



## **Project Outline**

### **VCSE Capacity Building & Infrastructure Fund 2024/2025:**

#### **Community Links Bromley**

We are excited to be recruiting to the new post of Grassroots Development Officer to lead a new project to support and develop small grass roots organisations in the Borough.

The post will work alongside and be supported by our current Funding and Development Manager.

As the Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) for Bromley, CLB exists to offer support to organisations and residents of the London Borough of Bromley. We support frontline voluntary organisations to identify and respond to the needs of the local community by offering advice, signposting, training, funding and capacity building support, facilitating a Voluntary Sector Strategic Network and representing the views and interests of the sector at a strategic level, including on the Health and Well Being Board and the JSNA steering committee, and as such are confident that we are well placed to deliver the necessary support to the sector.

We are conscious that beyond the larger and more established groups that are already engaged with our work lie a considerable number of smaller groups. These groups play a vital role for many who access their support but who are often going under the radar and are therefore less connected with statutory partners, less supported by infrastructure organisations like CLB, and less accessible by residents. This was emphasised in a recent State of the Sector survey undertaken by CLB. The survey identified a number of issues including challenges around funding, effective interaction within the sector, premises, etc. It also emphasised the need for forum development and a greater voice for small charities.

This is important as services currently being commissioned are not all reaching everyone in the community, since typically only larger, more recognised groups have been commissioned – where in many cases it is the smaller groups who have unique relationships with, and understanding of, “seldom heard” groups in the borough. As a result, the knowledge of the experiences of ‘seldom heard’ groups, their needs, ideas, and the ways to incorporate their learning that would make services more equitable and accessible is prevented from shaping and influencing a range of services in the way that it needs to.

In this post, funded for 2 years, the new Grassroots Development Officer post will focus on:

- *Identifying:* Recognising that some of the most impactful groups are also the smallest, often informal and unincorporated, groups (and as such may often be operating ‘under the radar’ of many statutory and VCSE partners as well as wider residents). A key focus of the Grassroots Development Officer role will be on identifying and engaging with these groups to better understand their service offer, user base, and development needs.
- *Connecting:* Building trusting and supportive relationships to help form connections across the wider sector by establishing an informal grassroots network of micro VCSEs in Bromley to build a sustainable support system of peer support and intelligence sharing.
- *Developing:* Providing tailored capacity building support to groups to maximise the positive impact of their services, such as support with communications, coordination, governance, funding and premises to name a few.

- *Promoting*: Enabling greater recognition of, respect for, and relationships between micro grassroots VCSEs and health partners in Bromley, as well as wider awareness among residents of the services offered by these groups to boost their impact.

Our work will focus on groups that are:

- Below £100k in turnover (\* According to the SoS report, smaller organisations made up the vast majority (77%) of the sector in Bromley. Therefore, do we want to focus on groups with a lower income?).
- Equity-led / 'By and for'
- Locally embedded
- Focus outreach to identify groups in the areas of highest health inequalities.

Our own anecdotal and fact-based analysis indicates that Penge, Anerley, Mottingham, and Cray Valley are the areas offering the most potential for positive outcomes.

With this funding, we will undertake targeted place-based work in localities to build capacity in communities and groups that support them. As a result, local VCSEs will be more knowledgeable about needs and priorities in their community, including those from "seldom heard" and under-represented communities, and can adapt their activities in response.

We aim to:

- Build three place-based networks, convening residents and people from local businesses, statutory services and VCSE organisations. The networks will be asset-based platforms for local people. The aim is to collaborate on identified priorities and nurture strong connections.
- Work with up to 5 new/emerging organisations in each priority area.
- Strive to establish at least one new formally constituted group in each target area.
- Develop a holistic training package in a variety of formats suitable for grassroots VCS organisations.
- Establish a new Small Charities Forum/space (This may take the form of a WhatsApp Group)
- Run frequent drops ins and 'Welcome to the Sector' sessions, ensuring coverage in each locality so new people, skills, and resources are added to the mix. In short, they use the ideas canvas to help anyone who would like to make a difference in their local community.

To complement this work, we will develop bespoke toolkits with which to support the local sector. These will include:

- A Small Groups Route Map – aimed at small community groups with volunteers.
- A Social Enterprise Toolkit – aimed at social enterprises.

***Ends:***