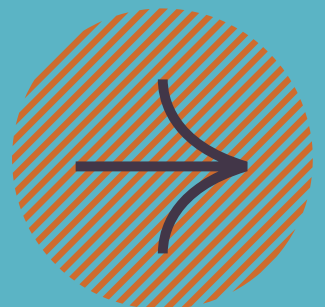


Annual Impact Report



2021 - 2022

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 would perhaps be best described as transitional. We navigated our way through the final lockdown, social distancing measures and emerged into our “new normal.” One thing is for sure, even though it has been a testing time, we have seen our sector flourish in so many ways. During this year we were able to support front line VCS groups with direct grants of over £1.2m and we supported the sector to attract and secure many further millions. It’s been a real pleasure for us to support our members and the community during this time.

It is difficult to summarise a year in simply a few paragraphs, which I suppose is why we put together a whole report. This document acts to give you a snapshot of our activity for the fiscal year 21-22. As you will read, we have continued to grow as an organisation, establishing new, exciting projects for the people of Rotherham, as well as continuing to provide reliable support and services that make up the core of what we do.

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.

Volunteers

The clue is in our name; volunteers are at the heart of what we do at VAR and, every year we celebrate them for the whole month of June, an extension of National Volunteer Week. Due to the pandemic were unable to coordinate all the activities and events that we usually do throughout the month, however we were still keen to recognise and shine a light on Rotherham volunteers, so lit up the town hall purple as part of a regional initiative to thank volunteers for their efforts.

The Kitemark is a quality mark that we developed with Rotherham Together Partnership, to evidence good practice amongst local volunteer involving organisations. It recognises excellence in managing volunteers and we currently have two levels organisations can apply for – Kitemark Standard and Kitemark Plus. During the year, even with the disruption caused by the pandemic, we received a selection of kitemark plus submissions and presented Wentworth Woodhouse with their kitemark plus certificate at the end of April 2021, which was a real highlight of the year.



Wentworth Woodhouse receive the Kitemark Plus award





Group Support

Alongside championing volunteers, the heart of our role is supporting the voluntary and community sector in the borough. One of the primary ways we do this is through our Neighbourhood Development work. The key worker in this area helps groups in a myriad of ways, from providing information on starting a group, supporting development plans, to acting as a “critical friend” to read through draft funding bids before submission.

This support is really important to individuals and groups trying to navigate their way through the initial months of starting out. Below is a story which demonstrates how much of an impact this help can have.

Community centre brought back to life

A community centre had been standing empty in The Brecks area of Rotherham and a lady had taken on the lease to bring the centre back to life. We supported her with development plans, information on bank accounts, provided a funding search identifying 13 funders for repairs, running costs and activities, information on group structures, constitutions and policies/procedures. The community centre, now called The Brecks Community Hub, has since secured funding, which has seen it revitalised; it is now running successful groups and activities for the community.

122
interventions

Engagement & Communications

We underwent a refresh of the Rotherham Gismo site this year, which is an online directory of groups operating in the borough. We adjusted the website to meet our audiences' needs and reached out to all those in the directory to see if their information was up-to-date and correct. We currently have over 600 groups registered on Gismo covering a wide range of areas, and offering diverse support to their communities.

Our weekly e-bulletin, which now has nearly 1300 subscribers, has become a pillar of communications in Rotherham, cherished by many people who subscribe and provide content to be shared. During this year in particular, the regularity of the weekly bulletin provided some consistency and connection during a time when many of us felt isolated and unable to operate in our usual way.

Although some Covid-19 measures were still in place, we were happy to offer 7 of our members a chance to promote their work at the Rotherham Show. To ensure the safety of our members we replaced our usual marquee with individual gazebos. This impacted the number of organisations we would usually support over the weekend, but we were really happy to be a part of it.

1290

e-bulletin
subscribers

23

new members

Professional Services

The Community Accountancy, payroll & HR service at VAR offers tailored support to Charities, Community Groups, CIC's and Social Enterprises.

Through our community accountancy service we are able to support community groups to set up straight forward and easy to use finance systems, as well as helping more established charities to review their financial systems as the complexity of managing different funds grows.

The payroll bureau service provides bespoke payroll preparation and calculation. Our payroll service is fully computerised and the team can provide 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.

Clients tell us they find it invaluable to have friendly specialist expert support available to them locally from within the charity sector.

12

organisations had in depth support from HR

80

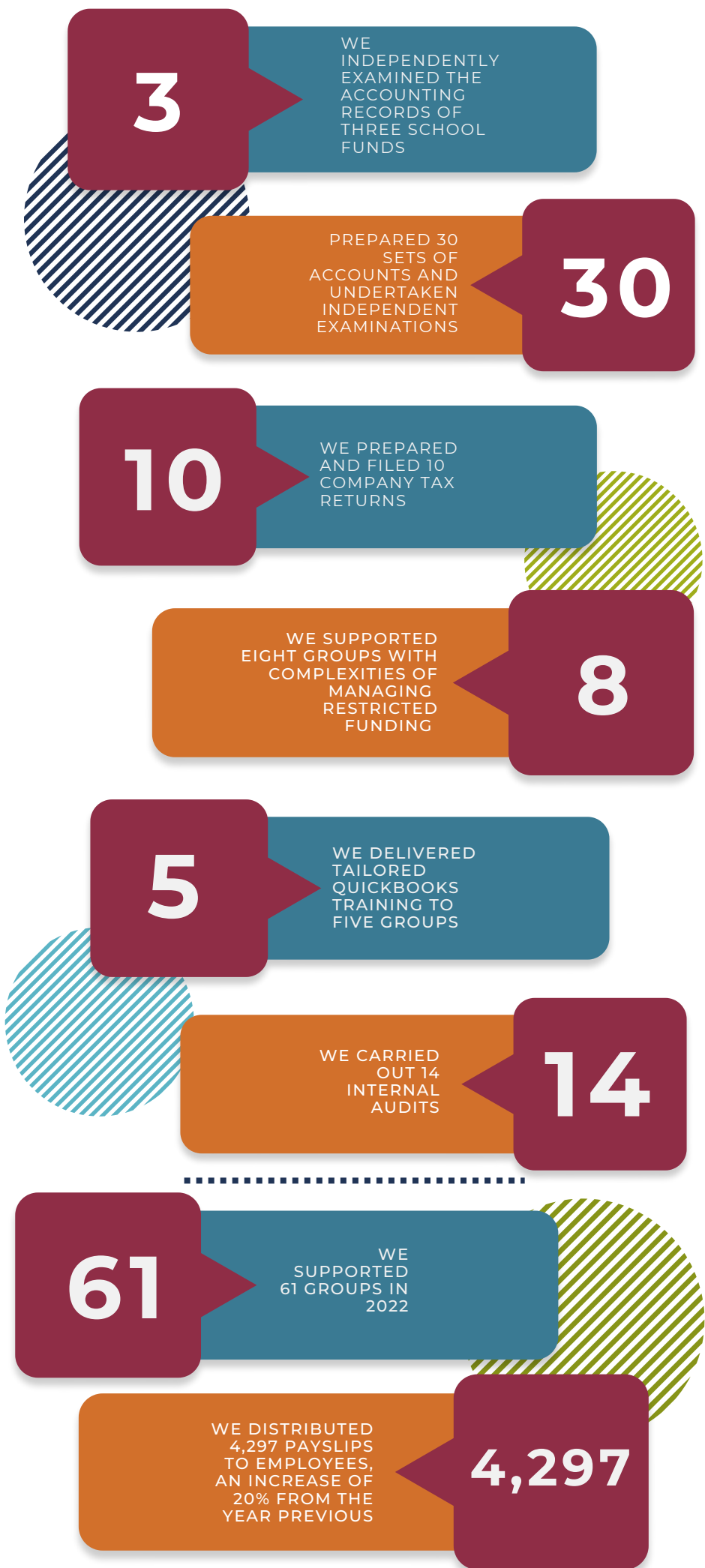
policies created and/or reviewed

25

recruitment campaigns supported

VAR's HR Support Service provides information, advice and training on employment matters for VCS groups, social enterprises and other small to medium-sized organisations. Offering a professional and cost-effective service to organisations in Rotherham and the surrounding area, we operate in line with employment legislation and best practice.

Community Accountancy



Payroll Bureau



Social Prescribing

The Rotherham Social Prescribing Service helps people with long-term health conditions and mental health issues to access a wide variety of services and activities in the borough. Established as a pilot in 2012, the service continues as a national model of good practice 10 years later.

Initially supporting targeted patients in primary care with long-term health conditions, the service has grown to support patients in secondary mental health care since 2015. More recently, the service has established a Social Prescriber within Rotherham Long COVID Clinic at Breathing Space, and is piloting Social Prescribing within Rotherham Hospital's Urgent & Emergency Care Centre.

The service has a team based at VAR, including a Service Manager, Administration & Support Officer and 8 Social Prescribers (known as VCS Advisors). Beyond the team at VAR, the service is much larger, with 20 linked VCS organisations delivering a wide range of funded support services for referred patients.





David referred to social prescribing after having a stroke. He was at rock bottom; as his Mum said, had "lost his old life." His Mum, who cares for David, was also affected as it was heartbreaking to see her son so unhappy.

A conversation with one of our social prescribers revealed that David was an avid Sheffield United Football Club (SUFC) supporter, but couldn't now attend any of the matches due to transport issues. Our social prescriber contacted SUFC and the Chairman of the Supporters Club (Derek) was very helpful and arranged for David to attend four matches for free. He also picked David up and brought him home! David and his Mum were really looked after whilst at the ground and this cherished occasion put a smile back on both their faces.

Food for People in Crisis

Food for people in Crisis partners provided over 13,000 emergency food parcels to people in financial difficulty between April 2021 and March 2022. This supported people and families through tough periods of time when they had difficulty making ends meet. At Christmas VAR administered the Local Authority Emergency Assistance grant to enable VCS organisations to provide Christmas hampers to their communities. These included essential items as well as some treats.

VAR supported Shiloh, the charity for homeless people, by making 30 bespoke seasonal food hampers at Christmas as a result of donations received through our people in need appeal. These were very gratefully received as they were made specifically with homeless people in mind and contained some essential non-food items as well as food and Christmas goodies.



**13,089 emergency
food parcels
provided**



Anything's Possible, Rotherham!

In 2021 thirteen VCS organisations came together to propose the project “Anything’s Possible Rotherham” funded through the Community Renewal Fund, managed by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and administered by South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority.

Spearheaded by VAR, the bid was successful in securing £595,926 for the VCS across Rotherham to provide a holistic support offer for people aged 14+. The partnership brought together VAR, Clifton Learning Partnership, Cortonwood Comeback, Endeavour, JADE, Lets BeFriend, Rotherfed, Rotherham Parent Carer Forum, Rotherham United Community Sports Trust, Rush House, WEA (Workers Educational Association), YAWR (You Ask We Respond) and YWCA (Young Womens Christian Association).

The menu of activities for the project included developing Improved digital literacy, access to IT and training for job searching leading to employment, improved English literacy and conversation, improving mental health and wellbeing, feasibility studies, supporting people with disabilities and SEND (especially into the job market) social action projects, youth work, life skills, outdoor activities, qualifications, community gardens, mentoring, intergenerational activities , support for parents and carers, enterprise clubs and empowering the community of Rotherham. Anything’s Possible Rotherham concludes in September 2022 when the final outcomes will be reported.

Children, Young People and Families Consortium

The Children, Young People and Families Consortium is a co-ordinated platform for like-minded VCS organisations to share their skills and knowledge, develop relationships and build on what works well. By working together, we reach greater potential in improving the lives of children, young people and families in Rotherham.

Between April 2021 and March 2022, we increased our membership to 33 by welcoming new voluntary and community sector organisations: Worker's Education Association, BME Young People and Carers CIC, Brampton Youth Group, Family Lives, Pop's Outdoor Adventure and The Learning Community.

Throughout the year, we shared 60 funding opportunities with members leading to 37 successful bids and a combined £1.9million in funding towards frontline services for our members. A highlight came when we learned in July 2021 that we had been successful in our joint-consortia bid to the National Lottery Community Fund, resulting in 11 of our members receiving a total of £493,047 to deliver the Smiles for Miles Base Project (more on that on the next page!)

Just as the network provides a support network for its members, we see many young people navigate towards a happier healthier and safer future through the support provided within the Consortium. We were incredibly proud when Millie Bell, a member of the Different But Equal Board (DBE) won the Young Volunteer awards at the 2021 Community Achievement Awards. The DBE is a network of young people from a diverse range of backgrounds who, through their voice, influence the services which they and other young people receive. This was such a well-deserved recognition of over 4 years of volunteering by Millie with the Consortium and a range of other partners.



Millie Bell wins award for
Young Volunteer of the year (2021)

Smiles for Miles

The Smiles for Miles base project was designed originally in 2019 by members of the Different But Equal Board (DBE) and young people accessing services in Rotherham. Launching in the Autumn of 2021, the 2-year project funded by the National Lottery aims to support young people to reach their goals.



717

activities / interventions



5859

attendances



945

children / young people



The project is all about co-production. It brings together 11 local organisations who work with young people to lead the direction of the project based on what they need or would like to “do and have a go at”. The 11 organisations are: Jade Youth and Community, Clifton Learning Partnership, YMCA Rotherham, Rotherham Open Arts Renaissance, Rush House, YWCA Yorkshire, Rotherham Parent Carer Forum, Mind, Grow, Endeavour, Rotherham United Community Sports Trust. These organisations offer Open access youth provision and access to a trusted adult. A basket of support offers a range of free activities such as Football and sports, outdoor activities and art projects as well as access to support with both mental health & well being and education & employment.

It began with 3 months of taster activities based on the original desires and ideas of the young people who were involved in its initial development. This process showed us that there is a more than sufficient need and appetite for the types of activities and support we are offering, as demonstrated by the achievement of our year 1 target of reaching 700-800 young people in as little as 6 months, with a consistent take-up of activities and support across the project.

Flux Rotherham

VAR is the lead organisation in a partnership which secured Arts Council Creative People and Places funding for Rotherham, resulting in the new programme, Flux Rotherham. The consortium of partners includes Wentworth Woodhouse Preservation Trust, Grimm and Co, Rotherham Council and ROAR (Rotherham Open Arts Renaissance).

Creative People and Places focuses on parts of the country where involvement in creativity and culture is significantly below the national average. Each project is completely unique to its area and communities, testing how to grow arts provision in ways that are relevant and lasting. Flux Rotherham is an action-research programme designed to engage Rotherham's communities in arts and culture.

In September 2021, with a new Programme Director in place, and later in January 2022 with a full team recruited, we were able to begin to connect with communities and start to test creative activity.





389

young people skating at the pop-up skate park in All Saint's Square

299

people creating their own screen-prints and stickers

180

young people taking part in spray and stencil workshops

1454

visitors came to see Robot Selfie painting in the Outdoor Covered Market

126

people submitted their selfies online for the Robot Selfie canvas

It's been a very busy and exciting time, but one of the high points from the programme so far was supporting a group of young producers to co-create Rotherham's first Skate and Arts Festival- this took place in February as part of the wider Children's Capital of Culture launch. An action-packed programme with 16500 visitors ran over 3 days, full of skateboarding demos, art installations, floor murals, creative workshops, live music and street food.

Photo credit: James Mulkeen

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ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND

