

Annual Impact Report



2022 - 2023

Supporting, developing and promoting the voluntary
and community sector in the Rotherham borough





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Key terms:

VAR – Voluntary Action Rotherham

VCS – Voluntary and Community Sector

Consortium – A network of organisations working
together and/or pooling resources
to achieve a common goal

SEND - Special educational needs and disabilities

CIC - Community Interest Company

Introduction



This year has been one of learning, development and, as ever, action. We've held conversations across our communities to understand the emerging needs and issues following the pandemic. We've focused on the development of existing projects, making sure they're fit to face those needs. And, as the Cost-Of-Living crisis began to bite, we took action – coordinating the VCS response through our new project Open Arms Rotherham.

This fiscal year of 22-23 was a difficult one for many, which means our sector is in more demand than ever. We continued to support front line VCS groups with direct grants of £1.6 million, enabling them to do what they do best. We provided developmental support that enabled the sector to attract and secure even more. We worked with our partners to ensure the VCS was at the table – valued, trusted and recognised as essential. And, all the while we continued to grow as an organisation – making sure we're ready for the challenges ahead.

As always, we want to give a huge thank you to all the VAR team, Volunteers, our Board of Directors, Members, Partners and Funders for making all of this happen. We hope you enjoy reading.

Volunteering

Volunteering contributes so much to our community – for our members and their beneficiaries, and crucially, for the volunteers themselves. It remains a focus of our core work and this year has been no different. Our Volunteer Centre supports groups to deliver quality volunteer programs, whilst connecting people to those opportunities.

We were proud to achieve NAVCA's Volunteer Centre Quality Accreditation this year – no small piece of work for the team! This quality mark demonstrates how we deliver across five strategic functions for the development of all things volunteering in Rotherham, providing assurance that this essential service is delivered to the highest standard.

This year we held our annual 'Business meets VCS' event on 28th March, where charities and local private sector come together to make connections and explore how they can work together.

We hosted our annual Funding Fair on 21st March where we invited a range of national and local funders to speak to local VCS groups about current opportunities and gave guidance on how to write a strong application.

As ever, we celebrated the contribution of volunteers. A number of events across volunteer month in June 2022 – not least the Volunteer Walk – highlighted the impact of volunteering and allowed us the opportunity to say thank you to these community leaders.



43

organisations supported - volunteer management

74

New roles developed

418

Applications brokered

Engagement & Communications

A crucial area of work for an infrastructure organisation, our engagement and communications team disseminated information and opportunity to the sector, whilst gathering voice and enabling influence with key stakeholders. Our weekly Bulletin has over 1300 subscribers and remains highly valued by the sector, but is just one of our pillars of communication. The Members Bulletin, Rotherham GISMO, Social Media updates and our work on strategic representation ensure members have access to quality, timely information.

We were keen to try out new ways to reach and engage, so this year we published our first Mental Health 'Zine'. Designed to raise awareness of mental health and the support available through the sector, we undertook engagement projects with Rush House and YAWR services, interviews with leaders from community groups (Mature Millers, S62 Community Together and the Menopause Support Group) and the collation of artwork to pull together the creative content.

The finished article was a real hit! The Zine has been distributed to over 20 locations/sites across the borough to a great response.

Now, on to Issue Number 2!





Professional Services

The Community Accountancy, payroll & HR service at VAR offers tailored support to our sector.

The Community Accountancy service offers specialist, tailored support to Charities, Community Groups, and CIC's. We can do your full accounts preparation or Independent Examination. We support Charities to meet the reporting requirements of the Charity Commission and other regulators.

The payroll bureau service provides bespoke payroll preparation and calculation. Our payroll service provides full guidance and advice in all areas of payroll, including PAYE, NIC's, Statutory payments and recovery and the latest changes in legislation. All of our guidance and support is included in the competitive rates charged for the service.

VAR's HR Support Service provides information, advice and training on employment matters to our sector. Offering a professional and cost-effective service to organisations in Rotherham and the surrounding area, we can help with employment legislation and best practice.

What Groups Say About Us:

"Thank you so much for the one to one quickbooks training and continued support, we are now able to manage our restricted funds much better"

"Thanks as always, I know I can rely on you to ensure we are on the right track"

Community Accountancy

52

Clients supported during 2023

2

Independently examined the accounting records of 2 school funds

35

Prepared 35 sets of annual accounts and undertook independent examinations

6

Groups supported with the complexities of managing restricted funding

3

Delivered tailored QuickBooks training to 3 groups

15

Carried out 15 Internal Audits

61

Groups supported with payroll (April 22 to March 23)

38

Of these groups also had regular pensions/auto-enrolment support

4,593

Payslips issues throughout the year (an increase of 296 from the previous year)



Social Prescribing

We deliver the Rotherham Social Prescribing Service to help people with long-term health conditions and mental health issues access voluntary and community services that can help them.

Social Prescribers assess and create a support plan with people, then refer them to a range of voluntary and community services funded through the scheme. Commissioned services are usually delivered at or from the person's home and are tailored to their needs.

It could be Befriending and Enabling, or support with welfare benefits, Advocacy, Counselling, Carer Respite and digital inclusion support.

In 2022/23, referrals into the service totaled 1,833. The referrals combined were from four referral pathways:

- GP Practices – Patients with long-term health conditions
- Secondary Mental Health services
- Long Covid Clinic
- Rotherham Hospital discharge teams

By 2022/23 the service was receiving referrals from secondary mental health services, the Long Covid Clinic and The Rotherham Foundation Trust (Rotherham District General Hospital) discharge teams. The Long Covid and hospital work began as pilots in 2021 and 2022 respectively, and by March 2023, referrals to both services had increased month by month.

Typically, over 80% of referred people engaged with RSPS across the four pathways.

Christine, aged 75



“ If it wasn't for Social Prescribing, I would not have had access to the support to help me stay independent in my own home ”

Christine is 75 years old and has lived alone since her husband went into a care home. Christine was referred to Social Prescribing by her GP to help her get some independence back. The Social Prescribing Advisor completed a full assessment and identified that the patient was not in receipt of any benefits and that she was also struggling to manage with some daily living tasks in her home. With Christine's agreement, the Social Prescribing Advisor organised a benefits check, adaptations in her home and support to apply for a Blue Badge, helping make Christine's life a little easier.

People followed up at service end typically improve wellbeing in over 85% of cases.

Mental Health Network

We facilitate The Mental Health Provider Network, bringing together community groups who support people with their mental health – from knit and natter groups to Yoga. We know that lower-level mental health provision can reduce the need for patients to visit a GP and our aim is to encourage more local participation, benefiting community members to maintain good mental health.

We do this through our facilitation and capacity building. The Network identifies and delivers opportunities for partnership working between providers, to broaden & strengthen their offer and maximise delivery opportunities.

84 Groups from the VCS have joined the Mental Health Network



The future for the Network involves a potential VCS Mental Health provider network directory – sharing contacts, referral processes, opportunities, and interests between providers. Further events and engagement to maximise involvement of providers in the Rotherham Community Mental Health Transformation – ensuring the views of VCS providers & their participants are incorporated and responded to in service changes. Partnerships and collaborative working to respond to future funding opportunities.

Member Case Study Spotlight: S62 Community Together Rotherham

The S62 CTR group were awarded funding to provide a Post Natal to Pre-School Course, that proved an enormous success.

Participants accessed a range of activities including an online group chat, parent evening meet ups, Women Supporting Women sessions, holistic care sessions and a walking group.

This funding has allowed the participants to make new friendships and they now socialise outside of the group.

“S62 are exactly the reason I love my job – I get to support and enable great people to do great things in their community!” - Kathy Wilkinson, Mental Health Provider Network Manager





Food for People in Crisis

The Food In Crisis Partnership was established some ten years ago to meet what we'd hoped was a short-term need. But, over that period the issue has grown, and more and more people are now relying on the support available through crisis food provision.

The Food In Crisis Partnership is a network of community food members, committed to ensuring people in need don't go hungry. Members continue to go above and beyond to meet the needs of their community. We chair the partnership, bringing together organisations to share learning, connect to the wider support network and ensure a strategic, joined-up approach to solving the problem.

This year, the annual Christmas Hampers scheme that we deliver for our partners at RMBC was the usual big hit! The relatively small fund was over-subscribed and highly competitive. But positive relationships with key stakeholders meant we were able to draw down further funding, increasing the total pot to £45,000. This made sure all organisations were successful and each was able to do a little bit more for the families they support, at this important time of the year.

- 12408 Food Parcels were distributed.
- 2660 had never received a food parcel before
- 485 parcels went to people who are homeless

As the year drew to an end, key partners came to the conclusion that an overhaul of the systems that underpin this work was needed, to make it fit for purpose. And so we began to plot out a co-design process to evolve this critical area of work.



Open Arms Rotherham

With the Cost-of-living crisis taking hold we worked tirelessly with partners at RMBC and across the sector to develop a project that could provide direct help to communities struggling to make ends meet.

A partnership of VAR, Rotherfed, Citizens Advice Bureau and Laser Credit Union formed to develop Open Arms Rotherham. The project recognised the power of the VCS to reach and engage the most vulnerable in our communities. The first stage began with the delivery of warm welcome sessions – engagement activities to connect people to the wider holistic support activities that the sector offers.

Twenty-seven VCS organisations, spread across specialism and the geography of the Borough received a small grant to develop and deliver a short-term programme - from hot meals for veterans to a hot yoga pod for well-being. Each project connected with a financial inclusion support offer, signposting people to in-depth support. And, importantly, it provided an additional 706 front-line staffing hours in the sector – recognising that workers are feeling the pinch too.

The project delivered:

- 400 Events
- 3500 People engaged
- 52 Training sessions
- 44 Volunteering opportunities

As the fiscal year drew to a close, the project moved on to Stage 2 – the delivery of 10 Financial Inclusion Hubs, in targeted locations across the Borough – which we'll tell you all about next year!



Link Workers

Social Prescribing Link Workers were placed in GP surgeries from the end of 2019, helping patients to access community support to improve their wellbeing. We support patients over the age of 18 years old with over 2500 referrals being accepted by the service in 2022/23, numbers that rise year on year.

The support can range from housing, debts, and benefits to social isolation; this being the most prevalent issue especially coming out of Covid lockdowns. We have made in excess of 2600 referrals into the voluntary sector.

Link workers also support new ventures and address any gaps we see in provision. To address social isolation, we have set up a community coffee morning at the Rawmarsh Social Prescribing hub, creating a partnership with a local community group to help support us and expand their reach into the community. We find the coffee morning has been a lifeline to people who come from a variety of backgrounds and social needs, from carers and bereaved patients to those who just want to socialise again. It brings in partner organisations, always has a Link Worker with a listening ear at hand and the weekly quiz is always a highlight!



Case Studies

“

“This has changed my life for the better, I now have a positive outlook”.

“I have benefited so much; I wouldn't hesitate to recommend the link worker to friends and family”

“I think I ended up with one of the best link workers who has been there when we needed him. I can't imagine if I didn't come to that first session. SO much has changed for the better in 3 months, I now have MH support, financial support and am more active with my partner”

“She was amazing, she listen without judgement and made me feel comfortable”

”

Children, Young People and Families Consortium

The Children, Young People and Families Consortium was established in 2003 by a group of Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations who wanted to explore the potential for collaboration and influence Rotherham's children and young people agenda. Since then, the Consortium has grown to include around 30 VCS member organisations who collectively employ 450+ staff, engage 500+ volunteers and provide services to around 45000 children and young people each year.

As our funding relationship with the Local Authority came to an end in '23, the Consortium consulted with our members to plot out our strategic direction for an independent future. Exciting times ahead!

30

MEMBERS OF CYPF CONSORTIUM

70

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES SHARED WITH MEMBERS, OF WHICH 29 WERE APPLIED TO

£1.6M

22 MEMBER ORGANISATIONS RECEIVED £1,611,443 FOR FRONTLINE VCS SERVICES

21

MEMBER ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED IN DELIVERING 10 LOCAL AUTHORITY INITIATIVES

63

ATTENDED 63 RELEVANT BOARDS, STRATEGY GROUPS AND MULTI-AGENCY MEETINGS

74

ATTENDED 74 PARTNERSHIP MEETINGS TO CONTRIBUTE TOWARD LOCAL PRIORITIES

233

233 STAFF/VOLUNTEER ATTENDANCES FROM 18 MEMBER ORGANISATIONS AT TRAINING AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Smiles for Miles

The Smiles for Miles project will be coming to an end in September 2023. However, due to the remarkable achievements of the project and the resounding success that has come from working together with our partner organisations, we are currently in the midst of pursuing additional funding to be able to deliver Smiles for Miles 2.0.





Flux Rotherham

FLUX Rotherham creates art projects and events with communities. From festivals filled with music, dance and outdoor arts experiences to exhibitions, creative workshops and conversations. We work with groups and individuals in Rotherham to explore and express people's creative ambitions, heritage and identity.

Over the last year activity has been targeted in communities where there are far fewer opportunities to engage in arts and cultural activities.

Read highlights from 2022 - 2023 on the following page



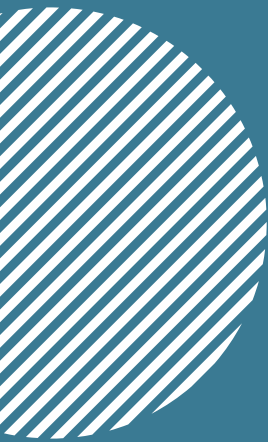
Our highlights this year included the co-production of Rotherham's first WOW- Women Of The World Festival 2022, in partnership with Rotherham Council Events and WOW Global. WOW Rotherham festival is a vibrant, colourful, bold, fun, and fearless festival celebration of women, girls, trans and non-binary communities, connecting Rotherham to other women and girls across the globe as part of the WOW – Women of the World family.

As part of the 2022 Women's Euros we installed a large-scale floor-based poetry trail throughout the town centre, animating the space and celebrating the beautiful poem "Our Rotherham", by Vicky Morris and Rotherham Young Writers.

Nearly 2000 people came to Ferham Park to enjoy Ferham Festival on a blisteringly hot day on 11 August 2022 to enjoy performances, take part in workshops, hear live music and get involved in sport and dance. This year the festival was programmed to celebrate Rotherham's South Asian cultures and communities through dance, music, sport, crafts and food.

Threads That Connect Us was a Rotherham Borough wide, artist led creative textile programme supporting 12 community groups, including Rotherham Hospital and engaging remotely with people in 15 distinct areas through project partners Rotherham Library service. The stunning artworks were exhibited in Rotherham Minster and Riverside House and are now on tour nationally with the Threads of Survival Exhibition

To find out more about FLUX Rotherham visit www.fluxrotherham.org.uk, or follow us on:
Facebook: rotherham.flux
Instagram: flux_rotherham
X: fluxrotherham



www.varotherham.org.uk

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ENGLAND

