

KINGSTON VOLUNTARY ACTION

STRATEGY 2025-2028

Stronger Organisations,
Healthier Communities

Building
Advocating
Bridging
Thriving
Sustaining





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FOREWORD

BY OUR CHAIR



Kingston Voluntary Action (KVA) began its journey in 1968 as an 'infrastructure support' voluntary sector organisation in Kingston. The community groups, charities and other not-for-profit organisations of all sizes we work with, help many different people, using their strengths and assets to achieve social change. Although rewarding, this work is often challenging and requires huge variety of knowledge and skills. KVA exists to support these organisations to do what they do even better. This is our main purpose.

We have evolved almost constantly since our inception, in response to rapidly changing circumstances, particularly in relation to the needs of the people that Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations support and the key public sector partners that they work with. This has also meant engaging regionally across South West London and Surrey in terms of working with Health (the South West London Integrated Care System) and more widely across London in relation to Digital, Data and Tech support.

In our current world full of new insecurities, scarce resources and rapid changes we see our sector as a beacon of hope. This strategy is designed to foster stronger, thriving communities and organisations by building their knowledge and skills, being their advocate and amplifying their voices, driving policy change and building bridges towards more effective collaborations. In that way, our strategy is aligning with three of the four 'functions of infrastructure' as defined by KVA's national body, the National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA).

As part of the strategy, we are equally committed to creating a resilient environment where meaningful partnerships lead to improved health and wellbeing outcomes for residents and communities. To achieve this, KVA Trustees and the Leadership Group will run KVA efficiently and effectively, ensuring we are always led by the voice, needs and interests of local communities.

By doing this, we believe we too can contribute to a fairer and more inclusive society for all.

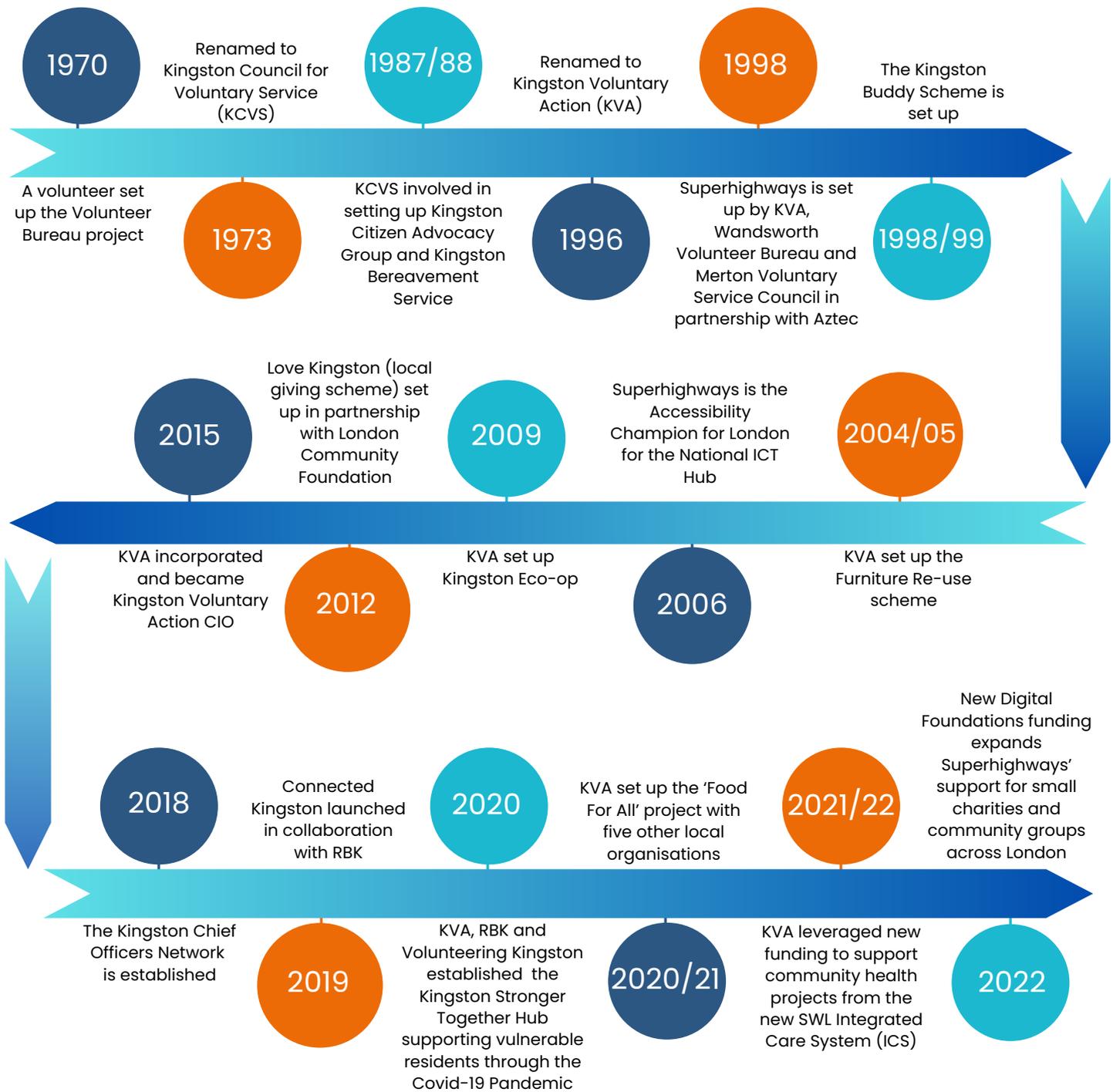
I am pleased to present to you KVA's Strategy 2025-2028; *Stronger Organisations, Healthier Communities*. We invite you to join us on this journey.

Nigel

Nigel Newby
KVA Chair of Trustees

OUR STORY

Mayor of Kingston, Cllr Pearce Oliver, gathered a group of local people, forming a provisional executive committee and arranged for an inaugural meeting of Kingston Council of Social Services (KCSS) to be held at the Guildhall on 14 May 1968. In 1969, KCSS had two full-time employees and one volunteer running the organisation from the Methodist church hall.



KVA has 32 employees and 31 volunteers, supporting over 400 organisations in Kingston and across London. We are governed by a Board of eight highly skilled, dedicated Trustees headed by the longstanding Chair, Nigel Newby.



Our Kingston Eco-op team

A key activity underpinning every aspect of our strategy is the need to understand who we are supporting, what challenges they face, the services available to them and the gaps in provision so that we can continuously inform our work and shape the services we offer to meet these needs.

THE FUTURE

As we look towards the next three years, the future for our sector promises to be as challenging as ever. This only inspires us to be more resilient, adaptable and innovative and have a steadfast commitment to a fairer, more inclusive, healthier and happier society.

We are poised to **BUILD** stronger and thriving VCSE organisations; bring about change by **ADVOCATING** for the sector and amplifying its voice; to be the **BRIDGE** which leads to collaborations that benefit all and to ensure that we have **THRIVING**, healthy and happy residents.

As a multifaceted organisation managing a growing number of diverse projects, KVA also must **SUSTAIN** itself. We have recently taken a step back to review our own direction and ways of working. We identified our well-recognised strengths which present us with exciting opportunities.

With a dedicated team of 32 staff members and the potential for growth, we decided it was the right time to set out more clearly how we are now working and organising our resources to meet changing needs. This involves a shift towards two over-arching, but interlinked areas of work driven by our revised Vision and Mission and recently developed Values.

Healthy Organisations

Robust and resilient VCSE organisations – support to set up, develop and grow to respond to their beneficiaries’ changing needs. This includes:

- Ask the Expert
- Superhighways
- Funding support
- Community accountancy
- Events and training
- Networks and groups
- Representation and partnerships

Healthy Residents and Communities

Improving health and wellbeing outcomes for residents and communities. This includes:

- Community health projects
- The Good Food Group
- Kingston Buddy Scheme
- Connected Kingston
- Surplus food hub
- Children and young people
- Kingston Eco-op

OUR VISION, MISSION, VALUES AND STRATEGIC AIMS

VISION

Communities and people, that Kingston Voluntary Action works with, are empowered to drive social change towards a fairer, more inclusive, healthier and happier society

MISSION

To meet the needs of community organisations and individuals by equipping them with relevant tools, skills, knowledge, confidence and voice to drive positive change

VALUES

We are Collaborative, Resilient and Creative

STRATEGIC AIMS

BUILDING – We want to enable stronger and thriving VCSE organisations

ADVOCATING – We want to amplify the voice of the VCSE sector in bringing about change and influencing policy

BRIDGING – We want to enable effective collaborations and partnerships

THRIVING – We want to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for residents and communities

SUSTAINING – We want to ensure KVA is a robust and sustainable organisation

EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) sits at the heart of Kingston Voluntary Action's vision. Our commitment to EDI practices is two-fold: to address EDI issues within our own organisation and to promote them proactively amongst other VCSE organisations.



Our Buddy Scheme volunteers

DATA:

OUR RESIDENTS AND THE VCSE SECTOR SUPPORTING THEM

A key activity underpinning every aspect of our strategy is the need to understand who we are supporting, what challenges they face, the services available to them and the gaps in provision so that we can continuously inform our work and shape the services we offer to meet these needs.

We have begun a programme of work to map the landscape in Kingston, for residents and the VCSE sector, as well as the wider London picture relevant to our London reach.

We are creating an interactive, real-time dashboard mapping the VCSE sector with up-to-date data from both open data sources (Charity Commission, Companies House, 360 Giving) and our own internal databases.

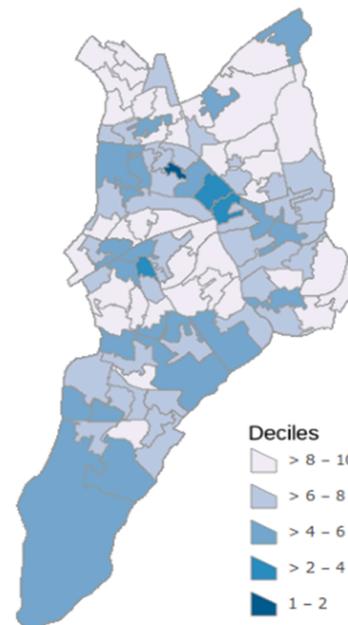


Figure 4: Deprivation Deciles in Kingston LSOAs (IMD 2019) Rank **Darker areas are more deprived**
Source: English Indices of Multiple Deprivation, 2019

Kingston may be perceived as a wealthy borough but pockets of deprivation still exist

44% Households deprived in more than one dimension (income, health, education, employment and living environment)

19% Child poverty rate

Worse than London average ratings across indicators

- Pay inequality
- Housing delivery
- Unemployment rate change

Kingston in numbers

167,845

Population
Up 5% since 2011



456

Registered charities located in the borough



65,626

Households

260

Charities delivering locally*
Circa 2% of London's local charities

61%

with an income of less than £100k

14.4%

65 years +

154

Languages spoken



8,230

Volunteers

2,428

Trustees

2,045

Employees

Data sources: London Poverty Profile; Royal Borough of Kingston; IMD 2019; Census 2021; Charity Commission. * Exclusions apply.



Our Superhighways team

“The Kingston VCSE sector in 2024 is supporting a very different population from that of its counterpart in 1967. The borough is significantly more ethnically diverse, and despite its reputation for prosperity, it grapples with rising challenges such as housing, deprivation, mental health issues, obesity and an ageing population.

At KVA, we recognise the vital role we play in ensuring that organisations can continue to support our communities.”

Sanja Djerić Kane, CEO Kingston Voluntary Action

THE CHANGING ENVIRONMENT

Kingston Voluntary Action will always be aligned with local and regional needs, policy changes, partnership opportunities, social trends and health and wellbeing agenda to better support communities. During the life of this strategy, we will particularly consider:



Political Shifts

Any sector is affected by government policy and perhaps the VCSE sector even more so than others. We need to be alert to the implications of changes in the political landscape which may bring about change in how the real issues facing our communities are tackled.



Cost of Living

The cost of living crisis continues to impact our communities. Not only are VCSE sector organisations at the forefront of supporting people who are experiencing high levels of poverty, but they are also suffering themselves as organisations having to continually find ways of doing more for less.



Funding

VCSE organisations are facing the perfect storm in accessing funding. Increasing competition, funders closing their programmes (temporarily or completely) and a lack of resources to cover core costs present significant challenges, particularly in Kingston, which is still perceived as a 'leafy, prosperous borough'.



AI and Tech

Advances in tech, digital and AI occur with increasing speed and complexity and it is a challenge for VCSE organisations to keep up to date, not just with how to benefit from the new ways of doing things, including better use of data for decision making, but also to guard against threats to business continuity and data security.



The role of the VCSE Sector within SWL ICS

The reorganisation of the NHS into Integrated Care Systems (ICS) has included the expectation that they will work more closely with VCSE organisations in their areas. Kingston is one of six boroughs in the SWL ICS. This presents opportunities and challenges for VCSE organisations to contribute their experience and skills in designing and delivering services based in the community.



Voices shaping services

The VCSE sector is made up of people who understand (and often share) the concerns of local people on many issues and can offer their invaluable 'lived experience'. If properly harnessed and listened to, their contribution to decision making can have a significant impact on how services are designed and delivered.



Climate Emergency

The Climate Emergency affects us all, but the impacts will not be felt equally across Kingston. The changes disproportionately affect the most vulnerable in the community and increase all kinds of inequalities. The VCSE sector has an important role to play in supporting people who may be vulnerable and in working together to build community resilience.



As we look towards the next three years, the future for our sector promises to be as challenging as ever.

This only inspires us to be more resilient, adaptable and innovative and have a steadfast commitment to a fairer, more inclusive, healthier and happier society.

Healthy Organisations



Funding Support

Advice and support provided to organisations to enhance their ability to secure funding and improve their financial sustainability



Community Accountancy

Comprehensive financial support on assisting organisations with a range of financial enquiries to enhance their financial health



Events and Training

Free to affordable training designed specifically for the voluntary sector to promote learning and develop the skills needed to be effective



Superhighways

Support for small charities and community groups to gain the essential digital and data skills, backed by the right tech, to achieve their goals



Ask the Expert

One-to-one personalised advice and support tailored to the organisation's specific needs in a variety of areas such as safeguarding and governance



Networks and Groups

Bring people together to enable effective collaborations to share information, network, and discuss topics that impact on the VCSE sector



Representation and Partnerships

Be the voice and advocate for the sector, celebrate its successes and influence stakeholders

Healthy Residents and Communities



Children and Young People

Supporting organisations that work, or have contact with, children and young people



Community Health Projects

Advice, support and signposting for communities and residents to help improve their health and wellbeing



The Good Food Group

Making nutritious food accessible and affordable for everyone in Kingston



The Buddy Scheme

Befriending for adults with learning disabilities and/or autism to take part in leisure activities



Kingston Eco-op

A community project that offers physical and wellbeing activities for adults with additional needs



Connected Kingston

A social prescribing platform dedicated to helping Kingston residents find local activities and services



Surplus Food Hub

Bridging the gap between food waste and food poverty locally by sourcing, coordinating and distributing surplus food



STRATEGIC AIMS

AIM 1: BUILDING

We want to enable stronger and thriving VCSE organisations

The number of people impacted by food insecurity, housing crisis, debt, social isolation, discrimination or inability to access help from health and social care services is increasing. It is the VCSE sector that often provides the essential safety net for people in need.

At KVA we recognise the vital role we play in ensuring these organisations can continue their crucial work. By nurturing skills, supporting learning, and providing necessary tools through one-to-one support, training, events, seminars, skills workshops, peer learning, and bespoke development programmes, we want to help these organisations survive and thrive.

Objective: To create and deliver a range of support to VCSE organisations in order to help them set up, develop, and grow

Activities:

Strengthen Governance and Management:

- Support with finances, business planning, managing people, monitoring and evaluation, policies and safeguarding



Support with Fundraising:

- Direct to suitable funding sources and improve funding applications
- Act as a funding advocate and distributor of grants for local organisations
- Help organisations raise their own profile and use data efficiently to showcase their impact

Enhance Digital, Data and Tech Capabilities:

- Provide training, support and advice on a wide range of digital, data and tech issues, including set up and configuration of devices and systems
- Collaborate with tech providers and funders to develop user-friendly technology and data for community use

Objective: To keep the VCSE sector informed about local, regional and national news, research and insights using various communications channels

Activities:

- Issue regular e-bulletins keeping the sector informed on general, and specific topics (health, food, digital, data and tech)
- Use social media to contribute, share and exchange information relevant to the sector and our partners and stakeholders
- Use our networks and forum meetings to share information about topics important to the sector

What success will look like

VCSE sector organisations KVA works with are well-informed about where to seek support, training, and information, enabling them to effectively respond to community needs and navigate challenging environments. This includes engaging with diverse funding approaches and leveraging technology. Consequently, the organisations are thriving, equipped with the right skills, knowledge, confidence, and necessary digital tools and resources to establish, develop, and grow high-quality community initiatives.

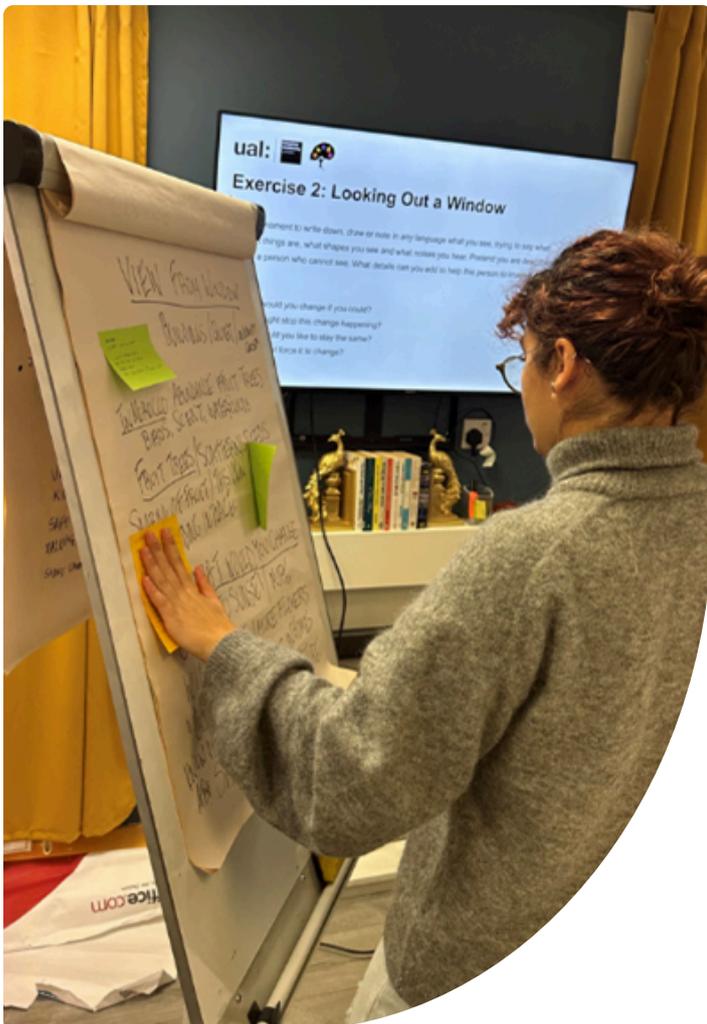
AIM 2: ADVOCATING

We want to amplify the voice of the VCSE sector in bringing about change and influencing policy

The VCSE sector understands and often shares the concerns of communities it serves regarding the most pressing challenges people face. However, their input in decision-making is frequently overlooked, even though their 'lived experience' should be crucial for distinguishing effective services from ineffective ones.

At KVA, we want to change that and amplify the sector's collective voice, ensuring it is acknowledged and considered in key funding and policy decisions.

Objective: To identify VCSE sector needs, issues of concern and ideas, raise them with local and regional decision makers and co-produce systemic change/s



Activities:

- Attend strategic meetings and be the active voice of the sector
- Engage VCSE organisations in consultations at all levels and facilitate feedback
- Conduct surveys and focus groups and share data on local needs and priorities and the sector profile
- Support people from diverse and underrepresented communities to take on representative/leadership roles and use their 'lived experience' to better inform decision making processes

Objective: To raise the profile and showcase the impact of the VCSE sector

Activities:

- Organise events, commemorations, and conferences to celebrate the work and impact of the sector
- Collect and promote stories, case studies and good practice examples from the sector
- Showcase the sector and its potential at meetings, events and forums organised by, or in partnership with other sectors

What success will look like

Decision makers have informed knowledge and understanding of the VCSE sector, including its complexities, perspectives, and impact. At the same time, the VCSE sector and broader communities, especially those that are minoritised and underrepresented, have the skills and opportunities to leverage their 'lived experiences' to influence relevant stakeholders, participate in decision-making, and contribute meaningfully to local plans and policies.



AIM 3: BRIDGING

We want to enable effective collaborations and partnerships

Networking within and outside the VCSE sector is crucial for fostering partnerships, enhancing collaboration, sharing knowledge and resources and better identifying local needs.

KVA has a unique role in uniting stakeholders, highlighting issues affecting minoritised groups and initiating collaborative work which can have great impact on communities. With a strong track record of local, regional, and national relationships, KVA aims to deepen these connections.

Objective: To initiate, develop, lead and support VCSE sector led networks, forums and user groups

Activities:

- Facilitate information sharing on topics relevant to the sector and partners and explore joint challenges, opportunities and resources
- Identify gaps and initiate new networks to address unmet/emerging needs and/or specialised interests
- Continue running existing forums and networks e.g. CEO network; Kingston Digital Inclusion Network, London CVS Development Workers Network (focusing on digital, data & tech)





Objective: To identify, develop and maintain collaborative working and partnerships between VCSE, public and private sector partners

Activities:

- Undertake horizon scanning and identify areas of common interest, or challenges where the VCSE sector has a major contribution to make, facilitate relationship building and initiate and support communities of practice
- Help set values and principles that guide the relationship between the VCSE organisations and statutory partners
- Act in the best interest of the sector as a whole within the role we take i.e. knowing when to lead, when to support and when to withdraw

What success will look like

VCSE sector organisations are confident in forming effective partnerships with other VCSE organisations, across sectors, and with communities. Due to developed Kingston Compact, they feel treated as equals when collaborating with the public sector, as a result of a better understanding of the co-produced principles underpinning good partnership working. Consequently, new networks are established to address unmet needs more efficiently.

The sector is assured that KVA recognises its role as an infrastructure organisation.

AIM 4: THRIVING

We want to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for residents and communities

KVA has collaborated with local public health and NHS on initiatives improving the health of local population for over 30 years. This has included running longstanding projects for people with learning disabilities, mental health issues and neurodivergent people.

Our crucial role as a VCSE infrastructure organisation became clear during and after the pandemic, and through contributing strategically to the SWL Integrated Care System since 2022. The Kingston Health and Care Plan 2022-24 prioritises mental health, long-term conditions, obesity, and isolation, requiring a partnership between the NHS, the council and the VCSE sector. We see ourselves as connectors and builders of these partnerships.

Recently, our focus on 'healthy residents and communities' has expanded, and we are committed to further shaping community health by reducing health inequalities and enhancing wellbeing.

Objective: To identify, develop and maintain projects and initiatives that address inequalities in health

Activities:

- Continue to support, grow and sustain The Good Food Group and set up a Kingston Surplus Food Hub
- Continue and further develop community health initiatives and education through our Core20plus5 and Community Health and Wellbeing Programme
- Promote key health campaigns through our networks reaching community groups in the appropriate format for the target population
- Enhance and sustain our Eco-op, Buddy Scheme and The Larch programmes to support people with learning disabilities, autism, mental health concerns and neurodiverse communities
- Provide digital inclusion support to residents – basic digital skills, data or devices



Our Community Health & Wellbeing team

Objective: To support and develop activities to improve residents' wellbeing

Activities:

- Promote, develop and improve Connected Kingston social prescribing platform
- Provide support and signposting for mental health support and suicide prevention including access to green spaces and bereavement support programmes
- Create and develop, if required, physical and other activities and volunteering opportunities to maximise wellbeing in the community

What success will look like

The health of Kingston communities will be enhanced through better access to healthy affordable food, reduced food insecurity and better utilisation of food waste across the Borough.

Our health programmes will improve residents' wellbeing, increase knowledge of the healthcare system, uptake of health checks, screenings and immunisations and reduce social isolation.

Residents and communities will be more digitally included. This will improve their access to services, and the use of Connected Kingston, fostering a more connected and supportive community.



AIM 5: SUSTAINING

We want to ensure that KVA is a robust and sustainable organisation

To successfully realise this strategy, it is vital that we always improve our own processes and systems for planning, decision making, allocating resources and day-to-day operations. This, as well as always investing in our team, is essential for KVA's long-term success, resilience and ability to deliver our commitments and to achieve our goals as one organisation, in line with our Vision, Mission, Values.

Objective: To sustain and further develop the organisation

Activities:

- Develop a funding strategy which will include our approach to diversifying income streams
- Work towards quality marks which strengthen our reputation with stakeholders
- Develop a system to engage people on work experience, internships and student placements
- Address skills audit gaps and encourage people from various backgrounds to join the KVA Board
- Improve energy efficiency, reduce operational costs and reduce our climate impact



Our fantastic team

Photo: Nick Kane Photography

Objective: To strengthen internal systems and processes

Activities:

- Create a system to gather reliable data for sharing across teams to demonstrate need and impact
- Develop a new CRM system to better identify and understand our users and service delivery across the organisation
- Write an HR strategy focusing on recruitment, development, retention and wellbeing of our teams

Objective: To develop and strengthen communication and collaboration

Activities:

- Create a unified KVA communication strategy
- Increase community visibility, and identify new initiatives and groups
- Maintain and strengthen relationships with key stakeholders

What success will look like

KVA has the resources and robust data to achieve its strategic ambitions and has grown in line with community needs. Communication is effective and targeted with user-friendly websites. It maintains rigorous self-assessment systems, achieving quality marks.

Newly developed KVA values are embedded in daily work. As a result, KVA is well known locally and across London for its quality and impact. KVA is a desirable workplace with a good culture and looked after staff.



Join us on the journey!

As we follow the roadmap outlined in this strategy, we hope that you will come with us on the journey.

Sign up for updates from us to not miss the next chapter in the story of Kingston Voluntary Action, by scanning the QR-code below or visit **kva.org.uk**.



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