

Community Links Bromley  
*Supporting Voluntary Action*

# ANNUAL REVIEW

## 2024 - 2025



## CHAIR'S FOREWORD

Welcome to this year's annual review and impact report. We are pleased to report that despite pressing issues of poverty, inequality, funding pressures, climate change and community cohesion, the voluntary and community sector in Bromley continues to demonstrate resilience, creativity, and determination in the face of these challenges.

At Community Links Bromley, we are proud to be a trusted and embedded part of the local community and voluntary sector. This recognition is a testament to the dedication of our small but impactful team. This report highlights some of our key achievements: securing over £1.8 million in investment for local charities, doubling website traffic to 65,000 visitors, delivering high-impact training and governance support, and strengthening volunteer engagement through brokerage and placement.

We remain committed to expanding our access and outreach. Our achievement of this is made possible through the support of our valued partners. Special thanks go to London South East Colleges, Bromley Job Centre, Bromley Central Library, and The Glades, who hosted our 'Spirit of Bromley' Community Fair.

We remain steadfast in our commitment to ensure voices of charities and voluntary organisations are heard at every level of decision-making. A key example of this was the work we undertook, with your support, to develop the State of the Sector Report (Nov 2024). We will continue to work with partners to implement its recommendations, advocate for policies that support and sustain the sector, provide resources to help you build capacity, and foster collaboration across our networks. As recognition of the sector's value grows, we aim to deepen and broaden this engagement.

In their report 'The Road Ahead 2025', NCVO stressed that "Together, the charity and voluntary sector can, and will, face the challenges ahead with its unique creativity, confidence and determination. The voluntary sector has always been a source of hope and support for those who need it most". It added, "with the right tools and strategies in place, ... we will all continue to make a meaningful difference in the lives of individuals and communities across the UK". We echo these sentiments and look forward to working with you in the years ahead.



**Janet Tibbalds**  
Chair of Trustees



**Christopher Evans**  
Chief Executive

## INFORMATION, ADVICE, AND GUIDANCE

This year, we have continued to grow our digital presence and strengthen our communications to better connect with community and voluntary organisations and partners across Bromley.

Our weekly online newsletter (e-bulletin) remains a vital tool for sharing sector news, opportunities, and events. With 794 subscribers — an increase of nearly 9% from the previous year — we have seen consistent engagement. Over the year, we published 52 editions, promoting 142 new job vacancies and spotlighting local initiatives aligned with the **Building an Even Better Bromley** themes.

Our social media channels also saw steady growth, helping us reach wider audiences and promote the work of the sector.

While some platforms experienced shifts in engagement, overall follower numbers increased, particularly on Facebook and Instagram. We continue to monitor trends and adapt our approach to ensure our content remains accessible and relevant.



Website traffic more than doubled this year, with over 65,000 visitors — a 122% increase from the previous year. This reflects the growing interest in our services and the effectiveness of our digital outreach. Notably, over 8,800 visitors engaged with our Volunteering pages, which featured resources for Volunteer-Involving Organisations, celebration campaigns like Volunteers' Week and the Volunteer Awards, festive volunteering opportunities, and appointment booking tools.

We also continued to provide tailored support to local groups and organisations. This year, 334 unique organisations accessed our advice and guidance — a consistent level of engagement from the previous year. We provided training and support, particularly for smaller and newly formed groups, with a diverse range of topics including governance and trustee support, creating constitutions, writing funding applications, and advertising local services and events.

Our development and capacity building takes a number of different forms, working with groups and providing one-to-one training support. Training sessions this year covered topics such as:

- Introduction to AI in fundraising
- Bid writing
- Mental health in the workplace
- Ergonomics and manual handling
- Cybersecurity
- Emergency First Aid

### SIMPLY CONNECT BROMLEY

- THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR DATABASE:

- Accessed by 44,833 visitors
- Total of 126,000 page views
- Increasing the visibility of sector services in the Borough

### Governance

For many organisations, effective governance is vital for growth or a change in purpose. This year, we supported Azelia Hall in expanding their charitable objectives, enabling them to become a grant provider for local groups. This involved consulting service users, presenting findings to the Charity Commission, and successfully launching a new grants programme. We continue to support the development of their grant-giving scheme.

We also delivered bespoke training on leadership and trustee responsibilities to an established charity and supported the formation of new CICs and associations.

Recognising the unmet needs of small charities, we collaborated with Bromley Council and the Integrated Commissioning Board (ICB) on a proposal to the VCSE Capacity Building & Infrastructure Fund 2024/25. This initiative focuses on equity-led, locally rooted groups with annual turnovers under £100k.

## FUNDING AND INVESTMENT

Our funding support remains crucial to Bromley's voluntary sector. We offer:

- Horizon scanning and signposting of funding opportunities
- Bid-writing advice and reference support
- Leadership on collaborative bids to attract inward investment

We manage grant applications through the online grants management platform Award Force and promote opportunities via e-bulletins and outreach.

### Key achievements:

- Secured over £1.8 million in investment during our current contract
- Improved access to funding, helping Bromley shed its "cold spot" status
- Co-hosted a Funding Conference (June 2024) with Lewisham Local, attracting 90+ attendees and 17 funders, including Groundwork London, Go! London, London Youth, Jack Petchey Foundation, and others
- Held a Funding Fair (Nov 2024) featuring The National Lottery Community Fund, Easyfundraising, London Catalyst, and more

We supported collaborative bids and advised charities, resulting in £732,346 in new sector investment. Highlights include a successful Volunteering for Health bid with King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust and nine partners, and a joint proposal to extend the Thinking Works contract, supporting vulnerable residents with energy advice alongside South East London Community Energy (SELCE), Thinking Works, and Transform Bromley Borough.

### Grants Management Overview

Since adopting the use of Award Force in March 2020, we have managed bids totalling £5.67 million, including just over £1.4 million in funding requests this year.

# £1.8m +

investment secured  
during our current  
contract



## Innovation Fund

We continue to manage Bromley's Innovation Fund via Award Force, which received 39 applications this year, with a record 23 in the final round of the year - reflecting the success of our outreach and training efforts.

## London Youth – Cold Spots Grants

Bromley remains a funding “cold spot”, especially in youth investment, due to historic funding patterns targeting inner London. To address this, we partnered with London Youth to deliver a Cold Spots grants programme, offering grants of up to £5,000 for small charities. We received 17 applications to this programme and awarded six grants.

Our workshops, surgeries, and “Meet the Funder” sessions remain impactful. We hosted one-to-one appointments with The National Lottery Community Fund across Bromley, helping groups strengthen applications.

This work resulted in successful bids for many groups including Bromley Homeless (£170,000), DCS Empowerment CIC (£18,800), CASPA Bromley (£20,000) and Bromley Little Theatre (£20,000 plus £71,000 towards theatre rebuilding costs).

Our thanks go to The Brun Bear Foundation, Trust for London, Veolia Environmental Trust, and The National Lottery Community Fund for your time and effort.

“**Attending your ‘Meet the Funder’ event and speaking with Patricia was incredibly helpful in shaping our grant application. Having the opportunity to ask questions and receive feedback was invaluable. We hope to keep updated on events with Community Links Bromley for further support in 2025.**”

*(Feedback from Funding Conference attendee)*

Finally, a word of thanks to a local benefactor who approached us with intentions to donate to local groups. We are in discussions on how this will work with a view to launching a pilot funding programme in April 2025, aimed at groups engaged in sports and physical activity.

## FUNDING SUCCESS

Through our work with MyTime Active and Need to Change, we were able to identify the London Marathon as a suitable funder for their project to enhance the new Changing Spaces initiative and fund specialist chairs that allow people with disabilities to use the swimming pool.



CASPA Bromley, who attended the Awards for All one-to-one surgeries and our Introduction to Bid Writing sessions, announced that they were awarded £20,000 by the National Lottery Community Fund to fund a new Infinity club that supports autistic adults over the age of 30.



# VOLUNTEERING

Our Volunteer Service continued to have a meaningful impact across the borough in 2024, focusing on support, connection, training, and celebration.

## Brokerage and Organisational Support

Our brokerage service connects individuals with purposeful roles and supports organisations in delivering vital services. With a 45% known placement rate, we have successfully matched volunteers to impactful roles. Special thanks to Peter Castledine and Julia Knox for their support with placement checks.

We also produce regular Volunteering Update e-newsletters to keep the community informed and engaged. This year, we distributed 24 Volunteering Updates, promoting a wide range of opportunities to both volunteers and partners.

We actively support Volunteering-Involving Organisations through recruitment promotion, training, and our Volunteer Manager's Network – a collaborative space for sharing best practices and tackling real challenges. Highlights this year included sessions on volunteers' mental wellbeing and youth motivation to volunteer.

## Training and Development

We deliver tailored support sessions to local organisations aimed at strengthening volunteer programmes and improving volunteer management practices. Organisations supported through these sessions this year included Mottingham Big Local Refocused, Bromley Homeless, Crystal Palace Park Trust, and Bromley Mencap.

## Celebrating Volunteers

Celebrating the work and dedication of volunteers is a key part of our role, and central to this is our Volunteer Awards Ceremony. We held our 15th Annual Volunteer Awards Ceremony this year, honouring 54 nominees, with the Mayor of Bromley in attendance. The event inspired new partnerships and served as a valuable networking opportunity, made possible through continued support from local sponsors.

During Volunteers' Week, we shared thank-you videos from 10 organisations, and in Trustees' Week, we produced five videos spotlighting personal stories to celebrate the impact and experiences of local trustees.



## Outreach and Inclusion

To expand access to our Volunteer Centre services and promote inclusion, we hosted outreach sessions, drop-in sessions, and one-to-one appointments. We also partnered with London South East Colleges (LSEC) to embed volunteering into student life. A new Volunteering Wellbeing video, created for Successful Mums, was launched to highlight how volunteering builds confidence, skills, and networks.

## Community and Corporate Engagement

We maintained a strong community presence through outreach in libraries and participation at events such as LSEC's Welcome Fair, Bromley Job Centre's Mini Recruitment Event, the 'Spirit of Bromley' Community Fair, and the Bromley Partnership Recruitment Fair.

We also continued to support local businesses in fulfilling their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) goals through structured volunteering partnerships with accountancy firms, the Integrated Commissioning Team, and care sector representatives.

## STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP AND VOICE

We continue to strengthen the voluntary sector's role in strategic partnerships through active representation, notably via the Voluntary Sector Strategic Network (VSSN) - a network of organisations for engagement and influencing on key borough and multi-borough partnerships - and at local forums and boards.

As part of our ongoing commitment to collaboration, influence, and sector leadership, we represented the sector through attendance and participation at 30 strategic and operational partnership events, including the Bromley Borough Partnership, Bromley Economic Partnership, Health and Wellbeing Board, and Pro-Active Bromley.

We also contributed to specialist groups including the JSNA Steering Group, Bromley Resilience Forum, and the Bromley Adult Safeguarding Board.

Our leadership in initiatives like the Strategic Co-Production Programme Board and Tackling Loneliness Strategy Action Group helped shape local priorities and service delivery.

We also strive to use member intelligence and knowledge to influence policy and practice. During the year, our active participation in Bromley's partnership meetings led to tangible sector-wide outcomes:

- Promoted the London Sport Awards locally, leading to Mottingham Big Local Refocused being shortlisted for the Community Impact Award
- Raised sector concerns on National Insurance changes, digital inclusion, co-production, and safeguarding training
- Presented findings from the State of the Sector report to key boards, leading to collaborative action planning to take the recommendations forward
- Supported the co-production development of adult services and joined relevant strategic boards

In collaboration with the Bromley Resilience Forum, we supported humanitarian response planning through the Humanitarian Assistance Steering Group and Recovery Group, following Exercise Felix Fort.

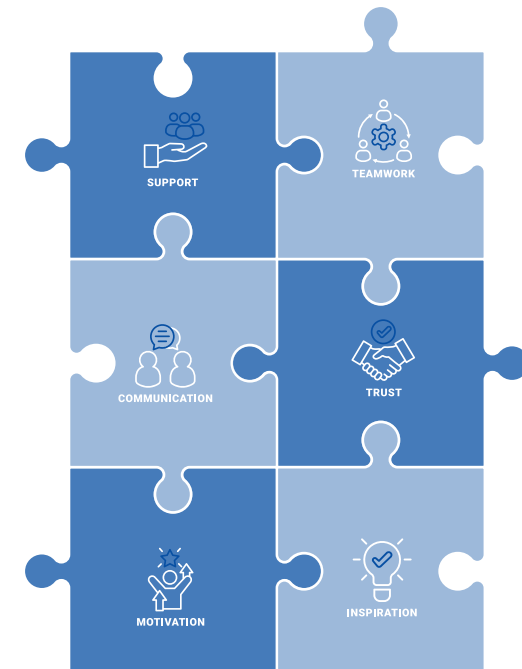
Our recommendations led to the development of new protocols and a Code of Conduct for future emergency co-ordination.

“

**Just keep up the good work. Until the last 3 to 4 years, I had no idea that we were missing out on the expertise and networking opportunities. Well done and thank you. All your team are really helpful.**

”

(Feedback via the State of the Sector survey)



## STATE OF THE SECTOR REPORT 2024

Published on 28 November 2024, the State of the Sector Report offers a comprehensive analysis of Bromley's voluntary and community sector. It highlights key challenges — rising demand, financial pressures, staffing, funding, and accommodation — and identifies opportunities such as digitalisation, stronger local partnerships, and influencing statutory bodies.

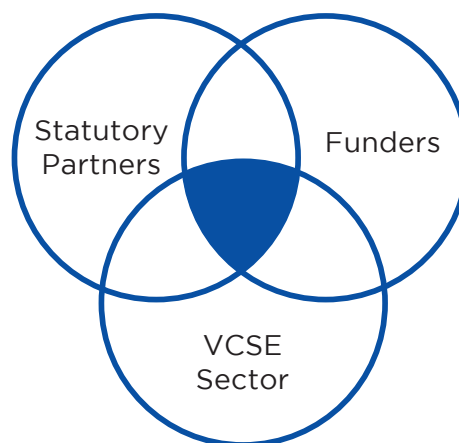
The report concludes with a set of recommendations to strengthen the sector, including:

- Addressing accommodation needs, competitive pay, and training for staff and volunteers
- Improving understanding of the Integrated Care System and exploring regional collaboration
- Recognising the needs of smaller and unregistered (UTR) organisations
- Identifying and addressing skills gaps
- Supporting recruitment, retention, and funding access

A central theme is the importance of collaboration between statutory partners, funders, and the sector, to improve service delivery and community outcomes.

The report's release was timely, aligning with the Government's plans for a civil society covenant and new guidance from the LGA and NAVCA on engaging smaller Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations through local infrastructure support.

Following publication, our Chief Executive presented the findings to the VSSN, the Bromley Borough Partnership, and the Bromley Economic Partnership. At the Bromley Borough Partnership meeting, Ade Adetosoye CBE, Chief Executive of Bromley Council, tasked Council Officers to work with Community Links Bromley to develop an action plan to implement the report's recommendations.



## DRIVING CO-PRODUCTION FORWARD IN BROMLEY

We are actively supporting the Borough's work on co-production—one of the key themes identified in the State of the Sector report. Our Chief Executive has been invited to join the strategic group leading this work and is Chairing the development of a Co-production Charter for Bromley. While the initial focus is on Adult Social Care, the ambition is to develop a wider One Bromley approach.

As part of this work, the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) presented the emerging framework to the VSSN. We also facilitated interviews with the CEOs of Mencap and MIND to share good practice and highlight challenges, and we are working with Advocacy for All to ensure meaningful user engagement is embedded throughout the process.

## INTEGRATED CARE SYSTEM AND THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR

Community Links Bromley continue to host the Director of Voluntary Sector Collaboration & Partnerships (SE London ICS), Tal Rosenzweig, who reports to the Southeast London Voluntary Sector Alliance, which brings together the VCSE sector across the area.

Tal has been instrumental in driving key initiatives and securing substantial funding to support the sector across the area. Despite financial challenges, she has continued to leverage funding to sustain sector activities and has worked on providing free or reduced-rate access to NHS estates for VCSEs.

In our last report, we highlighted important work on the development and implementation of the SEL VCSE Charter, which focused on four key areas of change:

- The sector as an equitable strategic partner
- Sustainable and fair funding
- Reducing bureaucracy and supporting sector innovation
- Strengthening the sector's infrastructure

This year, Tal, the Alliance, and the ICS worked to turn these commitments into real change, resulting in:

- Micro-Grassroots Capacity & skills building and enhanced grant funding pots. £600k was secured in capacity building support for “By and For” grassroots VCSEs, working with the six CVSs, grassroots VCSEs and Place executive leads to develop the guidelines for this pot
- Work with ICB estates team to progress free/reduced-rate access to NHS estates for VCSEs
- Mapping of VCSE provision across six Southeast London boroughs
- Conclusion of HEE funding (widening participation in health and care workforce); work on this project with seven partners submitting their final findings and co-created recommendations for solutions
- Work on the development of a Creative Health Impact Tool to measure the impact of creative VCSE activities on health and wellbeing
- Development and launch of the Alliance website



# PROJECTS

We delivered a range of impactful projects this year, including the conclusion of the Bromley Walking Challenge (piloted in 2023), support for Nottingham Big Local Refocused (MBLR), and our support for the expansion of the Community Champions programme.

## Bromley Walking Challenge

Funded by the Bromley Innovation Fund, our second Walking Challenge (Jan - Apr 2024) encouraged physical activity among staff, trustees, and volunteers across the sector. With 170 participants across 30 teams, over 117 million steps were recorded, and three teams completed the full route, exceeding expectations. The challenge concluded with a celebratory bowling event, hosted by MyTime Active.

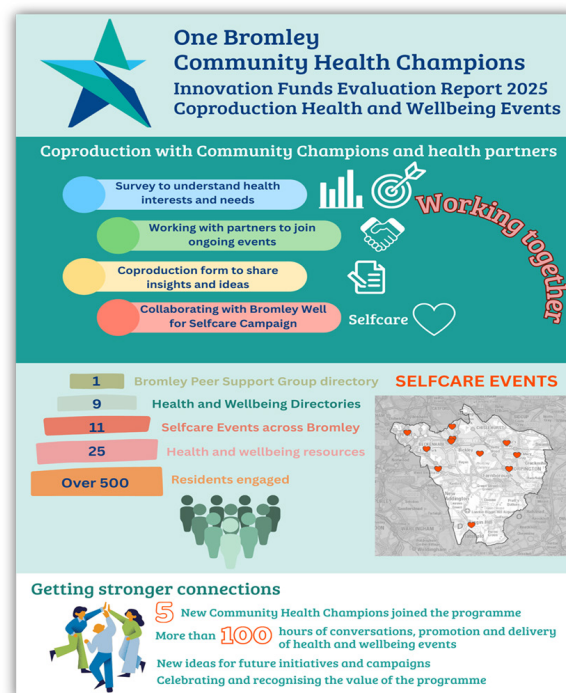
### Key outcomes:

- Improved mental and physical wellbeing for 75% of participants
- Strengthened bonds among colleagues and neighbours
- 86% of participants intended to continue the increased activity
- 33 trees planted as a result of participation numbers

## Community Champions

Launched in 2022 to support One Bromley local care partnership priorities, the One Bromley Community Health Champions Programme has now recruited over 90 volunteers to promote health and wellbeing across Bromley, through peer-to-peer engagement.

In 2024/25, Innovation Fund support enabled outreach, self-care events, and stronger community engagement with the work of the Health Champions.



Between October 2024 and February 2025, the Health Champions and One Bromley partners delivered 11 events in churches, community centres, and wellbeing hubs - including Bromley Adult Education College, Kentwood Centre and the One Bromley Wellbeing Hub at The Glades - reaching over 500 residents with resources on mental health, self-care, and winter support. The programme also led to new Champions, stronger partnerships, and tailored directories for Primary Care Networks.

## Nottingham Big Local Refocused

As the Local Trusted Organisation for Big Local's National Lottery funding to Nottingham, we supported MBLR in its final funding years, focusing on legacy - building and community engagement.

Highlights included new staff and residents joining the Partnership, community lunches, coach trips, seasonal activity programmes, and events for International Women's Day & Black History Month. MBLR also launched a Community Chest and Youth Fund, commissioned a six-month Health and Wellbeing programme, and convened a Youth Roundtable

This work was made possible by the dedication of residents, professionals, MBLR staff (Gavin Maynard, Rhiannon Ashley, and Seraphim Akrong), the Partnership Board that served during the year, Local Trust representatives, and the Community Links Bromley team.



## BUDGET/FINANCE AND FUNDING

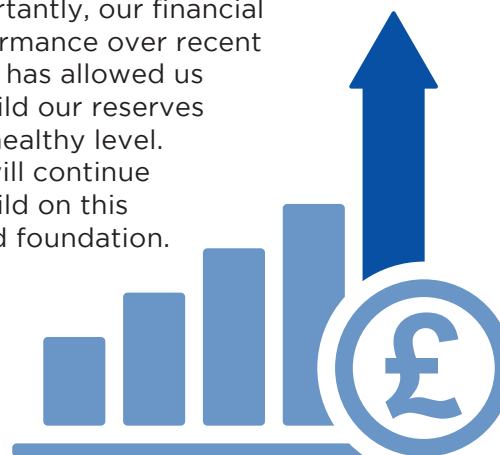
We are a lean organisation and continue to work hard to keep costs within budgets at a time of growing cost pressures. At the same time, we have also worked hard to secure external investment to support the delivery of services to our sector. As highlighted in this report, this work resulted in substantial investment in the Nottingham area, as well as investment from the Innovation Fund to develop and deliver other projects.

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 this year we secured funds from 10 different funding sources. It is essential to recognise that the core funding enabled us to secure 79.1% of our funding in 2024/25 from other sources. Overall income decreased from £859,412 to £746,119, following successive years of income growth.

As a charity, we are extremely aware of the financial pressures experienced by our funders and, as such, our trustees want to thank our core funders, the London Borough of Bromley, for their continued support.

The strategy of our organisation continues to be to seek core funding from the local authority and to enable on-going development through project funding from large funders such as Big Local and charitable trusts.

Our aim is to ensure that we can give confidence to stakeholders that the charity's finances are being well managed. Importantly, our financial performance over recent years has allowed us to build our reserves to a healthy level. We will continue to build on this sound foundation.



| Year ending        | 2024/25 - £ | 2023/24 - £ |
|--------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Income resources   | 746,119     | 859,412     |
| Resources expended | 533,441     | 849,367     |
| Net income         | 212,678     | 10,045      |

## LOOKING AHEAD 2025/26: FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

### Key developments planned for the year ahead include:

- Develop and agree an ambitious Strategic Development Plan
- Maintain systems and evidence to obtain NAVCA Local Infrastructure Quality Accreditation
- Recruit a Grassroots Development Worker
- Continue to grow and diversify income streams
- Work with stakeholders, partners, and the sector to implement our State of the Sector Report action plan.



## OUR STAFF

### Christopher Evans

Chief Executive  
christophere@communitylinksbromley.org.uk  
0208 315 1903

### Steve Smith

Funding and Development Officer  
fdo@communitylinksbromley.org.uk  
0208 315 1919

### Fay Millen (at time of print)

Volunteer Development Manager  
faym@communitylinksbromley.org.uk  
0208 315 1930

### Tal Rosenzweig

Director of Voluntary Sector Collaboration  
& Partnerships (SE London ICS)  
talr@communitylinksbromley.org.uk  
07932 417 076

### Amie Winter-Jackson

Voluntary Sector Collaboration  
& Partnerships Business Support Officer  
alliance@communitylinksbromley.org.uk  
07376 950 332

### Gavin Maynard

MBLR Programme Manager  
manager@mottinghamblr.com  
07512 334 649

### Seraphim Akrong,

MBLR Project Support and  
Communications Officer  
admin@mottinghamblr.com  
07593 443 416

### Alexandra Doust

Office Manager  
alex@d@communitylinksbromley.org.uk  
0208 315 1902

### Kathryn Mitchell

Web and Digital Assistant  
web@communitylinksbromley.org.uk

Previous staff members:

### Rhiannon Ashley

MBLR Programme Manager

## OUR THANKS




We are indebted to the support of our volunteers, so a big thanks to those that supported us during the financial year:

**Vandana Gandham  
Peter Castledine, and Julia Knox**



Supporting Voluntary Action



 [www.communitylinksbromley.org.uk](http://www.communitylinksbromley.org.uk)  
 [admin@communitylinksbromley.org.uk](mailto:admin@communitylinksbromley.org.uk)  
 0208 315 1900