

Trustees' Annual Report for the period

Period start date		Period end date					
From	1st	May	2011	To	31st	March	2012

Section A Reference and administration details

Charity name: Voluntary Action South Leicestershire

Other names charity is known by: VASL

Registered charity number (if any): 1141274

Charity's principal address:

The Settling Rooms St Mary's Place	
Market Harborough	
Leicestershire	
Postcode	LE16 7DR

Names of the charity trustees who manage the charity

	Trustee name	Office (if any)	Dates acted if not for whole year	Name of person (or body) entitled to appoint trustee (if any)
1	Carol Birch	Chair	01/05/11-19/09/11	
2	Linda Jones	Chair	19/09/11-present	
3	Gail Lamb	Treasurer	18/07/11-present	
4	Gillian Wood	Secretary		
5	Ann Charlton			
6	Diana Cook			
7	Michael Herbert			
8	James Lindsay			

Names and addresses of advisers

Type of adviser	Name	Address
Auditor	Ask! Audit and Accountancy Ltd	154 Rothley Road Mountsorrel Leicestershire LE12 7JX
Bankers	CAF Bank Ltd	25 Kings Hill Avenue Kings Hill West Malling Kent ME19 4JQ
HR Advisors	Peninsula Business Services Limited	Riverside New Bailey Street Manchester M3 5PB

Name of chief executive or names of senior staff members

Maureen O'Malley: Senior Manager

Jan Meredith: Business Development Manager

Section B Structure, governance and management

Description of the charity's trusts

Type of governing document	Memorandum and Articles of Association
How the charity is constituted	Company Limited By Guarantee
Trustee selection methods	Trustees above are persons notified to Companies House as first Directors of the Charity. Further appointments are in accordance with Paragraphs 16-20 inclusive of the Articles of Association.

Section C Objectives and activities

Aims and Objectives

The Trustees of VASL have regard to the guidance issued by the Charity Commission on public benefit.

Aims

- to serve as a community hub, encouraging and supporting community development and enabling people to engage in democratic processes.

Objectives

- build the strengths and independence of community groups, organisations and networks
- build equity, inclusiveness, participation and cohesion amongst people and their groups and organisations
- empower people and organisations to influence and help transform public policies and services and other factors affecting the conditions of their lives
- advise and inform public authorities on community needs, viewpoints and processes and assist them to strengthen communities.

These objectives were achieved by inspiring and supporting individuals to contribute their own time and skills on a voluntary basis; by helping them organise and by supporting the organisations which they create; and by supporting local and other statutory authorities in developing and implementing their own strategies for the voluntary and community sector.

In practice, the work involved

- recruiting, assessing and placing volunteers into our in house projects
- delivering project based activities
- providing information, advice, training and support to community and voluntary organisations in partnership with VAL and through our own in house Funds and Figures Project
- facilitating the Harborough District Voluntary Sector Forum

Projects

1. Volunteering

VASL continues to support volunteering brokerage in the district by dealing with enquiries and referring on to Voluntary Action Leicestershire.

2. Representation and Engagement

In partnership with VAL, VASL delivered four district Voluntary and Community Sector Forums throughout the year, bringing groups together to discuss topics of interest and share good practice. They were well attended and gave opportunities for Harborough District Council and Leicestershire County Council to engage at a local level. Topics covered included the future changes in health provision and funding for voluntary sector groups.

3. Support for Carers Leicestershire

VASL was successful in tendering for a countywide contract to deliver 'Support for Carers' across the whole of Leicestershire commencing on 1st July 2011. This developed VASL's previous, local service to reach countywide. 1300 carers chose to be transferred into the new service from across the county. VASL is receiving referrals from many different sources such as GP practices, statutory services, from within the voluntary sector and self-referrals. The number of carers who are registering with the service is increasing on a weekly basis, with 1352 carers registered to the end of March 2012. The service is developing new ways to identify and support carers through the website, carer support groups, telephone befriending service, newsletters and working in partnership with voluntary and statutory services. VASL has also set up carers' drop-ins at various libraries around the county. VASL has held 3 successful forums with guest speakers from the Department of Work and Pensions and local solicitors. The team has attended many partners' support groups and been involved in consultations with the NHS and Leicestershire County Council.

VASL administers the Carers' Support Grant on behalf of Leicestershire County Council; this is an annual payment which carers can apply for to give them a break. 178 carers accessed the grant in 2011-12. The website, www.supportforcarers.org, has effectively promoted events and services across the county to support carers, as well as keeping them updated with all relevant new information and legislation; it has received positive feedback for the quality and usefulness of the information provided. Since its launch in July 2011, there have been 3,560 visitors to the website (including new and returning visitors).

4. Carers Mental Health Respite

As part of the countywide carers tender, VASL was also successful in negotiating the delivery of the Carers Mental Health Respite service for the south of the county. VASL co-ordinates respite in Blaby, Oadby and Wigston as well as Harborough Districts. 24 carers of people with mental health difficulties have been able to access the scheme with up to 8 hours of free respite in the home provided by Crossroads for Carers. This successful project has given carers welcome and much needed, regular breaks.

5. Complementary Therapy Service

A further £3,000 was secured from Market Harborough and the Bowdens Charity to continue to provide complementary therapy and pampering sessions for carers. VASL provided over 200 treatments to more than 50 different carers in 2011-12.

6. Young Carers

VASL Young Carers Group continued to meet and, over the year, consolidated its partnership working with Leicestershire County Council Youth Service. The group meets on Youth Service premises and the county provides additional staffing which is all contributed in kind. Towards the end of 2011, we submitted a successful bid for another BBC Children in Need grant to continue the group for a further three years. With funding secured, VASL was able to look at the changing needs of the group and recruit a youth worker for 8 hours a week. The extra youth worker time is used to develop and promote the

group as well as run the fortnightly sessions.

7. Good Companions Befriending Scheme

This year proved to be very successful for the Good Companions Befriending Scheme. The scheme was jointly funded by Market Harborough & The Bowdens Charity and Seven Locks Housing Association.

VASL has worked with a total of 48 volunteer befrienders this year, 16 of whom were newly recruited. VASL accepted 15 new client referrals this year but, unfortunately, had to refuse another 11 referrals as they were located outside the funded activity area. Our wonderful band of volunteers provided 2323 hours of volunteering this year to 46 elderly and isolated people in the area.

Most of the volunteers visited their clients regularly once a week for about an hour or more, with breaks for holidays, illness etc. Most volunteers visited in the home for a chat and a cup of tea in order to give social contact that is lacking. 9 of our volunteers have taken their clients out for trips to places such as garden centres, theatre, shopping, accompanied them on walks and walked next to their client to give them confidence in using their electric mobility scooters.

8. VASL Transport

The Social Car Scheme continues to be well used, with a total of 7,032 journeys undertaken this year. An amazing 106,570 miles were clocked up by our 48 volunteer drivers and we have 1367 passengers registered to use the Social Car Scheme. To be eligible to use the Social Car Scheme the passengers are either elderly, disabled or there is no access to public transport in the geographical location where they live. VASL's seven seater multi purpose vehicle provided regular shopping trips to Melton Mowbray, Fosse Park, Corby, Padders factory shop & Tesco at Kettering. In the past year it has also been hired to transport young carers to a fortnightly group, and adult carers to a variety of events and training courses.

9. The Chill Out Bus

A mobile youth provision, this has been used in many venues across the district, including Ullesthorpe, Fleckney, Swinford, South Kilworth, Walcote, Lutterworth, Broughton Astley, Kibworth & Market Harborough.

The youth workers who run the sessions on the Chill Out Bus find it a useful resource which is reasonably well used by young people. One important piece of work was a consultation with young people in the Swinford area around the Wind Farm Community fund which is worth £24,000 a year for 30 years. The presence of the Chill Out Bus on site encouraged young people to make their views known.

10. Funds and Figures

The aim of the Funds and Figures Project is to increase the sustainability of local voluntary groups, community groups and charities through improved fundraising and financial management skills and knowledge.

This year VASL has continued to deliver services of one to one consultancy support, a funding bulletin, training and peer support group sessions. Groups really value the project and what it offers. The following quotes were taken during interviews with groups as part of an evaluation of the project which took place this year.

"The charity is in a very different place now to what it was before we engaged with the Funds and Figures Project..... We are more confident in applying for funds, and have a more professional approach to fundraising." Michael Smyth – Trustee of Bower House Christian Counselling.

"All the courses have helped me and the last one on Gift Aid made me realise just how much more we can claim". Pat Bishop – Riding for the Disabled Melton

"It's really important to have this kind of support as we're all amateurs, despite some specific skills in some boards." Ian Smith - Hose Village Hall

VASL has achieved all the milestones requested by our funder, with most planned targets being greatly

exceeded. VASL has continued to attract new groups to events and to introduce them to the Funds and Figures project.

VASL has successfully bid for, and received, £10,000 from the BIG Lottery's Supporting Change fund, to find ways to sustain the model of support we have developed over the last four years.

11. Rural Youth Voice

The Big Lottery Funded Rural Youth Voice Project is now in its 3rd year, with another 2 years funding remaining. The project continues to work to support the engagement of young people in local decision making and in the development of services and facilities for them. It also supports organisations and groups to improve their youth participation practices.

Full details of the project's outcomes and achievements in 2011 can be found in the Rural Youth Voice's annual project report <http://www.enableyouth.org.uk/rural-youth-voice-what-have-we-been-up-to/>

One young person said the following:

Being a part of the Enable Youth Rock on the Rec Project is one of the best things I have done. I will be performing at this year's event and am really looking forward to that but am also part of the team scouting the local area for new bands and talent and asking them to play at the event. I have taken on the role of Social Media Administrator which involves me updating and managing the group's internet pages. Sian has taught me loads of tips and techniques on this and blogging and has guided me every step of the way - I had never done any of this before and now have full responsibility. For the first time in my life I am keeping a Diary, because I am regularly at meetings and my spare time is filled greatly with stuff to do with the project. I went along completely independently and didn't know anyone at the group - I've made many friends and learnt to work with people and speak confidently as part of a team about my ideas and views. I also help out with the budgeting of the event and applying for grants. This has given me a great insight into financing and if ever I want to go down that path for a future career I am already one step ahead. Sian has been inspiring and great fun to work with and always makes me feel positive about what I have done or achieved. The experiences and skills I have gained so far are invaluable as I could not have gained them at school or home. I think they are life skills and the sense of achievement gained on a personal level has helped me grow in confidence massively. This project is great because it allows the youth to show the community through the skills and tools provided that we are a vital asset and have a lot of good to offer.

12. Community Garden

Following identification of a suitable piece of land in partnership with Harborough District Council a successful bid for £10,000 was submitted to the Big Lottery Awards for All fund. A steering group was formed and a sessional project co-ordinator was recruited in June 2011.

The community garden is now an excellent resource that the community will be able to use for a minimum of 15 years. The project has engaged with 5 different user groups throughout the community and with them have designed and created a community garden where they can grow flowers, fruit, vegetables and trees, meet with people from their own group and from other groups in the community with whom they may not usually have much contact. The five groups represent a local primary school, a local secondary school, a national mental health charity, a local charity which supports those with severe physical mental and physical disabilities as well as a group from the local mental health NHS team.

In addition to the above, there are two additional beds in the garden and we have recruited a knowledgeable volunteer to run a 'drop-in' session for anyone not associated with the other groups, to come and enjoy the benefits of gardening and the company of others. We expect this to reduce isolation in those individuals.

The garden has been 'branded' as a Voluntary Action South Leicestershire project with a sign incorporating our name and logo. An Open Day is planned in May 2012.

Section D Outcomes, achievements and performance

The table below summarises the difference VASL made in our communities during 2011-12.

Community	Total individuals	How have they benefited?
Carers across Leicestershire	1352 (average of 5 new carers a week are now registering for support)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helpline • Online support through website, Facebook, Twitter • 5 Support groups met to share experiences and enjoy social time • 3 forum events • 2 Newsletters provided information and contacts • Telephone befriending (67 users/ 9 vols)
Young carers	11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fortnightly support group gives respite time and a chance to be with peers
Isolated Older People	46 befriended (15 new 11-12) 800+ used social car scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social support – regular visits through Good Companions Befriending (46 users, 2323 hrs of visits) • Used VASL social car scheme for health and social journeys (800+)
Young people , including young parents, young travellers, rurally isolated young people and those at risk of offending or being excluded from education.	1400	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved confidence • Enabled to make a difference in their communities • Greater understanding of the meaning and practice of youth participation • Youth cafés • Enable Youth website
Volunteers	44 drivers 46 befrienders 9 telephone befrienders 4 young carer volunteers 3 Carer Support volunteers 1 VASL office volunteer 40 Rural Youth Voice volunteers 5 community garden volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteers enjoying their roles and gaining experience in supporting carers, befriending, providing community transport • Received training to develop knowledge and skills • Enable Youth won Pride of Harborough Young Achievers award
Community groups in Harborough and Melton districts	Over 350 groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Received funding and finance advice at events, one to one and by telephone, through VASL's Funds and Figures project. • Developed and now use the Little Bowden Community garden • Attended training • Attended VCS support forums
The business and public sectors	Seven Locks Housing Vattenfall – Swinford Windfarm Project Leicestershire County Council Harborough District Council NHS LCR LINK Local schools, libraries, adult learning 3 GP surgeries 10 Parish Councils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worked in partnership with VASL to support their customers and share knowledge and ideas • Raised their community profile • Received information to help them engage effectively with young people
Single Infrastructure Organisations	Voluntary Action Leicestershire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worked in partnership with VASL to support their aims for Harborough district

Section D Outcomes, achievements and performance

Community	Total individuals	How have they benefited?
Charitable trusts	Market Harborough Bowdens Charity LLR Community Foundation (Comic Relief) Big Lottery Children In Need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Met their charitable aims by awarding grants to VASL for project activity
The wider community		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Little Bowden Community Garden fosters community and intergenerational cohesion and contributes positively to the environment. 1000 people attended Enable Youth's Rock on the Rec event Enable Youth put on Speak Out competition Supported by Rural Youth Voice to engage with young people Enable Youth website provides information Support for Carers Leicestershire website provides information and support

Section E Financial review

1. Financial performance

The financial period covered by the accounts and this report was an 11 month period from 1st May 2011 to 31st March 2012. VASL started the period with funds of £182,933 of which £1,055 were restricted to be applied to specific purposes. It ended the period with funds of £164,274 which included a shortfall in restricted income funds of £17,665 mainly due to the set-up costs of the Support for Carers contract. This amount will be recovered in the remaining years of the contract. The amount which can be applied at the discretion of the Trustees had risen by £61 to £181,939. VASL continues to operate in a period of considerable financial uncertainty in relation to core funding from statutory bodies and project funding from other agencies. In view of this the Trustees considered it prudent to leave the designated financial reserve at £100,000 to cover contingencies (see note d in point 4 below).

2. Policy on cost recovery

In undertaking a grant funded project, VASL aimed to apply the principles of Full Cost Recovery. That is, it recognised that each project undertaken by VASL was supported by a central organisation whose costs must be covered by the organisation as a whole. Each project had therefore to contribute its share of the central cost.

Accordingly, except where there was an explicit agreement with the funder on the amount of grant which was to be applied to central costs, an overheads charge was levied in proportion to the staff time devoted to the project. These charges were calculated as part of the annual budgeting process, and were applied in the accounts as inter-fund transfers.

3. Staffing

A full review of our core staff was undertaken in the year to meet the financial restrictions of the coming year. In November 2011, a Business Development Manager was appointed on a 12-month contract based on 3 days work per week. Through this role, VASL has been able to put in a strong tender for a county-wide contract, obtain funding to continue the Befriending project and develop a strategic plan.

4. Policy on reserves

VASL's policy on reserves has been designed to protect it from uncertainties in funding from statutory and grant making bodies, and other financial risks. Its aim is to ensure that there are sufficient funds to meet all its contractual obligations and to continue in operation until there has been time to reorganise to meet the contingency.

The Trustees agreed that:

- a) The VASL Board would continue to designate a fund in its accounts to be its financial reserve.
- b) No expenditure of money from the financial reserve could be committed for any purpose except by explicit decision of the board. In so deciding, the board would consider whether, when and how the reserve could be replenished.
- c) The core fund operational reserves should be designated for business development costs to cover delivery of the strategic plan.
- d) The financial reserves and business development reserves should be invested in 2 interest-bearing instant access accounts to a maximum of £85000 in each (as per current FSA guidelines re risk).

The VASL board reviewed its financial risks and decided not to increase or decrease its designated financial reserve. The financial reserve remains at £100,000, calculated thus:

3 months' core running costs	£50,000
negative cash flow in run down situation	£25,000
reserve for possible redundancy costs	£25,000

Section F Declaration

The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees

Signature(s)

LINDA JONES

PILLIAN WOOD

Full name(s)

LINDA JONES

PILLIAN WOOD

Position (eg Secretary, Chair, etc)

CHAIR AND TRUSTEE

SECRETARY AND TRUSTEE

Date

23. JULY 2012