



Community Links Bromley

Annual review 2020/2021



A warm welcome from our Chair, Janet Tibbalds

This year has been marked by the extraordinary challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. It was a year in which the pandemic ripped through communities, separated families and caused massive disruption. It highlighted inequalities locally, regionally and nationally and it was against this backdrop we continued to work to support local charities and the communities that they serve.

To provide that support we were indebted to our funders including the London Borough of Bromley.

Our thanks also to the Direct Line Group, who provided £170,000 support to invest in the sector locally. The funding was used to provide a grants programme to support organisations working in Bromley that were either delivering COVID-19 front line services, or whose operations had been disrupted by the measures put in place to stem the pandemic and its consequences.

The scheme was quickly oversubscribed and bids amounting to over £347,000 were received. The grants were distributed to 38 groups of various sizes covering a range of services across the whole borough. The funding made a massive impact on the organisations and the communities that rely on them. Many of the organisations have freely admitted that without the grants they would have been unable to respond in the way that they have.

One by product of this work was that we invested in a new Awards Force Funding platform. This new platform has helped save time, reduce costs and provide a better experience for all programme participants. We have used this to administer a number of funding schemes with bids in excess of £1.5million.

At the start of the year, we were required to re-tender for the Bromley Support to the Sector Contract. The application was very much a team effort. It resulted in a successful outcome of a five-year contract securing our future and allowing our service to plan for the years ahead. This review can provide no more than a brief overview of the work undertaken during the year. It is a snapshot to highlight the tireless work we all do to look after vulnerable people and support thriving communities.

At Community Links Bromley, we can be really proud of the work we carried out during the year. It was very much a team effort, so our thanks go to our team of fellow trustees, staff and volunteers.



Janet Tibbalds, Chair

Support to the Sector



As an organisation, our focus remains unchanged. To ensure a thriving sector locally we manage and co-ordinate a number of different activities that include:

- a) Information, advice and guidance
- b) Funding and investment
- c) Volunteering
- d) Strategic partnership
- e) Strategic voice

We provide the sector with relevant, appropriate and timely information, advice and guidance in order to build capacity and support its role within the community.

During the year we:

- Developed and relaunched our website
- Grew our Facebook presence
- Developed our social media presence through Instagram

The website provides an important space and resource and includes alerts to keep people informed on the latest Coronavirus support and

information nationally and for the local VCSE sector.

Training

Our support to the sector continued with ongoing training, particularly for smaller and newly formed groups including the Mutual Aid groups.

This training offer, seminar and conference programme continues to be well received.

During the year, we delivered sessions on trustee recruitment, developing trustee roles, social value, negotiating and managing property leases for the not-for-profit sector, hybrid working, workshops on voluntary sector recovery planning and COVID-19 Employment Law.

These events were in addition to our on-going Volunteer Managers Forums and funding workshops.

Many of these were delivered in partnership with other providers and our thanks go to The Ethical Property Foundation, Social Value UK, Reach

Support to the Sector

Volunteering, Get on Board, Thackray Williams LLP and London Sport for their assistance with our programmes.

Advice

As with many organisations, much of our activity migrated to online services as face-to-face services ceased during lockdown. To do this we invested in new IT equipment to enable home working, funded by London Plus and the GLA. This enabled us to continue to provide direct support to organisations. This support was provided to 196 different organisations, a 27% increase to the previous year.

Funding and Investment

We continued work to secure much needed investment into the Borough. This work was instrumental in a successful proposal to develop a local Parent/Carer Champion Network. This project has subsequently secured further funding and continues to thrive.

This was one of nine collaborative bids we worked on this year. In addition, we supported and advised charities on sixty-eight unique bids resulting in £366,499 new investment into the borough. This was 83% above our agreed fundraising target.

CASE STUDY: Transform Bromley Borough (TBB) Food Partnership

One of the key issues and challenges that the pandemic highlighted was food deprivation and insecurity. We were contacted by the Southeast London representative from FareShare (London Food Alliance - Food Distribution Network). As a result of this approach, we worked with partners, including the Council, to agree an approach for food distribution locally. This work was subsequently led by Transform Bromley Borough (TBB) Food Partnership, which was set up to accept and distribute food provided by FareShare. This aimed to reduce food deprivation and insecurity in Bromley.

We have supported this partnership with Direct Line funding and subsequently worked with the partnership on a Food Roots Incubator programme application.

Volunteering

Encouraging and nurturing opportunities

Leading and generating expectations and cultures in which volunteering can thrive remains central to our mission.

This year, a key to our support to the community was our work in partnership with the London Borough of Bromley to mobilise and deploy the army of local volunteers.

This enabled us to match over 1300 volunteers with 1500 households needing assistance. This included support to self-isolating people as a result of track and trace contact and for those individuals contacted by the government to stay at home because they were clinically extremely vulnerable.

Whether undertaking shopping; collecting prescriptions; dog walking or telephone befriending, these volunteers provide a critical service and support for many vulnerable members of our community.

We also supported local volunteer-involving organisations who wanted to adjust their usual volunteer roles to meet the adjusted needs of their clients during the pandemic.

These roles were directly promoted to the 4600 individuals who had expressed an interest in volunteering throughout the pandemic.

1300
volunteers
matched
with
1500
households
needing
assistance



Volunteering

We also played a significant role in vaccine clinic volunteering. CLB was approached by the Bromley GP Alliance and the Clinical Commissioning Group to promote the volunteer roles they had for vaccine clinics to those who had expressed an interest in volunteering during the pandemic and via CLB's on-line volunteer recruitment portal. We were also actively involved in the deployment at local clinics.

Up to 31st March 2021, we made 349 assignments to seventy-three clinic sessions.



“Thank you Diane, you are a star. We couldn’t do this without any of you so your help is greatly appreciated.”

Oakfield Surgery, January 2021

“ The volunteers have been brilliant, I am listening to a couple of them now greeting people – they are doing a great job.”

Bromley Civic Centre, March 2021

349

assignments made to

73

clinic sessions

Projects

During the year, we worked with a range of partners to deliver different projects.

We have delivered programmes to improve health and wellbeing including the City Bridge Trust – Cornerstone Fund project and the Royal Mencap Society – Round the World Challenge; delivered programmes to support children's services in the borough; as well as programmes to help improve services and support for residents of local day centres.

Mottingham Big Local Refocused

During the year, considerable progress was made in relation to the Mottingham Big Local project.

It included:

- The development of a new large grants programme
- The recruitment of consultants to develop the next three-year plan for the area.
- The new plan, subsequently approved by the Local Trust, will result in a new programme of investment worth up to £650,000 for the area in the coming years.



Royal Mencap Society – Round the World Challenge

Community Links Bromley (CLB) led a bid alongside Bromley Mencap, MyTime Active and Palace for Life Foundation to apply for funding from Royal Mencap to take part in the Round the World Challenge. The fund supports people with a learning disability to get outside and get active in a way that is flexible, fun, and empowering.

It is about turning hours of fun sporting and physical activities into a round-the-world adventure. Each hour of activity logged by the individual moves them closer to their next destination, on their way to complete their route which can be around the UK, Europe or the World. Individuals will receive a postcard from a different location as the number of hours of activity they do takes them around their chosen route. These events were initially free to those over 16 with a learning disability.

Projects



GLA Trustee Pilot

This project aim was to develop and deliver a trustee training programme. The pilot focused on two events: a best practice in Trustee Recruitment session and an introduction to Trusteeship session. The sessions were delivered and marketed to include both local and wider geographical regions, making sessions more easily accessible to more Londoners.



City Bridge Trust – Cornerstone Fund

This project seeks to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for citizens by improving the engagement of civil society with commissioning through collaboration at Sustainable and Transformation Partnership (STP) and at borough levels. Better inclusion, voice and asset-based inputs will enhance service strategies and commissioning; improve the whole healthcare system; and make better use of resources. This will be explored through the shared good practice on what works at borough and STP levels; project interventions which challenge current working practices and contribute to changing culture and developing shared understanding of the benefits of co-production.



Projects

Young Londoners Fund Bexley and Bromley Local Network

The Mayor's Young Londoners Fund is helping children and young people to fulfil their potential, particularly those at risk of getting caught up in crime. It is supporting a range of education, sport, cultural and other activities for young Londoners.

The fund is seeing £30 million invested directly to projects in local communities.

As part of the Young Londoners Fund, the **Bromley and Bexley Local CYP network** hosted an interactive online event on 1 December 2020 to focus on the engagement and participation of young people in organisations and activities. The event was a great success, with over 60 people participating throughout the morning in our various workshops.



Our Money

The team worked hard to keep costs within budgets and, at the same time, worked hard to secure external resources to support the delivery of priority services to our sector. It resulted in substantial new investment in the Mottingham area, as well as investment from the GLA and the Cornerstone Fund to develop and deliver projects.

Income for the year was £606,520, which was 45.45% higher than that for 2019-20 (£416,991). This was the result of a substantial increase in restricted funds which increased from £257,403 to £446,746. This included the one-off grant payment from the Direct Line Fund to support local Bromley based charities, referred to earlier in this report.

Our position at the end of the year showed a surplus of £99,846 compared to a surplus of £111,425 previous year. Whilst much of this surplus is restricted, our reserves continued to grow.

The Unrestricted Reserves carried forward of £94,332 represents a 48.26% increase on the previous year (£62,165) and shows that the Trustees plans, as set out in previous Annual Reports, to increase our reserves are on target.

We continue to obtain our core funding from the London Borough of Bromley. However, we remain committed to diversifying our sources of funding and are pleased that over 66% of our funding in 2020/21 came from other sources.

As a service, we are only too aware of the financial pressures experienced by our funders and, as such, the trustees wish to thank our core funders for their continued support.

The strategy of the organisation remains one which aims to have core funding from local authority and to enable on-going development through project funding from large funders like the big lottery and charitable trusts.

Our aim is to ensure that we can give confidence to stakeholders that the charity's finances are being managed and can also provide an indicator of future funding needs.

£606,520 income for the year

The Future

The year concluded with the successful reapplication for the Provision of Infrastructure Support Service to the voluntary and community organisation and social enterprises in Bromley. This is an important vote of confidence by the Borough in our services.

Importantly, the 5-year contract will enable us to plan ahead to meet the changing needs of the sector. It means that the service is well positioned to plan ahead and it will enable us to refresh our vision and service and ensure we remain a vital point of connection and communication for intelligence, experience and good practice across the sector.

Our Team

Staff

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- Stephen Smith, Funding and Development Officer

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- Hugh Stultz, Health and Wellbeing Transformation Project Co-ordinator

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- Jane Walker, Mottingham Big Local

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- Carmelo Di Maria, Simply Connect Bromley Project Development Worker

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- Alex Doust, Office Manager

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- Kathryn Mitchell, Web and Digital Assistant

Our Board

Janet Tibbalds, Chair of Trustees

Byron Johnson Brown, Trustee | Carole Wells, Trustee

Elliot Lewis, Trustee | Luke Hallard, Trustee | Paul Cosgrave, Trustee

Tadeusz Peter Dabrowski, Trustee/Treasurer

Our Thanks

Our service has been delivered by a small and resolute team of staff and volunteers.

During the year, we said goodbye to Yvonne Linton who worked for a brief period as our Development Manager for the Mottingham Big Local Refocused. We also welcomed two new members of staff during the year - Steve Smith, our Funding and Development Officer and Hugh Stultz, a Cornerstone project worker. Both settled in well and continue to make an important contribution to the team.

In delivering our many services, we have been helped by our volunteers.

Their contributions continued to be invaluable, and our thanks go to them.



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