - CEO

Times are challenging for the sector and from talking to other VCSE organisations there is a sense of overcoming one 'wave' only to see further waves on the horizon. That said the sector is agile, creative and resilient as its driven by striving for a fairer world. For VAAC our ambitions for the next year will focus on building on our solid foundations and reflecting our 2025 to 2030 strategic plan, namely:

For the VCSE sector:

- Enhance and develop our service offer, articulating our approach and impact effectively.
- Strengthen and develop more partnerships and joint initiatives across the VCSE sector in West Sussex.
- Have a vibrant and active VAAC membership that collaborates and supports one another.
- Progress further our work in relation to Net Zero and climate adaptation.
- Evidence the social value of the VCSE sector.
- Build on our CPD offer for the VCSE sector across West Sussex.
- Continue to campaign for equity, inclusion and diversity in all sectors.

Operationally we aim to:

- Further strengthen and diversify the Board of Trustees ensuring broad representation and expertise.
- Upgrade our website and systems.
- Embrace AI and the positive difference it will make, but provide 'human' empathy and explanation.



Thank you

We would like to thank our donors and our funders, Arun District Council, University of Sussex, (Brighton & Sussex Medical School), Chichester City Council, Chichester District Council, Diversity Resource International, Hyde Charitable Trust, NHS Sussex, Meadow Blue Community Energy and West Sussex County Council for their support.



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