

VASL

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TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT

FOR THE PERIOD 1 APRIL 2013 TO 31 MARCH 2014

SECTION A

Reference and Administration details

Charity Name Voluntary Action South Leicestershire
Other names charity is known by VASL
Registered Charity Number 1141274

Charity's Principal Address The Settling Rooms, St Mary's Place
Market Harborough, Leicestershire
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)
Linda Jones	Chair		
Gail Lamb	Treasurer		
Gillian Wood	Secretary		
Margaret Nash			
Ann Charlton			
Valerie Hitchcox			
Michael Herbert			
James Lindsay			

Type of Adviser

Name

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 Ltd	Riverside, New Bailey Street, Manchester M3 5PB

Name of Chief Executive or Names of Senior Staff Members

Maureen O'Malley, Senior 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
- contributing to the Harborough District Voluntary Sector Forum

Senior Manager Overview of 2013/14 – What went well?

Project and Services

Another busy and successful year at VASL. The projects and services continue to deliver high quality services to their target users. Carers support (including Young Carers) remains the largest proportion of VASL's work with combined projects accounting for around 60% of VASL's work. We added to the Carers Support with a specialist carers group for Substance and Alcohol misuse funded by the Triangle Trust and a Carers Choir Project, funded by the Big Lottery.

The organisation agreed to invest part of its operational reserves to extend the reach of our very successful Older Person Befriending Scheme and levered in £12,000 from HDC New Homes Bonus Fund. Older Person's Befriending is now available across the whole of the Harborough District.

Transport remains the most well-known and popular project with the local people of Harborough. Although the contribution towards the cost of journeys has risen considerably with the withdrawal of the bus pass contribution, the scheme remains busy.

VASL continues to support the Rural Youth Voice Project which has now entered its final year and is considering options to continue some of the offshoot projects established during the duration of the project.

Quality

2013/14 also saw VASL embed Pqasso Quality Standards throughout the organisation. Jan Meredith, VASL's Business Development Manager led on this piece of work which enabled the organisation to progress at a pace and submit an application for the accreditation before Jan left VASL at the end of September. VASL was externally assessed in December and successfully passed all areas of quality apart from two minor improvements. We now await the final certificate which will allow VASL to use the Quality Mark endorsed by the Charity Commission.

Publicity and Promotion

2013/14 also saw the formal launch of the VASL website. The rebranding and new logo has been well received by service users, volunteers, professionals and stakeholders. In the past year VASL (and not Voluntary Action South Leics) has been firmly established as our new name. The organisation also agreed to invest in Publicity and Marketing Manager from September 2014 which is proving to be a valuable addition to the core staff team, enabling planned and co-ordinated publicity and media coverage for VASL. The role is also supporting the projects with media engagement.

VASL's profile has also been enhanced by the adoption of Maggie Philbin as our Patron. Maggie hosted VASL's AGM in September which proved to be a very successful event with over 60 people attending including the Chair of both HDC and LCC.

Internal and External Relationships

VASL continues to be identified as the lead 3rd Sector Organisation in the Harborough District by HDC and the wider VCS organisations. We are consulted regularly by HDC officers on various topics and themes and 2013/14 saw us embed a service framework with HDC to enable the continuity of direct funding to VASL. We continue to work closely with VAL which is enhanced by Linda Jones who is Chair of both VAL and VASL. We also continue to have strong links to LCC particularly through our Carers Contracts and with individual LCC officers.

Our internal relationships have been strengthened by the addition of two new trustees who have contributed not only to the overall direction of the organisation but by joining other trustees getting involved with specific projects. This is proving to be an excellent way for VASL staff to have closer relationships with the Trustee Board.

Finances

VASL Finances remain healthy with a strong leadership from Gail Lamb, VASL's Treasurer. The finance sub-group are able to scrutinise and make informed and measured decision through accurate reporting, with appropriate oversight by and approvals from the full Trustee Board.

What could we have done better?

Throughout 2013/14 VASL continued to consider statutory contracts as they arose. Although it was easy to identify services that do not fit with VASL's Strategic aims, a number of contracts were up for tender that VASL considered tendering for. With a very short turn around on many of the statutory contracts, very quick decisions were made as to whether to apply or not. To ensure VASL maximises its Senior Managers time and additional resources needed to apply for statutory tenders, we need to be more aware of our competitors and the likelihood of success. VASL must look for appropriate partnerships for larger contracts.

VASL also needs to establish a mechanism for planning for continuation of projects that are trust/grant funded.

Where do we go from here?

To ensure financial stability for the whole of VASL we must ensure that we are well prepared for the tender process for the Support for Carers retendering exercise which is likely to be from April 1st 2015. The tender documents are likely to be out by December 2014 with a deadline for submission at the beginning of January 2015.

We need to secure funding for Older Person's Befriending across the whole of Harborough District, using evidence of need gathered throughout the year.

We have plans to develop a further Mentoring/Befriending scheme for adults with low level mental health problems, applying to trusts etc.

We drive forward VASL's engagement with Businesses looking for sponsorship/support both in monetary terms and the sharing of skills and expertise.

We continue to work closely with HDC to identify gaps in service provision and support their priorities.

We ensure VASL is a key deliverer of services for LCC, by keeping our profile high and contributing to events/forums/consultations etc. and tendering for appropriate contracts.

We actively look to tender with partner organisations where appropriate.

We continue to work collaboratively with VAL to ensure volunteering is kept at the core of VASL's values.

We agree a way forward with regards to Youth Involvement/projects and actively look for funding should a need be identified.

VASL continues to raise its profile by using all forms of Media including video clips. VASL increases its use of social media especially Facebook and Twitter putting control of these Medias back with the Managers of VASL.

Maureen O'Malley
VASL Senior Manager

VASL Projects

1. Support for Carers Leicestershire

VASL's Support for Carers Leicestershire project continued to provide much needed support to family carers across the whole of Leicestershire again this year. 700 new carers were identified and registered with our service. This brings the total of 2500 carers on our database. Each registered carer receives an initial assessment and is signposted and supported to services to help them in their caring role. Carers then receive a quarterly newsletter from VASL and the opportunity to attend various carers groups. The project works very closely with the Health and Social Care services and specialist Voluntary Sector providers to provide a holistic approach to supporting carers. VASL delivered 6 Carers Forums throughout the year giving carers the opportunity to meet with service providers and decision makers and influence future planning. The Forums also enable Leicestershire County Council to carry out meaningful consultation with carers. VASL's Carers Website www.supportforcarers.org continues to provide up to date relevant information to Carers and Professionals across Leicestershire.

2. Carers Mental Health Respite

VASL continued to co-ordinate Carers Mental Health respite in the South of the County which covers Blaby, Oadby and Wigston as well as Harborough Districts. 38 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.

3. Mental Health Education Programme for Carers

This programme specifically targets carers of people with a diagnosis of a severe mental illness e.g. schizophrenia, Bi Polar Disorder and Clinical Depression. During 2013-14 VASL ran 4 separate, 8 week courses across the county. Overall 42 carers attended the whole course and a further 9 who attended one of two modules. The courses have been very well received with positive feedback from carers who have attended. This contract has been extended to 30th September March 2014.

4. Generic Carers Training Programme

This project is a continuation of funding from Santander Community fund to provide training courses for Carers across the whole of Leicestershire. During the year we ran 56 courses, totalling 117 sessions for carers. They covered different topics such as First Aid, Computing for Beginners, Complementary Therapy, Yoga for Beginners, Mindfulness, Safer Handling and Lifting, Arts and Crafts. 335 carers attended these courses learning many new skills. Funding to provide further training for carers is being sought.

5. Carers Complementary Therapy Service

45 Carers were provided with 305 individual therapy/pampering sessions by VASL in 2013-14. We seek to secure further funding to continue this much needed and valuable service for carers, although this service is part funded by carer donations at each pampering session.

6. Young Carers

VASL Young Carers Project supported a total of 21 young carers between 2013-14. 4 members left and 4 new members started. The number of young carers who regularly attended was 16. This makes it by far the largest young carers group in Leicestershire. To enable quality of delivery, the maximum number of young carers regularly attending the group is capped at 20. Throughout 2013-14 VASL has been exploring ways of growing young carers support and a need has been identified for a younger age range group for 8 -11 year olds. Funding options to expand will be investigated.

7. Good Companions Befriending Scheme/Rural Befriending

In 2013-14 The befriending scheme supported 46 lonely and isolated older people. 47 volunteers were active in the scheme providing 2332 hours of befriending. During the year VASL successfully bid for further funding to expand the service into the more rural areas of the district. A second worker was recruited and commenced work in December. Identifying both clients and volunteers in the rural areas took place during the final quarter of 2013-14 with a very positive response. 6 people expressed an interest, 3 volunteers recruited and 2 new befriending relationships commenced.

8. Memory Lane

This partnership project with Seven Locks Housing was funded by Leicestershire County Council Innovation Fund. The aim of the one year project was to provide 3 weekly reminiscence sessions in three Seven Locks Sheltered Housing Schemes in Market Harborough and Fleckney. The sessions were delivered against the back drop of three memory pods 'RemPods', a 1950's living room, a shop and a pub. The project engaged with a total of 103 older people and established friendship groups that continued after the end of the project. The project was successful in its main aims however it needed longer to integrate people with dementia into the project.

9. VASL Transport

The Social Car Scheme continued to be well used, with a total of 5,879 journeys undertaken this year. 78,563 miles were clocked up by our 47 volunteer drivers and we have 1561 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. Journeys were slightly less during the year as a result of the impact of Leicestershire County Council withdrawing the use of Bus Passes for Community Transport from the 1st September 2013. This resulted in the cost of journeys to the clients doubling in some cases. We fed back client comments and concerns to Leicestershire county council during the consultation period for the funding changes. Feedback from clients is that they may have to cut back on some social journeys although they would continue to use VASL transport for essential hospital and health appointments. VASL's seven seater multi-purpose vehicle continued to provide regular trips to popular shopping destinations.

10. Funds and Figures

The aim of the Funds and Figures Project was to increase the sustainability of local voluntary groups, community groups and charities through improved fundraising and financial management skills and knowledge. This project was finally closed at the end of September 2013-14 after a 6 month extension on original funding. VASL now provides free web based information to community groups, however it no longer offers face to face support unless a community group is willing to pay for this service. VASL now signposts groups to VAL for support as they hold the infrastructure support role for the county.

11. Rural Youth Voice

The Big Lottery Funded Rural Youth Voice Project entered its 5th and final year and will finish at the end of December 2014. During 2013-14 Rural Youth Voice supported Swinford Wind farm Project to engage with local young people to hear their views on a 25 year community funding from Vattenfall for the locating of the wind farm. Rural Youth Voice facilitated a number of joint meetings with the young people and the parish councils in the three villages near to Swinford. Ultimately the parish councils will decide where the funding is spent, however with the support of VASL's Rural Youth Project the young people's ideas and input have been included. The project also continued to put on Rock on the Rec and

produce the Speak out Magazine. Planning for the sustainability of some of the projects beyond the life of the Rural Youth Voice project is already being considered.

12. Community Garden

VASL community garden continues to be run and maintained by local volunteers and community groups.

13. Volunteering

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

14. Representation and Engagement

In partnership with VAL, VASL contributed to 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 'Supporting Leicestershire Families', 'Community Safety Partnership', 'Young People's Mentoring Schemes' and Funding Information.

SECTION D

Outcomes, Achievements and Performance

The Table below summarises the difference VASL made in our Communities during 2013-14. In brackets the 2012-13 numbers.

Community	Total Individuals	How Have They Benefited?
Carers across Leicestershire	2,500 (1929)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carer helpline (M-F, 9 – 5) • Online support through website, Facebook, Twitter • 144 Support group sessions delivered to share experiences and enjoy social time • 6 forum events • 4 Newsletters provided information and contacts • 480 carer support grants issued • Telephone befriending (327 sessions, 104 users/11 volunteers) • 27 carers provided with mental health respite • 56 Carer training courses delivered to a total 335 carers • 305 carer pampering therapy sessions delivered • 4 specialist mental health education programme developed and delivered to 51 carers of people with poor mental health
Young Carers	21 (22)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 23 support group sessions provided respite time and a chance to be with peers • One to one support where most needed • Email and Facebook support • 10 activity days/ extra outings.
Isolated Older People	50 (54) befriended 1561 (1487) used social car scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social support – regular visits by volunteers through Good Companions/Rural Befriending (46 users, 2332 (2505) hrs of visits) • Used VASL social car scheme for health and social journeys

<p>Young people, including young parents, young travellers, rurally isolated young people and those at risk of offending or being excluded from education</p>	<p>1870(1940)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved confidence and skills • Enabled to make a difference in their communities • Greater understanding of the meaning and practice of youth participation • Youth cafés • Enable Youth website
<p>Volunteers</p>	<p>8 (9) VASL trustees 47 (52) drivers 47 (55) befrienders 11 (9) telephone befrienders 12 (14) young carer volunteers 3 Carer Support volunteers 2 (1) VASL office volunteer 1 carer pampering volunteer 43 (40) Rural Youth Voice volunteers TOTAL 174</p>	<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
<p>Community Groups in Harborough and Melton Districts</p>	<p>Over 150 groups</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributed to an evaluation of the Funds and Figures Project
<p>The Business and Public Sectors</p>	<p>We worked with many different organisations including Seven Locks Housing Leicestershire County Council Harborough District Council NHS community mental health teams CCG's Healthwatch Vattenfall Waitrose Santander Sainsbury's Plexus Media Indigo Computing Local schools, libraries, adult learning GP practices across Leicestershire Parish Councils Schools/Education Establishments</p>	<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
<p>Single Infrastructure Organisations</p>	<p>Voluntary Action LeicesterShire</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worked in partnership with VASL to support their aims for Harborough district
<p>Charities/Third Sector</p>	<p>We worked with many different charities including Market Harborough Bowdens Charity LLR Community Foundation Big Lottery Children In Need Age UK</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Met their charitable aims by awarding grants to VASL for project activity • Took referrals for services from VASL staff • Attended VASL forums • Consulted on project development

	<p>LAMP Harborough District Mind Snowdrops Swanswell Dementia Café Harborough Youth and Community Trust Enable Youth Room for Music Befriending Network Community Transport Association Alzheimer's Society</p>	
The Wider Community		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 • VASL website provides information, support and access to services

1. Financial Performance

The financial period covered by the accounts and this report was a 12 month period from 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014. The annual income was £568,432 and the total costs were £565,078. This resulted in a net surplus of £3,354. There was a £8,621 surplus in restricted funds, giving a total of £33,458 to be carried forward when added to last year's surplus. The Finance Committee agreed that this restricted surplus would be invested into continuing projects. There was a £5,267 shortfall in unrestricted funds which was primarily due to bid writing costs approved at the start of the year by the Board. VASL continue 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

VASL's Business Development role ceased in September 2013 with a decision to outsource bid writing. Wider business development and funding searches were taken up by the Senior Manager. To enable VASL to continue with its strategic plan core funding was diverted to creating a Publicity and Marketing role. Staff numbers increased overall as we recruited to fill project posts as they came on board throughout the financial year.

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:

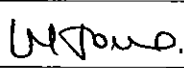
3 months' core running costs	£50,000
negative cash flow in run down situation	£25,000
reserve for possible redundancy costs	£25,000

SECTION F

Declaration

The Trustees declare that they have approved the trustee's report above.

Signed on behalf of the Charity's trustees

Signature		
Full Name	LINDA JONES	
Position (e.g. Secretary, Chair etc.)	Chair	
Date	9 September 2014	

