



**VCAT** | Voluntary & Community Action Trafford

# VCAT Annual Review 2010—2011



# Report from the Chair & Chief Executive



**Colin Barson**  
Chief Executive



**Ralph Rudden**  
VCAT Chair

The year 2010 – 2011 has been a watershed in the life of VCAT as a VCS development and infrastructure support organisation. This was the year in which was heralded a new government, the adoption of economic policy to stave off bankruptcy and the launch of the BIG Society at the national level.

Within VCAT it was also the year the Basis project previously funded through the BIG

lottery ended, the core grant coming to a close and a host of other financial and newly emerging commissioning directives for our sectors. After the celebration of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary in October 2010 coming to earth included a very big bang. Nevertheless VCAT did take initiatives, requesting meetings seeking alternatives and sought to extend its life into the 2011/12. The future without doubt is a very big unknown, funding will be less secure, commissioning will take a vital role in ensuring all funding is allocated against identified needs and across strategic interventions. The role of the VCS and VCS organisations will no doubt change many times but the current trend of partnership working, collaboration and the M word – mergers is here for the foreseeable future. Therefore this is probably the last annual review under the old style of independent organisation meeting the needs as identified by its members, the future is likely to be collaborative and legal partnerships, even merging of functions.

It is with pleasure then that VCAT can report a really successful year in relation to the amount of income generated and the resources expanded on behalf of our stakeholders. VCAT have continued to meet the needs of the sectors whilst trying to shape the future, adding value to commissioning processes and leading on the development of the stronger communities partnership. VCAT have met its duties as shown in the reports within the annual review through training, funding information, development work etc. and aside to this has managed its contracts through the 50+ Voice Network, LINKs and TMHAS.

The board of directors have ensured VCAT have met its obligations through monitoring and review of all projects and governing the organisation within its legal remit. The board of directors have ensured they have kept an open and honest dialogue with stakeholders and seen fit to support the organisation through increasingly difficult times. Therefore the chair and chief executive would like to thank the board for their patience, reliability, honesty and trust in making some fundamental decisions on behalf of the organisation.

The future of VCAT as an organisation cannot be certain but 2011/12 appears to be the time when difficult decisions will be made, when the partnership development will

take centre stage and where we will develop our services against the identified needs of our stakeholders. There are no certainties as our members will understand but VCAT will be flexible, will support change and will seek to meet the needs of our communities through support and development services as the lead infrastructure agency in the borough. VCAT will make governance decisions based upon identified needs and seek where appropriate to work in partnership. Whatever the future of VCAT as an organisation VCAT will meet its liabilities and seek to add value to the work of the 3<sup>rd</sup> sector in Trafford, supporting those vulnerable communities which are at the heart of all we do and make a positive contribution to the life of Trafford and all its communities.

## Development Team

In 2007 VCAT successfully bid to the Big Lottery Fund Basis Programme to establish and run a Development Team for three years.

VCAT have been very pleased with the performance and contribution that this project has made to our aims to develop an effective and highly skilled voluntary and community sector, capable of making a strong contribution towards a fair and open society in Trafford.

Each year we have successfully achieved or surpassed all of the agreed 5 outcomes and have achieved a number of additional, unanticipated, outcomes.

In particular, we had outcome targets to meet of working with 30,40 and 60 groups in each year – in the end we worked with 51, 64 (with 43 being new to the project) and 68 (with 39 being new to the project) – not only surpassing annual targets, but directly working with 154 groups over the life time of the project providing one to one support and advice – around half of VCAT's membership and around a third of the number of groups on our database.

This year the project co-ordinated 35 meetings of various forums such as FASNET, BME Network, Health and Social Care Forum and the Volunteer Coordinators Forum. Key achievements for the year include:

- Commissioning research from the GM BME Network into the needs for a Trafford BME Network. This has shown wide support for the network and outlines a road map for VCAT and partners to develop the network.
- Health and Social Care Forum arranging a 'meet the commissioners' event and holding a substantial conference on key issues such as the reform of the NHS and the trend towards personalisation.

## Development Team

- The Volunteer Coordinators Forum were heavily involved in a Overview and Scrutiny review of Volunteering in Trafford which will guide decision making in relation to volunteering and the big society over the coming years.
- FASNET has had a focus of developing consortia to bid for CYPS contracts this year. VCAT successfully tendered to join a 'framework' for future CYPS commissioning and is currently working with partners on consortia applications.

VCAT delivered 40 courses this year across a range of topics including Minute-taking, Presentation Skills, Safeguarding, Book-keeping, Fundraising, Tendering, Voluntary Sector Legal Structures, Evidencing Need Understanding Outcomes, Community Engagement and Community Work Skills. In total 365 people attended these courses.

Over the period of the grant, VCAT have delivered 108 courses, of which 36 were brand new to Trafford. In total 946 people attended our training courses.

The Development Team also delivered two major events during the year:

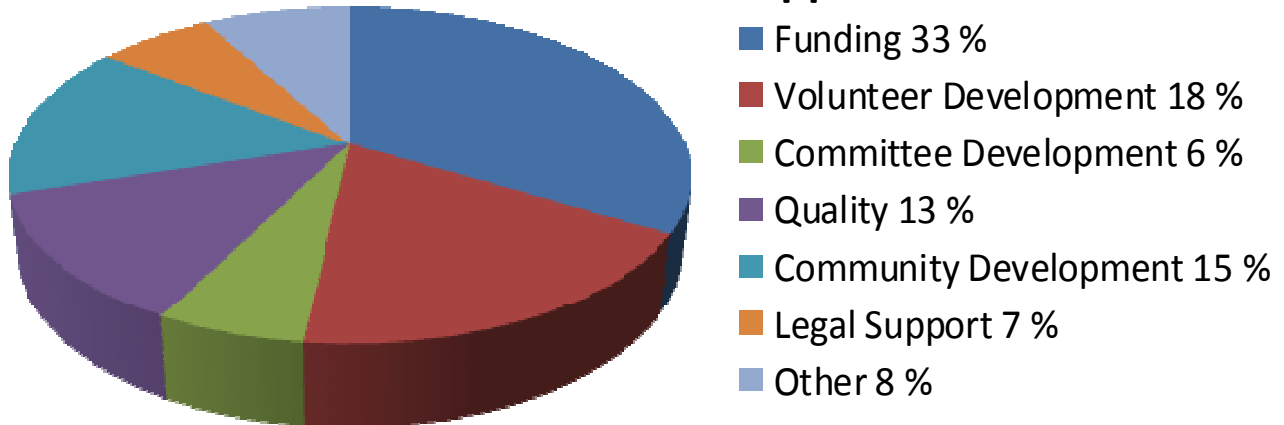
- The Trafford Compact Conference was held in July 2010 and was attended by 127 people. Key note speakers included TMBC Chief Executive and Trafford Homestart Coordinator. VCAT Produced a video for the day promoting the Trafford Compact - featured on the film was the leader and chief exec of the council, chief exec of Trafford PCT, Trafford Housing Trust, Trafford Leisure Trust, Big Life Company and the Police Chief Superintendent. Workshops focused on the 5 Codes of Practice attached to the Trafford Compact.
- The Health and Social Care Conference was held in February 2011 and was attended by 64 people. Key note speakers included the Chief Executives of Voluntary Sector North West and UnLimited Potential as well as the Service Director from Haringay Independent Living. Workshops included 'Getting Contract Ready', 'Personalisation and Your Group', JSNA Consultation and NHS Whitepaper Consultation.

Monitoring and evaluation throughout the project has consistently shown satisfaction with our services. The final evaluation in January 2011 shows exceptionally high levels of satisfaction with the services provided and in achieving positive results and heightened confidence.

It is fair to say that the team were gobsmacked by the overwhelmingly positive feedback from the survey. Highlights of the survey include:

- 90% rated the supported they received as 4 or 5 out of 5
- The vast majority rate all aspects of our training courses at 4 or 5
- The vast majority rate all aspects of our information at 4 or 5
- 90% said that VCATs support lead to positive results
- 87% feel more confident as a result of VCAT's support.

## Common Areas of Support



In addition to the overall satisfaction of the project over the lifetime of the grant, there were a number of additional, unanticipated outcomes achieved:

1. The development of the Trafford Compact and associated Codes of Practice – one of the first Compacts in the country to be adopted by the LSP rather than just the council.
2. The Development of the Trafford Community Engagement Strategy – again one of the first to be adopted by a LSP.
3. Cooperation with partners at Salford CVS to host two “Thinking the Unthinkable” conferences aimed at focussing VCS attention to the rapidly changing environment around public sector cuts
4. VCAT has become the lead agency in the development of the Greater Manchester Funding Portal [www.GMFunding.net](http://www.GMFunding.net) a free to use searchable database of funding opportunities and sources of help and advice for frontline groups across the whole of Greater Manchester
5. The development of plans for frontline groups to work in consortia to bid for contracts.

A continued high presence in priority neighbourhoods – in particular managing a Community Engagement project in Old Trafford, a Community Development Project in Sale Moor and offering substantial support to partners in Sale West and Broomwood to review their work.

VCAT are grateful for the financial support received from the Big Lottery Fund over the last three years - and for its previous support 2003-2006 - without these grants VCAT would not have had the impact upon the sector we have enjoyed.

# Development Team

## Re-branding

Members can't fail to have noticed that VCAT looks different these days. Throughout 2010-11 we have been rolling out a re-branding exercise. This started with a launch of a new logo at the 2010 AGM, newsletters have been re-designed, a new website was launched in early 2011 and all publicity materials, leaflets, flyers etc have been redesigned. Central to this work has been the adoption of a new logo featuring a Trafford sky scene. *Can you identify all of the Trafford icons included in the image? (There are 8 to identify!)*



VCAT worked with a local designer in this process and have tried to incorporate best practice in relation to accessibility in all the work we have undertaken.

## PQASSO

A small VCAT working group made up of staff and board representatives have been working through the process of achieving PQASSO Level 1. Maya Sharma was trained by the Charities Evaluation Service to be a PQASSO Mentor and has guided the working group through the process – of improving internal practice and of gathering evidence across 12 quality areas.

1. planning
2. governance
3. leadership and management
4. user-centred service
5. managing people
6. learning and development
7. managing money
8. managing resources
9. communications and promotion
10. working with others
11. monitoring and evaluation
12. Results



This is a self assessment process, but we have not taken it lightly, working through the process has brought changes to the way VCAT works internally and we hope that our members will begin to see the benefits. We believe that we are 90% complete and aim to finish by November 2011. It is then our intention to apply for the NAVCA Quality Award over the next 12 months.

# Trafford Mental Health Advocacy Service (TMHAS)



This service can help people who use mental health services in Trafford to GET THEIR VOICES HEARD!! It helps people exercise and defend their rights and enable them to get their point of view across. Advocacy is about having their voice heard.

Trafford Mental Health Advocacy Service (TMHAS) can help people if they feel their mental health problem stops them making their voice heard.

TMHAS do not act as an advice service but if people need advice for example, with debt or housing issues, then they will support them in getting the help they need.

The last year at TMHAS began on a very positive note with the service successfully applying to be accepted on to the Trafford Mental Health Framework for preferred providers, which allows us to continue to be a commissioned service over the next 3 years. Having secured the IMHA contract from July 2009 we continued to offer this statutory service, and both advocates have now attained the recognise qualification managed by Action for Advocacy to deliver this service.

The statistics show we are seeing increasingly more clients under the IMHA part of the service and the last quarter of the year has shown an increase in take up of IMHA for community patients under Community Treatment and Guardianship orders.

IMHA's are Independent Mental Health Advocates who are trained to work within the framework of the Mental Health Act to provide additional safeguards. They are totally independent of any person who is professionally involved with the patient's medical treatment and will be subject to regulations.

We remain committed to offering a very flexible and direct access service to all our community clients and continue to offer drop in sessions at Park House and appointments at Blusci, which are emerging as the main routes of how clients can access our service.

In the current economic climate and with significant changes happening to benefits we are seeing increasingly



**Advocacy Workers Aly Gell and Jackie Stott**

# Trafford Mental Health Advocacy Service (TMHAS)

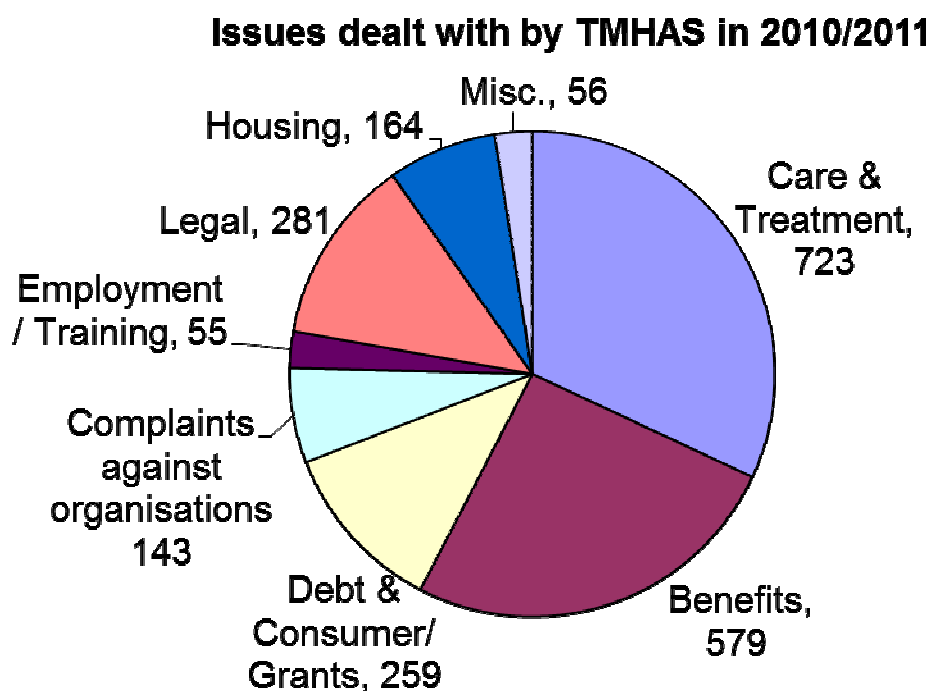
more clients with debt and benefit needs and working hard to keep up with the demand for active advocacy input.

With support from TAAG, our advisory group we have redesigned our customer satisfaction surveys to work on gaining more specific feedback from our clients about the impact of using our service on their lives. We have aimed to look at the experience of using an advocate and how this has impacted on all areas of their lives and offer a greater opportunity for meaningful feedback to shape our future developments.

In 2010/11, we undertook an initial review of our IMHA service and planned a second one to check in a qualitative way that we are meeting the needs and expectations of health care professionals who are referring to IMHA. The initial results were very positive, but we felt a second survey sent from TAAG rather than the advocates themselves was needed, to obtain a wider mandate for our service. We expect the results to be collated and available following our TAAG meeting in November 2011.

We are very grateful to our TAAG members for all their hard work in redesigning and verifying our working documents and assisting with the production of our new report into what we hope is an improved format .

With regret we said farewell and happy retirement to Muriel Howarth in June 2010 as TMHAS admin support worker, and have been very grateful to Bernie Connor who has been supporting us since November 2010 in her place.





## FASNET

Family Support Network for Voluntary and Community Groups  
Working with Children, Young People and Families in Trafford

When asked to write an article for this year's Annual Report I pondered for ages before putting pen to paper. I really wished that I could write something positive about the future and our plans for the FASNET Project.

Unfortunately, this is not the case. FASNET like so many voluntary sector projects, in this uncertain economic climate, has been without funding since March 2011. At the time of writing, there is no future funding identified for this important project set up in 2003 as a family support network for voluntary and community groups working with children, families and young people in Trafford.

I have therefore decided to write and celebrate all the good work we have done over the years.

I work 3 days a week coordinating the FASNET Project, I am supported by Craig Almond. I have more of a strategic role which involves attending many meetings. Craig Almond supports me dealing with most of the information sharing aspects of the job.

Back in 2003, following a Children's Fund Conference, it became evident that there was the need for a forum for voluntary and community groups working with children, families and young people. The FASNET forum was developed to provide opportunities for exchanging information, developing good practice and influencing partnerships with other agencies. We agreed that we would hold meetings on a regular basis in community venues throughout Trafford. One of the main aims being to improve the understanding of voluntary and community groups of the 'Every Child Matters Agenda'.



To date we have held 47 meetings and 4 conferences which have been invaluable for information exchange. There have been many guest speakers discussing a wide range of topics all helping the voluntary sector work with other agencies to improve the services available for the children of Trafford.

# Family Support Network—FASNET

FASNET has been about sharing information and over the years, we have produced 43 Newsletters and more e-bulletins than we can count. The FASNET Website was created in 2009 by Craig this provided another important way for voluntary groups to access information. With the amount of changes and legislations relating to the children's workforce, as you can appreciate, there is a constant need for updating information.

## INTRODUCTION TO SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE Awareness Training for the Voluntary Sector



Safeguarding children in Trafford has always been high on our agenda. We work very closely with Trafford Safeguarding Children Board and I have been approved to train Level 1 Safeguarding Courses. In the last three years 21 courses have been delivered and 213 volunteers have been trained.

Recently I became a North West Safe Network Champion. The Safe Network is jointly managed by the NSPCC, Children England and Child Accident Prevention Trust (CAPT), and was created as a result of the Government's Staying Safe Action Plan.

Following an in depth Training Needs Analysis, FASNET have provided lots of other training for the sector, this has included a wide range of topics such as Safer Recruitment of those working with children and Paediatric First Aid. We were able to do this as a result of Children's Workforce Development Council Funding, 48 training courses have been delivered and this has provided 403 volunteers with the skills they need to be able to volunteer/work with children.

So as you can see, there has been a great deal going on and how important it is for us to be able to secure funding to keep this service for the voluntary sector.

**Heather Smith**  
**FASNET Project Coordinator**



The 50+ Voice Network was set up in 2006 to give people aged 50+ an opportunity to find out about, discuss, and influence local issues with the following planned outcomes:

Older people are able to have a greater influence and be in a better position to inform policy on service developments and be more able to co-produce projects that improve issues that affect people aged 50+, such as health and well being, community safety and promote independence.

The 50+ voice network is more fully representative of local communities and ensures the needs and aspirations of people aged 50+ inform the work and priorities of the Council and PCT (Health services)

People aged 50+ feel they have better choice and more control over their lives and that they have an increased opportunity to engage in local developments

This has been done through a variety of ways including workshops, events, including a Celebration event where 180 people attended. Topics included falls prevention, safety both in the home and outside which were priorities already identified in the 50+ Strategy. A newsletter was published six times during the period covered by this report which was sent to the 662 people signed up to the project.



Following discussions with both funders of the project (Trafford Council and the Primary Care Trust) it was agreed to alter the focus, widening it out to a wider engagement role which includes the membership of the 50+ Voice Network, the Health and Social Care Forum and to encourage young people to engage around Health and Social Care issues. The new project is now well underway and is already showing positive outcomes.

The role of Trafford LINK is to gather people's views on local health and social care services, working with the people who plan and run them to improve those services. Trafford LINK has the power to influence, make recommendations and bring about change.



Changes introduced in the Health and Social Care Bill will see Trafford LINK evolve into HealthWatch in October 2012. Whilst much of the LINK's role will stay the same there are proposed additions, such as, provision of information, advice and complaints procedures.

Trafford LINK applied for Pathfinder status in becoming a local HealthWatch and was one of those selected. A group of LINK members are now taking this work forward to make the transition as seamless as possible.

Part of the LINK's work relates to meeting with statutory partners to improve services. Three new Liaison Groups have been set up working with the Moorside Unit at Trafford General, University Hospital South Manchester and Trafford Provider Services.

A major refurbishment has take place at the Moorside Unit. The LINK Liaison Group has monitored developments closely by visiting the unit to see the work in progress, meeting regularly with staff and monitoring delays. This work has now been completed and the Liaison Group has been able to visit the refurbished areas.

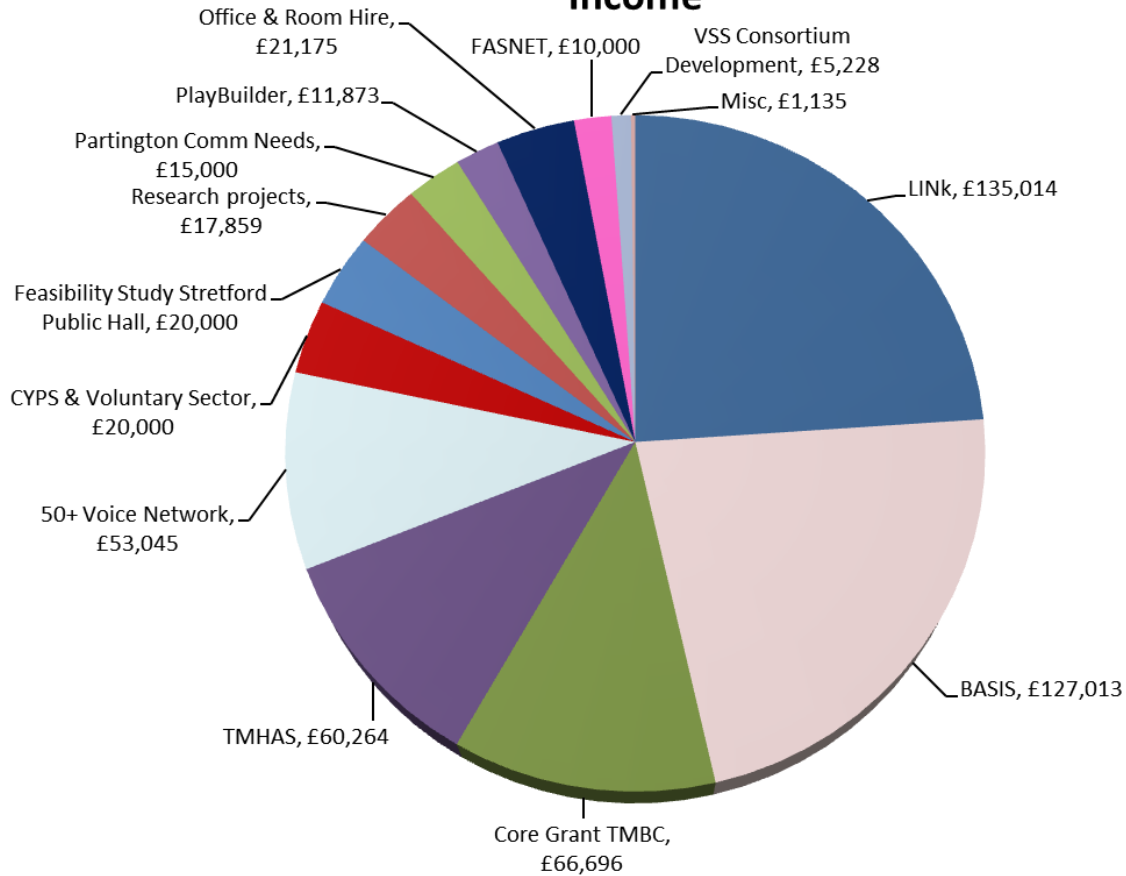
The acquisition of Trafford Healthcare Trust has developed into a major piece of work for LINK. Support from the LINK team was provided to set up a Patient and Public Reference Group from local communities. LINK members received a questionnaire asking which services were considered a priority and needed to be retained. The LINK attended a series of neighbourhood forums alongside Trust staff to provide information and answer questions. It is expected this work will continue for the foreseeable future.

Work in Partington, Flixton, Urmston and Davyhulme areas was carried during May to July 2010 in relation to Making It Better (MIB) This included visits to Children' Centres, toddler parents/carers, speaking to mums-to-be and parents of new babies about their experiences and views on accessing the maternity services and children's inpatients services following the implementation of the MIB changes. From this exercise a report of the transport issues and other MIB concerns that had been raised by Trafford residents was gathered and submitted to Trafford Primary Care Trust (PCT) and UHSM (Wythenshawe). Following on from this, a meeting took place between members of the Trafford LINK task group a senior health professional plus the Head of Midwifery at Wythenshawe to acknowledge and resolve issues raised by members of the public.

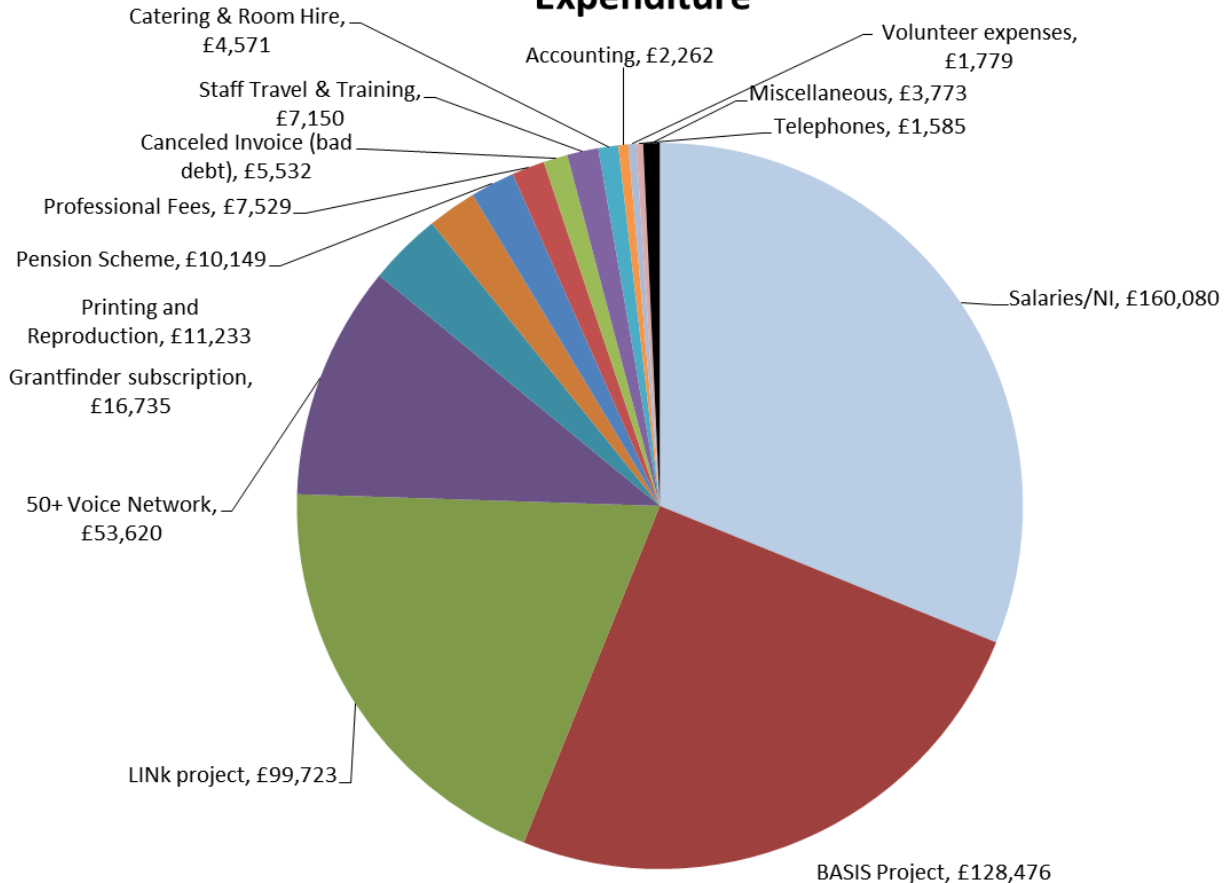
The LINK continues to monitor the way it communicates with the public. Regular newsletters are sent out. The website ([www.traffordlink.org](http://www.traffordlink.org)) continues to create interest and Facebook and Twitter have been set up, in particular, to engage with younger people.

# Our Finances April 2010- March 2011

## Income



## Expenditure



The Income and Expenditure items are derived from interim management accounts. Full audited accounts are available from VCAT

# VCAT's Staff & Board

## VCAT Staff

### Chief Executive

Colin Barson

### Development Team

Dave Nunns

Development Manager

Lynsey Cottle

Development Worker: Training & Information

Maya Sharma

Development Worker: Forums & Networks

Heather Smith

FASNET Co-ordinator

Craig Almond

Support Worker: FASNET & Development Team

### TMHAS

Aly Gell

Advocacy Worker

Jackie Stott

Advocacy Worker

### Trafford LINK

Ruth Walkden

LINK Manager

Marilyn Murray

LINK Development Worker

Sarah Atta

Support Worker:

### 50+ Voice Network

Alis Aspinall

50+ Involvement Worker

Sarah Atta

Support Worker:

### Admin Team

Rose Thompson

Office Manager

Muriel Howarth

Admin Support Worker

Bernie Connor

TMHAS & VCAT Support Worker

## VCAT Board of Directors

### Chair

Christine Aspinall to October 2010

October 2010 onwards—Ralph Rudden

### Treasurer

Vacant

### Board Members

Christine Aspinall

Joan Ball

Joanne Bennett

Cllr Phil Gratix

Victor Holding

Eddie Kelson

Mark Nesbit

### Co-optees

Cllr Brian Shaw

Cllr Jacki Wilkinson



## **VCAT** | Voluntary & Community Action Trafford

VCAT aims to develop an effective and highly skilled voluntary and community sector, capable of making a strong contribution towards a fair and open society in Trafford.

As the local support and development agency in Trafford, our role is to help voluntary and community groups and local charities in their development.

- We have over five hundred members drawn from Trafford's voluntary and community sector.
- We provide support to groups both funded and unfunded.
- We help new groups and existing groups to develop, provide information and training, assist in liaison with local government and enable the views of voluntary groups to be represented.
- We work with management committee members, staff and volunteers to support them in their work. This can include: fund raising support, financial advice, personnel and employment advice, constitutions and governance, Charity and Company formation and co-ordination of the local voluntary sector.

### **MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS**

- **Advice and Information on a range of topics** - constitutional, management, finance, marketing, fund-raising, signposting, starting new groups, local issues.
- **VCAT News** We publish a newsletter six times a year - full of information and news on funding and resources, legislation, practical help and local issues.
- **VCAT e-bulletin** Members can subscribe to our regular e-bulletins to receive information updates between newsletters.
- **Statutory Consultation** VCAT represents the collective interests of Trafford's Voluntary and Community Sector in a variety of Public Sector partnerships.
- **Funding Searches** VCAT supports groups searching the Greater Manchester Funding Portal [www.gmfunding.net](http://www.gmfunding.net)
- **Training** VCAT is one of the largest providers of voluntary sector training in Greater Manchester.
- **Networking** VCAT offers a range of events and meetings for groups working in related fields across Trafford. These meetings feature presentations from partner organisations and contribute to the development of services and activities within Trafford
- **Meeting Rooms** Members can book rooms at Park House at a reduced rate. Screens, projectors, flipcharts and an IT Suite can also be hired.
- **Influence Members** have the right to influence the policy and running of VCAT.
- **Publicity Members** can advertise job vacancies, training opportunities and other events on our website, in our newsletters and bulletins or through our networks and forums.

**Acknowledgement and thanks to our funders:**



**VCAT is currently a member of the following organisations:**

- ◆ **NAVCA** - National Association for Voluntary and Community Action
- ◆ **NCVO** - National Council of Voluntary Organisations
- ◆ **GMCVO** - Greater Manchester Centre for Voluntary Organisation
- ◆ **GMVSS** - Greater Manchester Voluntary Sector Support
- ◆ **Community Matters**
- ◆ **NALM** - National Association of LINK Members



**VCAT** | Voluntary & Community Action Trafford

Park House, 73 Northenden Road, Sale M33 2DG  
Tel: 0161 905 2414 [vcat@vcatrafford.org](mailto:vcat@vcatrafford.org) [www.vcatrafford.org](http://www.vcatrafford.org)

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