

# Voluntary Action Harrow Co-operative

*Helping You Achieve*

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**Our Impact 2014 - 2015**

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# Foreword

As Voluntary Action Harrow Co-operative (VAHC) reaches its fourth year, we have much to reflect on.

VAHC has come a long way since our humble beginnings occupying a small desk and using broken laptops. This year we have focused diligently on streamlining our services, with a direct focus on responding to needs in the community in a collaborative fashion.

We have established some real and lasting relationships with our partners in the public sector, the voluntary and community sector (VCS) and the co-operative movement.

There have been many highlights throughout the year. We have a new trading name to emphasize our co-operative roots and values, along with a new logo, accessible website, vision, mission and strategic plan.

This document outlines what we have done and how we have performed over the previous year. It includes useful statistics relating to our services and an update on our newest projects.

Our members feel strongly that we have achieved a great deal in supporting and strengthening local communities, charitable organisations and social enterprises. We are proud of our achievements and grateful to everyone who has supported us. It means the world to us!

There are still huge challenges ahead but, with your help, together we will strengthen the voluntary and community sector in Harrow.

*Members of Voluntary Action Harrow Co-operative*

## About Us

Voluntary Action Harrow Co-operative works with the voluntary and community sector providing information, training and guidance to help them achieve their objectives.



*Helping you achieve.*

Based in Harrow, we are a not-for-profit co-operative owned by our workers. We are all local residents of Harrow with in-depth knowledge of the local area and who's doing what. Collectively, our members have over 35 years' experience in the voluntary, community, and social enterprise sectors, specialising in capacity building in a variety of different organisational development areas.

We work with a diverse range of local organisations, from small community groups to regional and international charities. We also run, manage and co-ordinate projects working with local people and groups to help them make a difference in their local community.

**Vision:** The local voluntary and community sector has the skills, resources and support to achieve their objectives.

**Mission and Purpose:** To develop a strong, independent, purposeful and unified not-for-profit sector in Harrow, and support the growth of a successful co-operative movement in West London by providing information, training and guidance.

**Values:** Co-operatives are based on the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity. In the tradition of their founders, co-operative members believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others.

## Our Highlights



**Alex Buckmire**

*Research & Development Director*

"It's been a very busy 12 months, but the highlight has to be working with so many passionate, engaged and innovative co-operators and local people."



**Asia Chetouani**

*Safeguarding Development Director*

"The year has flown by; we have worked with colleagues whose passion for their work is immense. Best of all, we have so many new friends and colleagues."



**Rachel Wright**

*Operations Director*

"It has felt like our range of activities, along with the skills and commitment of our team, have come together nicely to create a stronger community development package."



**Sue Bush**

*Program & Training Director*

"My highlights have been working with groups from diverse faiths and cultures, and bringing a sensitive and difficult subject out into the community."

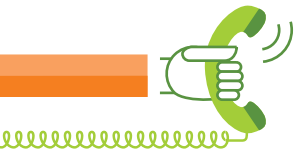
# Output/Outcome Summary



265 people joined our Volunteer Network



- From 79 trainee feedback forms (a sample):
  - 90% agreed training objectives had been achieved;
  - 91% agreed the skills learnt will be useful;
  - 92% agreed they would recommend the session to a friend.
- Implemented 20 policies and procedures, which have reduced the risk to the organisation's sustainability and ensured good practice and safeguards are in place.
- 100% of the groups who we worked with on an in-depth one-to-one basis felt:
  - they had increased their knowledge in key development areas;
  - they had developed their ability to improve their organisation;
  - they had increased their confidence to manage their group;
  - the value of the support offered was double or triple its worth.
- Supported the development of 4 constitutions for new groups, enabling over 9 social projects to be delivered in the local community.



50+ telephone advice sessions





# Trustee & Governance Development

**Training:** Some of our most popular courses included workshops on trustee roles and responsibilities, recruitment and organisational start-up.

Feedback from attendees:

- “Knowledgeable and passionate about the topic.”
- “Fully covered my needs as an introduction to becoming a trustee. The content was ideal.”
- “Excellent, interactive and a worthwhile session.”

**Harrow Trustee Network:** A support forum and networking opportunity for Harrow’s VCS to share ideas and experiences, and to discuss current topics that are important to trustees. This year, 50 people attended our network sessions; an increase of 108% over the previous year. All those who attended the sessions left very positive feedback, with comments demonstrating that the insight gained was helpful.

**#Trustee2B:** The Charity Commission has reported that just 0.5% of trustees in England and Wales are aged between 18 and 24, compared with 12% of the population as a whole. This lack of diversity on charitable trustee boards restricts access to a broader range of skills, knowledge and experience, which can be fundamental to a charity’s performance. #Trustee2B aimed to solve these diversity issues by training and enabling young people (18-35) to become trustees within local voluntary and community sector groups.

The project was very popular, with over 25 applicants wanting to become trustees in local groups. These young people are currently being recruited onto trustee boards.



## #Trustee2B: Steph became a trustee at Mind In Harrow

“I think the support offered by VAHC is fantastic. There are plenty of training courses and networking events for new trustees, all of them offered at convenient times for people working full time. Everyone at VAHC is helpful and encouraging throughout the process of becoming a trustee and keep in touch to see how it is going once you’ve been matched up to a charity. I have been a Trustee since December 2014, and have really enjoyed the whole process and learnt a lot about charity governance.”

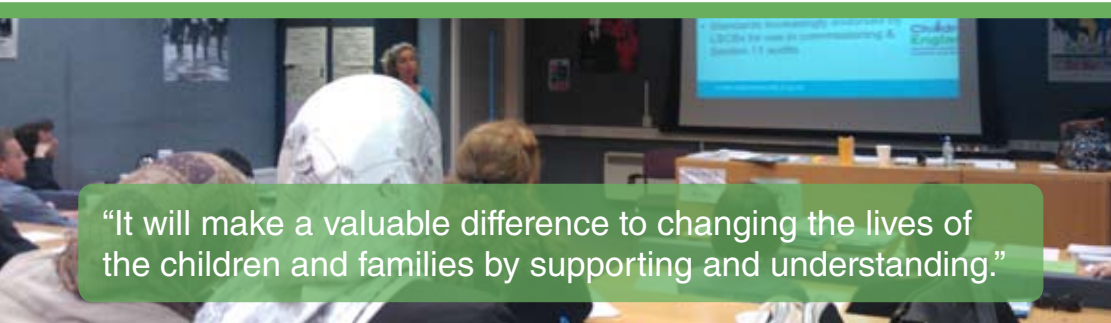
## Children & Young People Safeguarding

Working in partnership with Ealing CVS, we were contracted by the Harrow Local Safeguarding Children Board as their outreach team to promote, engage and enable consistent best practice in safeguarding.

We have successfully delivered safeguarding training to the community, voluntary, faith and private sectors in Harrow, working hard to reach minority ethnic groups, organisations and communities.

Achievements include:

- Pre/post-training evaluation indicated that 100% of participants improved their confidence to make a referral.
- Distribution of 485 Green Books (Harrow Safeguarding Children Guidance).
- Organisations that did not have a Nominated Safeguarding Person have now started the process of appointing a safeguarding lead.
- The set-up of a Children and Young People's Safeguarding Forum for updates on changes in legislation, and providing a platform for discussion and raising awareness.
- Promotion of multi-agency working to create a better understanding of how organisations can work together more effectively to keep children and young people safe.
- Processing 93% more Disclosure and Barring Service checks than 2013/14.



“It will make a valuable difference to changing the lives of the children and families by supporting and understanding.”

## Upskilling Your Organisation

Working with 5 different Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) volunteer-led organisations, this programme built employability skills by coaching volunteers in a range of organisational development areas.

During the programme, all volunteer groups increased their knowledge of how to identify and diversify their funding. There was a marked improvement in volunteers' bid-writing skills, enabling them to take more ownership of their own fundraising and helping them to sustain their activities.

Volunteers reported many wider community benefits from the support we offered. One group described how they felt it put them in a better position to deliver more structured and effective services. Another stated that our help in identifying areas where they could develop enabled them to provide a more professional support service to their community.

Feedback found the quality of advice, support and information given was 'Excellent' (60%) or 'Very Good' (40%).

Comments from feedback given:

- “It was reassuring to know we are on the right path, and have much more confidence for the future.”
- “The support offered highlighted many areas where improvements could be made in a very friendly, flexible and amicable manner.”

**Question:** What would you have done if you could not have accessed the support?

**Answer:** “It's more what we wouldn't have done. The draft documents (the governance policies and procedures) wouldn't have been done. Your support put us in a better position.”





## #PopUpHarrow

Volunteer in small chunks

From November 2014, we have worked with local organisations to identify, develop and upload micro-volunteer opportunities to the Team London Speed Volunteering website.

We have uploaded 136 opportunities, equivalent to 662 volunteer hours, and engaged with 138 volunteers.



**92% of attendees felt their volunteer experience was rewarding and valuable.**

## Supporting Harrow Community Action

We are responsible for the co-ordination, information exchange and database management of Harrow Community Action CIC (HCA).

### What is Harrow Community Action?

HCA is a consortium working to strengthen the voluntary and community sector. It provides a collaborative co-production bidding platform to secure public sector funded contracts. The consortium is working towards creating a stronger sense of local identity, engagement, support, collaboration and a focused mission for the VCS.



During the year we have:

- Established all the appropriate policies and relevant consortia procedures.
- Successfully co-ordinated HCA's launch and annual general meeting (AGM).
- Increased HCA's membership to 30 VCS groups.
- Sent 24 e-bulletins and increased database membership to 473 subscribers.
- Of 29 feedback respondents, 52% rated our 'Community Newsletters' as 'Excellent' or 'Good'.



## Supporting The VCS Forum

Through our support to HCA, we co-ordinate and administer the VCS Forum, which brings together local groups to discuss issues that are important within the sector.

With help from others, attendance at forum meetings has steadily increased, with an average of 19 organisations being represented at each meeting. This is an increase of 49% on last year's average.

We worked closely with the Constitution Working Group in the development of the constitution for the Harrow VCS Forum.

## Supporting The Co-op Movement

Since we started as a co-operative, we've felt quite lonely in West London, with most of our fellow co-operators and co-operatives situated elsewhere.

We believe strongly that the co-operative model is a real alternative for social action and, when we can, we support local organisations in setting up as co-operatives. To develop this work, we have progressed with our plans to start the West London Co-operative Development Agency.

**News:** In July 2014, Alex was elected as a Worker Co-operative Council Member for Co-operatives UK.



## Health & Safety

After receiving a number of requests for first aid training, we started facilitating Emergency First Aid courses, both in-house and open to the public. 35 delegates have passed the course, each receiving a certificate that is valid for 3 years.



Harrow has one of the highest tuberculosis (TB) rates in London. In partnership with Harrow Council's Public Health and TB Alert, we co-ordinated an outreach training programme to raise awareness of tuberculosis among local communities who are most at risk, reaching 38 individuals.



## Eco-Audit

We take our environmental responsibilities very seriously by continuously developing and introducing more environmentally friendly products, supply lines and procedures.

Funded by City Bridge, an eco-audit report was produced for our office within the Lodge. We were pleased with most of the results, including our recycling level of 66%, which is above the national average of 43%.

Nevertheless, results for the Lodge as a whole showed that the general good practice limits for energy consumption and carbon footprint levels were exceeded by more than 450%, thus indicating an urgent need to address the issue of making the Lodge more environmentally responsible. This is something we will be focusing on and looking to improve in the coming year.



# What's On The Agenda?

- **Kaizen** - Continuous improvement of ourselves and the VCS. We'll be launching new projects, training and services that respond to local needs.
- In line with our new strategic objectives and changes in commissioning, we will focus on development services that effectively **measure, monitor and communicate impact.**
- We are going for the **PQASSO** quality mark and will be doing more work for other VCS groups seeking a quality mark.
- **The Beehive** - We have wanted to do this for a while. An incubator hub service for young people to start their own social enterprises, charities and co-operatives.
- We will be improving our **Harrow Community Network** website to increase access to knowledge of local services and events.

## Thank You!

A massive thank you to our funders, clients and supporters. To list but a few:



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