Voluntary and Community Sector Framework

2026-2031



Enfield, delivers.

ENFIELD Council

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Foreword.

I am delighted to introduce our Voluntary and Community Sector Framework for 2026–2031.

Across Enfield, hundreds of voluntary organisations, community groups, charities and volunteers make an invaluable contribution to the lives of our residents. They provide trusted support, bring communities together, champion local voices and often respond rapidly when new challenges emerge. We appreciate and value this and see the impact this has on our residents and communities.



Developed through engagement with the sector, this framework sets out our ambition to build a stronger partnership between the Council and the voluntary and community sector. The shared principles and priority themes provide a framework for how the Council can support the Voluntary and Community Sector to strengthen, thrive and grow.

I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the development of this framework. I look forward to working together over the next five years to turn these commitments into action and help build a stronger and sustainable voluntary and community sector.



Councillor Edward Smith
Cabinet Member for Council Assets and Culture

Our vision.

We want to work in partnership with the Voluntary and Community Sector to foster a thriving and sustainable ecosystem that continues to improve residents' lives.



Purpose of the framework.

Our Voluntary and Community sector plays an essential role in helping our residents to live happy and healthy lives, as well as preventing acute problems from developing in communities. Enfield has a strong history of positive partnership working with the VCS, and this framework seeks to build on that good work. This framework reflects this understanding at its core.

For the purpose of this framework, the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) includes charities, voluntary organisations, community groups, social enterprises, community interest companies, faith organisations, residents' groups and other not-for-profit organisations that work to improve the lives of Enfield residents and communities. These organisations are independent of the Council and play a vital role in delivering support, building community resilience, representing local voices, reducing inequalities and contributing to prevention and early intervention.

This framework positions our role in supporting VCS organisations to thrive in Enfield. It sets out key priority areas that have been identified through conversations and engagement sessions with VCS stakeholders. It also highlights overarching principles and the actions that lie at the centre of each priority.

The framework will guide how we work together and with communities themselves. It will help us create more consistent partnership working, ensure funding and commissioning decisions are informed by shared outcomes, and strengthen prevention and community-led support.

This framework has been shaped through engagement with Enfield's VCS, including dedicated workshops attended by 35 local organisations and discussions through existing partnership forums. These conversations helped identify the issues that matter most to the sector, the practical barriers organisations experience, and the opportunities for the Council and VCS to work together more effectively over the next five years.

Delivery will also be supported by existing structures, services and partnerships across Enfield that already provide routes into communities and opportunities for joint working. This includes, for example, Family Hubs, community spaces, commissioned VCS infrastructure support, partnership board and wider prevention and early help arrangements. These provide a strong base from which to strengthen the collaboration with the VCS, connect residents to support earlier, and make better use of local assets. There will also be ongoing developments over the life of this framework as more emerge about the Neighbourhoods model being developed by the Integrated Care Board (ICB) and the Council and VCS will need to consider how this can support stronger local partnership working.

Current Funding Arrangements.

In 2024/25, Enfield Council invested almost £7 million in services delivered by voluntary and community sector organisations through the expenditure identified in this review. This included £5.96 million across 37 commissioned contracts, supporting services spanning adult social care, children and families, education and public health, alongside approximately £1 million of additional expenditure, primarily relating to educational placements.

This significant investment reflects the vital contribution that VCS organisations make to supporting residents, reaching communities and delivering statutory, preventative and community-based services across Enfield.



Shared principles

- **Equal partnership:** recognising the VCS as a strategic partner with expertise, leadership and reach into communities.
- **Early engagement and co-production:** involving the sector and residents early in policy, service design, commissioning and delivery.
- **Early intervention and prevention:** strengthening our focus on early help, resilience and community-based support, and considering how resources can support this where appropriate.
- **Equity and inclusion:** tackling barriers faced by different communities and ensuring support is inclusive and reflects Enfield's diversity.
- **Independence of the sector:** supporting a strong and independent VCS that can advocate, innovate and challenge constructively.
- **Evidence and impact:** using data, insight and lived experience to understand need, measure outcomes and improve services.
- **Transparency and trust:** promoting openness, consistency and accountability in how decisions are made, including around funding and commissioning.

Community engagement, volunteering and social action.

We will seek to make it easier for residents to find support, take part in community life, and shape the services that affect them. This means recognising the value of community-led activity, improving information and signposting, reducing duplication, and making better use of local spaces and hubs.

- Map community assets, services and spaces to improve visibility and reduce duplication.
- Improve signposting and navigation so residents and professionals can find support more easily.
- Continue to strengthen being a listening and learning Council, seeking out and responding to resident and VCS feedback, demonstrating how their experiences shape local priorities.
- Ensure Council premises are allocated fairly, managed consistently and used to deliver clear community benefit for Enfield residents through implementation of the Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS) Premises Policy.
- Promote community leadership, volunteering and peer support as key strengths within Enfield's communities, celebrating the work of volunteers across the borough.

Partnership, governance and ways of working.

We strive towards a more closely connected way of working with the VCS across the Council. We want to make sure that VCS expertise is respected and incorporated in strategic decision-making. This will help build trust, improve coordination, and make partnership working easier and more effective.

- Continue to strengthen partnership working through existing forums and boards, or by identifying new networks.
- Communicate upcoming priorities, policies and plans in advance, and explain the different ways VCS organisations and communities shape and respond to these.
- Create clearer routes into the Council, including specific contacts, a practical “who’s who” and consistent communication channels.
- Continue to strengthen our understanding of community needs through the expertise, knowledge and support of the VCS.
- Introduce VCS awareness and partnership learning for Council staff, including induction content and practical guidance.
- Strengthen opportunities for collaboration, peer learning and joint problem-solving between VCS organisations and statutory partners.

Financial sustainability and capacity.

We will promote the development of a sustainable and resilient voluntary and community sector. Voluntary sector organisations have a unique understanding of the communities they represent and therefore are often well placed to deliver innovative solutions.

We want to ensure that there are clarity and consistency across programmes and funding streams in the Council. This way, VCS organisations can benefit from these opportunities in a straightforward and accessible way. Furthermore, where these funds are awarded, we will ensure we are proportionate in the way we carry out due diligence and monitoring of projects or services being delivered.

- Review grant and commissioning processes to make them more accessible, transparent and proportionate.
- Publish all competitive grant programmes on one single page on the Council website.
- Create a standardised application template for grant programmes.
- Create a set of monitoring and reporting guidelines for people responsible for handling grants that are proportionate and centered on understanding the impact of the work.
- Encourage longer-term funding from Council departments where this supports stability, prevention and measurable outcomes.
- Use social value, commissioning and external funding opportunities to strengthen investment in local communities.
- Support collaborative bids and partnerships where they add value and avoid unnecessary competition.
- Work with our commissioned VCS infrastructure organisation to further enhance and promote VCS support with key development areas such as bid-writing, financial management, communications and legal governance.

Data, evidence and impact.

VCS organisations are often first to identify emerging issues and can provide trusted, community-based support before problems escalate. They bring valuable local knowledge and experience, while the Council and partners hold data that can reveal patterns and inequalities. Combining these strengths will support earlier intervention, better services, and improved outcomes.

We want to measure the collective impact that the sector has across the borough, as well as understanding and measuring the impact of our role as a commissioner, funder and partner to the VCS. We want to think innovatively about how we can measure what is most meaningful and promote stories that demonstrate the impact on residents' lives. Using this together is an important part of understanding the impact and effectiveness of services and activities.

- Work in partnership to explore and expand our data on VCS organisations in Enfield.
- Use community intelligence, data and local insight to identify emerging needs and target support earlier.
- Share learning about what works, including resident voice, case studies and evidence of impact.
- Promote VCS organisations within the Council and with external funders through comms and social media support to create digital content demonstrating their impact in Enfield.
- Agree across the Council proportionate approaches to monitoring and reporting that demonstrate value without overburdening smaller organisations.

Commitments

The Council will	The VCS will	Together we will
Engage earlier and more consistently with the sector.	Share insight, evidence and community intelligence.	Co-produce priorities, services and solutions wherever appropriate.
Improve transparency around funding, commissioning and decision-making.	Collaborate where it improves outcomes and reduces duplication.	Develop shared outcomes and measure impact proportionately.
Strengthen internal coordination and provide clearer routes into the Council.	Represent community voice and advocate constructively for residents.	Build trust, mutual understanding and long-term partnership working.
Support capacity-building, social value and access to external funding.	Continue to innovate, mobilise volunteers and support community-led action.	Promote prevention, resilience, inclusion and sustainability across Enfield.



Governance.

Delivery of this framework will be supported through clear governance arrangements that strengthen accountability, transparency and shared ownership between the Council and the VCS. The Voluntary Sector Strategy Group (VSSG) provides an established mechanism for strategic consultation and partnership working between the Council and VCS and will be used as a key forum to oversee progress, test emerging priorities and identify opportunities for collaboration.

The VSSG will be used to support implementation by providing regular opportunities to review progress against the commitments in this framework, consider feedback, and highlight areas where stronger coordination is needed across Council departments and partners. This will include using the group to discuss key developments, funding and commissioning issues, emerging community needs, opportunities for joint work, and learning from what is working well. Where appropriate, updates from the VSSG will inform wider Council planning and partnership arrangements, helping to ensure that the VCS has a meaningful voice in shaping local priorities and solutions.

To support this approach, we will:

- Use the VSSG as a reference point for implementation of the VCS Framework.
- Provide regular updates to the VSSG on progress against the framework's commitments.
- Use VSSG discussions to identify barriers, opportunities and areas requiring joint action.
- Ensure VSSG feedback helps inform Council approaches to engagement, commissioning, funding, prevention and partnership working.
- Review governance arrangements over the life of the framework to ensure they remain effective, inclusive and proportionate.
- Consider whether additional task and finish groups are needed to support specific priorities or actions, reporting back through the VSSG where appropriate.

This approach will help embed the framework into existing partnership structures and ensure that delivery is shaped by ongoing dialogue with the sector.

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