COVID-19

VCS Recovery & Resilience strategy 2021 - 2022

The pandemic has highlighted the vast inequalities present in Hackney's diverse communities, which can only be addressed by partners working in collaboration

#FairerHackney

hackney cvs

KEEP LONDON SAFE

Event link:
Join Zoom meeting
https://us02web.zoom.us/j/7701713568
Meeting ID: 770 171 3568

COVID-19 VACCINE CONVERSATIONS

Online event: Thu 1 April, 5.30pm–7.30pm

South Asian communities in City and Hackney

If you have any concerns about the COVID-19 vaccine or are concerned about a family member, this is a chance to get the information you need and ask the questions you want answers to.

To join the Zoom meeting
https://us02web.zoom.us/j/7701713568

Organised jointly with:
- SKS Swaminarayan Temple, East London
- Bangla Housing Association

Hackney CVS
3,197 Tweets

BLACK LIVES MATTER

hackney cvs

Mar 24, 2021
Anonymous

VIRGIN MONEY GIVING

Now more than ever want to share what we have with those who have lost so much in the last year. Thankful for the tireless work of all the small organisations making Hackney a better place.

https://bit.ly/3uuutco

Throughout the pandemic, we have been working with and supporting our diverse local communities. To keep up to date with our work, please follow us on twitter >> @hackneycvs and sign up for our weekly newsletter: https://bit.ly/3gZMwDJ

Contents

Foreword

2020 marks one of the most challenging periods in recent years for Hackney, as we, along with the rest the world, have needed to respond to a global pandemic. Pre-existing inequalities have not only been highlighted, but exacerbated, with clear evidence that Black and Asian ethnic groups have increased mortality rates when compared to their White counterparts. Furthermore, it's the most marginalised within our community, that have been hardest hit by the economic impact, and who will need the most support to sustain resilience and recover.

The Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) plays a vital role in maintaining strong local communities, reaching residents that statutory services may struggle to reach and empowering and supporting community and individual resilience. However, to deliver against the needs outlined in this strategy, adequate investment will be critical. Therefore, whilst this strategy is for the VCS, to be led by the VCS, it will need the backing and support of both public and private sector partners if it is to achieve its aims.

We can't ignore the role that structural racism has played in the disproportionate impact the pandemic has had on our ethnically diverse communities. It's for this reason that I firmly believe this strategy needs leadership representative of those communities most impacted, particularly those from Black African heritage backgrounds

The situation is fast-evolving, and with the rollout of the national vaccination programme we now have hope in sight. However, if the pandemic has taught us anything, it's that the virus is unpredictable, and therefore to expect the unexpected. Therefore, this strategy doesn't propose to set out how we recover from the pandemic, but rather how to respond to the immediate challenges to sustain our resilience, and best position ourselves so that we have the infrastructure and mechanisms in place to build our inevitable recovery.

Jake Ferguson
Chief Executive Officer
Hackney CVS

1. Introduction

1.1 Why do we need a strategy?

COVID-19 has presented many challenges, both for the present and for the future. A coordinated response is required to address these challenges, to maximise strained resources, and to increase the sharing of information and lessons learned.

1.2 Who is the strategy for?

The VCS has the closest proximity to the issues being faced by Hackney's vibrant communities, it therefore makes sense that the VCS is resourced to take a leadership position to drive forward the actions included in this strategy. This strategy will support the VCS and partners to make informed decisions, setting out the key themes, and subsequent priorities, as coproduced by the VCS, and public sector partners.

1.3 How has the strategy been developed?

Whilst Hackney CVS has led the development of the strategy, its primary role has been as a convener, and facilitator. The themes, and correlating recommendations, have been developed from a series of VCS conversations, and survey data, culminating in a shared understanding of the current challenges, and a set of coproduced set of recommended actions.

1.4 How does strategy align with other local initiatives?

The pandemic has highlighted the vast inequalities present in Hackney's diverse communities, which can only be addressed by partners working in collaboration. The success of this strategy relies on a partnership approach, with coproduction at its core, working between the community, VCS and statutory health and care partners – see section 7: Strategy mobilisation for more details.

Relevant local initiatives which align to the priorities identified throughout this strategy include:

- Ageing Well Strategy, LBH
- Anti-Racism Manifesto, LBH
- Community Partnerships Network, LBH
- Community Champions, VCH
- HackIT, Bridging the Digital Divide, LBH
- Hackney Giving, HCVS
- Health Inequalities Steering Group, LBH, NHS, VCS
- Impact Assessment, LBH
- Integrated Commissioning Communication and Engagement Enabler Group
- Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, LBH
- Neighbourhood Conversations / partnership, VCS
- Population Health Hub, LBH
- Social Value Exchange, LBH, VCS, Private sector

2. Underlying principles

This strategy has been developed and is to be delivered guided by the following principles:

1. Provide clear, accurate, timely and targeted communication
2. Ensure equitable distribution of resources so that VCS organisations are sustainably funded to deliver identified solutions, and are able to be responsive to evolving needs
3. Adopt a collaborative approach to partnership working, and commit to open dialogue and transparency
4. Employ an asset-based community development approach, coproducing solutions with residents and patients
5. Champion innovation by embedding a 'test and learn' culture
6. Commit to tackling inequalities – challenging imbalances of power and inequitable prioritisation

3. Strategic objectives

Four key strategic objectives have emerged from discussions with the sector. Our learning has illuminated those within our community who have been impacted most by the pandemic, and therefore who should be prioritised as part of our efforts to build resilience and prepare for recovery.

Objective 1: Support Hackney's diverse communities strive towards recovery from the impact of COVID-19, building and reinforcing resilience as the pandemic continues to evolve	**Priority 1**: Identify and provide financial support to those most at risk from financial hardship **Priority 2**: Ensure fair and equitable access to services that meet practical and emotional needs for local residents, with prioritisation given to those with complex needs **Priority 3**: Identify, explore and support people and communities under the radar e.g., LGBTQ community; people experiencing homelessness; undocumented migrants **Priority 4**: Tackling prejudice and discrimination; supporting marginalised communities e.g., disabled people, ethnically diverse communities; empowering ethnically diverse communities to be at the forefront of change
Objective 2: Support Hackney's vibrant voluntary and community sector to recover from the impact of COVID-19, and build resilience	**Priority 1**: Ensure VCS organisations are core funded to ensure their sustainability, so that they can continue to exist; ensuring that capital assets and IT infrastructure are in place, and fit for purpose **Priority 2**: Build the capacity of the VCS workforce, striving for parity with public sector to support equal and equitable partnership working and collaboration. **Priority 3**: Support effective partnership and collaborative working (within the VCS and with Public Sector partners) **Priority 4**: Empower ethnically diverse led VCS organisations/groups to address structural racism; addressing imbalances of power and prioritisation

Objective 3: Align strategic priorities with public sector partners; and ensure the strategy influences relevant local initiatives	**Priority 1:** VCS provided a seat at the table to inform and influence decision-making, including but not limited to service procurement **Priority 2**: Commit to open, transparent and timely communication that allows resources to be allocated to meet the greatest need from the outset, notwithstanding our commitment to act fairly and equitably **Priority 3**: Empower and resource the VCS sector to actively engage in local initiatives so that they continue to accurately reflect the needs of local communities, particularly those representing ethnically diverse communities disproportionately impacted by COVID-19
Objective 4: Supporting and developing an inclusive leadership culture within the VCS, developing the workforce globally	**Priority 1:** Commitment to ensuring that leadership structures reflect the local population, reimagining entry requirements and targeted recruitment **Priority 2:** Deliver training and provide opportunities for upskilling to develop the VCS workforce; with a clear focus on addressing inequalities to fill gaps that exist within current leadership structures

4. Priority groups and individuals

A number of groups/individuals have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, and therefore prioritised for inclusion in this strategy (listed in alphabetical order)

- Carers
- Children and families (including Children with Special Educational Needs)
- Disabled people
- Ethnically diverse communities
- Faith based communities
- Families on low and uncertain incomes
- Older people

- Parents and guardians
- People experiencing or at risk of homelessness
- People living with dementia
- People with a learning disability
- People living with a long-term condition
- Refugee and migrant communities
- Working-age people (experiencing financial hardship)

We recognise this is not an exhaustive list, and there will be other people and communities that are not listed but who will require a specific focus for their needs to be addressed. Some of these are included under the heading 'People under the radar'. Communication and engagement will need to outreach beyond simply the targeted demographic to reach people under the radar.

5. What do we need to do?

We recognise that the pandemic has impacted on some within our community far greater than others. People living in poverty, those from ethnic minority communities, those with complex needs or living with a long-term condition, children and young people, and older people have all experienced particular challenges. These groups, (and others) will require tailored responses to aid sustained resilience, and to lay the foundations for recovery.

This coproduced strategy, with Hackney's strong and vibrant VCS and its public sector partners, offers a framework and focus for the next 12 months. Crucial to its success will be continued collaboration, with a focus on equitable leadership, and fair distribution of resources.

The contents of this section represent a particular period in time, and therefore as times passes some elements may be less relevant than others, and therefore the agents responsible for delivering this strategy need to continually assess the validity and newly emergent needs, as the pandemic evolves.

5.1 Children, young people & families

Most Impacted: Children 0-4 / C&YP 5-16 / YP 16+ / children with SENs / parents, guardians and carers

Challenges

- Lack of clear government guidelines
- Disproportionate impact of lockdown restrictions on new parents
- Primary aged school children disproportionately impacted by lockdown, impacting on mental health
- Children from low-income and/or overcrowded households significantly disadvantaged by distance learning (digital exclusion)
- Financial hardship
- Young people aged 16+ NEET at high risk.

What does the VCS say is needed?

1. Increased collaboration between LBH, NHS, VCS and residents to coproduce/influence policymaking and service design
2. Improved, consistent communication, which takes account of nuances for people within this cohort; with specific guidance for VCS groups operating on the frontline
3. Improved collaboration between VCS providers, children's services, and schools to identify children in need of additional support; VCS trained to undertake risk assessments
4. Priority support provided to parents of children 0-4
5. Safe-spaces created for new parents, with investment to ensure spaces are Covid-secure
6. Whole family approach, ensuring that siblings of children with SEN, or of children aged 0-4 also have their needs met
7. Outreach to find YP 16+ who are NEET to provide support with employment, housing etc.
8. Mental health and wellbeing support made accessible to C&YP
9. Respite support provided to parents and carers.

Key Partners: Children & Families Forum, Children's Services, Mental Health SIG, Advocacy Groups e.g. Parent Voice, Public Health, Hackney CVS, ELFT

5.2 People living with complex needs / long-term conditions

Most Impacted: Disabled people / people living with a learning disability / people living with dementia / people living with or experiencing poor mental health / people awaiting treatment for serious illness

Challenges

- Lack of clear government guidelines
- Impact to regular routine having significant impact on quality of life
- Insufficient access to PPE
- Impact on treatment, particularly for those with life-threatening illness
- Delays to receiving vaccine due to ill-health
- Accessibility challenges, particularly with online services
- Financial hardship.

What does the VCS say is needed?

1. Increased collaboration between LBH, NHS, VCS and residents to coproduce/influence policymaking and service design
2. Improved, consistent communication, which takes account of nuances for people within this cohort; with specific guidance for VCS groups operating on the frontline
3. Improved co-ordination of community assets, linking providers working with these groups with suppliers of needed resources to create more efficient distribution channels
4. Identification by GP practice of people who are experiencing delays with treatment, or with receiving their vaccine, and to be referred to a social prescriber for community-based intervention/support.

Key Partners: Food Justice Alliance, Food Banks, NHS Primary Care, Volunteer Centre Hackney, Other VCS groups as appropriate, Public Health, Hackney CVS

5.3 Older people

Most Impacted: People aged 50+

Challenges

- Older people have experienced long-term isolation and loneliness due to having to 'shield' due to increased risk
- Many have experienced a loss of confidence (to engage in wider society)
- Financial hardship (40% of older Hackney residents live in income-deprived households)
- Over 60% of over 65s have a disability
- Ageism has been amplified by media reporting

What does the VCS say is needed?

1. Increased collaboration between LBH, NHS, VCS and residents to coproduce/influence policymaking and service design
2. Improved access to befriending support to combat isolation and loneliness, and support with digital inclusion (as part of a wider package of digital support – see section 6.2)
3. Increased promotion of at-home exercise e.g., chair-based exercise
4. Positive case-studies, to combat ageism, and to support re-building of confidence
5. Safe spaces created for older people, to combat loss of confidence, and support re-engagement with

- Digital exclusion
- Increased likelihood of suffering a bereavement during the pandemic
- Vaccine hesitancy high amongst some ethnic minority communities
- Incidence of depression increases with age / however also seen high level of resilience

wider community; supported by community transport, and increased access to public toilets

6. Accessible bereavement / mental health support
7. Local vaccination awareness campaign, targeted at specific ethnic minority communities with higher hesitancy levels.

Key Partners:	Age UK EL / OPRG, Connect Hackney / OPC, Older People's SIG, Volunteer Centre Hackney, Hackney Lunch Club Network, Public Health, ASC, NHS Primary Care, Hackney CVS

5.4 Ethnically diverse and/or faith-based communities

Most Impacted:	Ethnically diverse communities / faith-based communities / refugee and migrant communities

Challenges

- VCS significantly under-resourced to meet increased demand (owing to inequalities resulting from structural racism)
- Cultural nuances omitted from public policies
- Financial hardship amongst community – owing to higher proportion in low-income jobs / migrants with NRPF
- Language / communication barriers
- Increased incidence of COVID-19 amongst some Black and Asian communities and increased mortality rates / lack of knowledge (Beyond known inequalities resulting from structural racism)
- Higher rates of vaccine hesitancy, particularly amongst Black, and Asian communities – linked to mistrust of statutory bodies owing to previous, and ongoing abuses of trust

What does the VCS say is needed?

1. Increased collaboration between LBH, NHS, ethnically diverse-led VCS groups, community leaders and residents to coproduce/influence policymaking and service design
2. Improved, consistent communication among VCS and public sector partners, which takes account of cultural nuances, translated into community languages (with ethnically diverse-led VCS groups financially resourced to support), including translation services for in-person/online appointments
3. LBH, in collaboration with VCS to lobby for full review of disproportionate impact of C-19 for Black and Asian communities
4. Capacity building of ethnically diverse-led groups, with proportionate, and appropriate leadership positioning
5. Ring-fenced sustainable funding for ethnically diverse-led groups
6. Culturally specific mental health, and bereavement support
7. Local vaccination awareness campaign, targeted at specific ethnic minority communities with higher hesitancy levels
8. Demystifying of 'undocumented migrants', to support improved awareness and access of support (financial and otherwise).

5.5 People under the radar

Most Impacted: People in high-risk environments and/or unknown to services e.g. people at risk of DV, LGBTQ+ living in hostile environments, people new to Hackney, people with NRPF

Challenges

- Advice services are experiencing a sharp increase in demand on issues related to financial hardship, housing, domestic abuse; with a disproportionate spike in demand from some ethnically diverse communities e.g., Turkish/ Kurdish
- Some patterns emerging to suggest people are feeling higher levels of anxiety, increased stress within households, and carers not able to get respite from caring their responsibilities
- Local data not known, but reported nationally that incidence of domestic violence has increased during periods of lockdown, with fewer support access points
- Concern for people with limited contacts in the area e.g., recently moved to the borough
- Housing providers reporting few residents reaching out for support; limited access to understand what is happening behind closed doors (during lockdown)
- Lack of clarity of who falls within the 'undocumented migrants' group, and what support is available

What does the VCS say is needed?

1. Increased collaboration between LBH, NHS, VCS and residents to coproduce/influence policymaking and service design
2. Increased promotion of advice services (Debt, housing, mental health and others), including the LBH Find Your Service tool
3. Accessible Information, which is jargon free, written in a style to accommodate those with lower literacy, or have English as a second language, as well as being translated into community languages
4. Communication channels which reach people where they are, and produced and delivered in partnership with key stakeholders e.g., community leaders, local residents; increased use of tools such as WhatsApp, and the 'Next Door' app
5. Increased use of social media (being well utilised by Community Champions)
6. Positive case studies to support those potentially concerned about making themselves known to services
7. Increased promotion of 'safe-spaces' for people experiencing / at risk of domestic abuse e.g., pharmacies
8. Demystifying of 'undocumented migrants', to support improved awareness and access of support (financial and otherwise)
9. Accessible mental health support

Key Partners: RSL's/HA's, Volunteering Centre Hackney

6. Cross-cutting themes

A number of cross-cutting themes emerged where there was commonality amongst more than one group, and where the challenges and solutions needed to support sustainment of resilience were shared amongst different groups.

6.1 Financial hardship

Most Impacted:	Disabled people / faith-based communities / refugee & migrant communities / working age / low-income families / ethnically diverse communities

What does the VCS say is needed?

1. Emergency grants for people awaiting the outcome of benefit claims, due to the delays within the DWP
2. Lobby exercise for an extension to the ban on evictions; and clarity from central government on long-term package of support
3. Increased promotion of The Debt Respite Scheme (Breathing Space) which provides someone in problem debt the right to legal protections from their creditors. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/debt-respite-scheme-breathing-space-guidance
4. VCS supported to carry out needs assessments and any initiatives identified as needed to address the impact of poverty, to include financial support, e.g., bursaries
5. Target local micro-organisations for marketing of support to get funding e.g., those who have pivoted into food supply

6.2 Digital divide

Most Impacted:	Disabled people / people with a learning disability / faith-based communities / refugee & migrant communities / low-income families / ethnically diverse communities / children, young people & families / older people

What does the VCS say is needed?

Skills training
1. Digital skills training for people new to the internet, particularly around undertaking routine functions such as setting up an email account; attaching documents, identifying themselves as not being a robot
2. Personalised digital inclusion services/courses, which provide tailored support, addressing digital skills, staying safe online – it was noted that simply providing hardware and Wi-Fi access would not suffice
3. Increased used of befrienders as digital inclusion buddies such as those provided by Volunteer Centre Hackney
4. Online fraud awareness/prevention training
5. VCS training on of how digital technology can be adapted to the needs of people with visual and hearing impairments

6. Continuation funding for VCS groups providing digital inclusion courses e.g., Groundwork, and Newham New Deal Partnership, currently funded via Connect Hackney, and Hackney Quest

Access to hardware
1. Funding for hardware (laptops/tablets), with low-income families prioritised to support those with school-age children undertaking distance learning
2. Donation hub / campaign for old/second devices to be donated; a collaboration with tech companies (vis CSR) / individuals able to upgrade donated devices to ensure they are in working order, and safe for use

Access to broadband
1. Increased roll-out of publically accessible Wi-Fi across the borough in community venues
2. Promotion of national initiatives by national internet providers such as Hyperoptic, offering free high-speed broadband, along with telecoms companies including BT, EE, Vodaphone, Sky, Virgin Media, O2 and Three each offering free data and internet packages to help children access online learning tools.
3. Bursaries for low-income families requiring support to meet essential household bills e.g., electricity

6.3   Safeguarding

Most Impacted:	Children and families, older people, people in receipt of care e.g., older people, disabled people, people with a learning disability, people living with dementia, people living with severe and enduring mental illness

What does the VCS say is needed?
1. Need for training for VCS frontline workers in Mental Health First Aid, Safeguarding etc.
2. Additional measures are needed to ensure reviews taking place online can accurately take account of the whole family
3. Schools, children's services, and VCS providers working with children should check [with families] if additional support is needed, and work with families, ensuring mechanisms are in place where relationships between schools and families breakdown e.g. involving advocacy groups such as Parent Voice
4. The VCS needs to be supported to carry out service users risk assessments so that children and families in need are correctly assessed early
5. VCS children and families sector to continue their awareness regarding the impact of trauma informed

6.4   Communication & Engagement

Most Impacted:	Hackney-wide

What does the VCS say is needed?
1. Development of a VCS communications strategy, which sets key messages, and channels most effectively to reach specific groups e.g., WhatsApp broadcast cited as effective tool to reach

seldom heard communities, and 'Next Door' App being used to support people make themselves known if they need support. The strategy needs to commit the VCS and wider system to ensuring all communications are accessible e.g., translated materials, easy read, audio, braille.

2. Increased roll-out of 'Making every contact count' to upskill VCS workforce to disseminate key messages
3. Improved distinction between signposting and supported referrals (escorted referrals)
4. Increased promotion of Hackney Council's 'Find Support Services' on the LBH website, and encouragement to update service details
5. Improved coproduction, partnership working that ensures equitable and diverse representation at all levels.

7. Strategy mobilisation

To mobilise the VCSE, and the wider system to deliver the priorities set out in this strategy, will require convening partners at regular intervals to collaborate and achieve shared goals.

The proposed mechanism to provide the necessary infrastructure is through the VCSE Enabler, which will support partnership working between the VCSE and statutory health and care partners, convening a quarterly VCSE Assembly. The VCSE Assembly will provide a forum for engagement to shape plans and solutions set out in this strategy, between the VCSE Enabler Executive (the VCSETLG) and the range of VCSE networks, providing direct engagement with the Integrated Care Partnership (ICP). As the pandemic evolves, and new needs emerge, the VCSE Assembly will provide the space for these to be shared, discussed and plans to be adapted as necessary. The VCSE Assembly will provide a mechanism for the ICP to invest directly in activities which are led by local VCSE organisations, coproduced as part of the VCSE Assembly, and arising 'task and finish' groups.
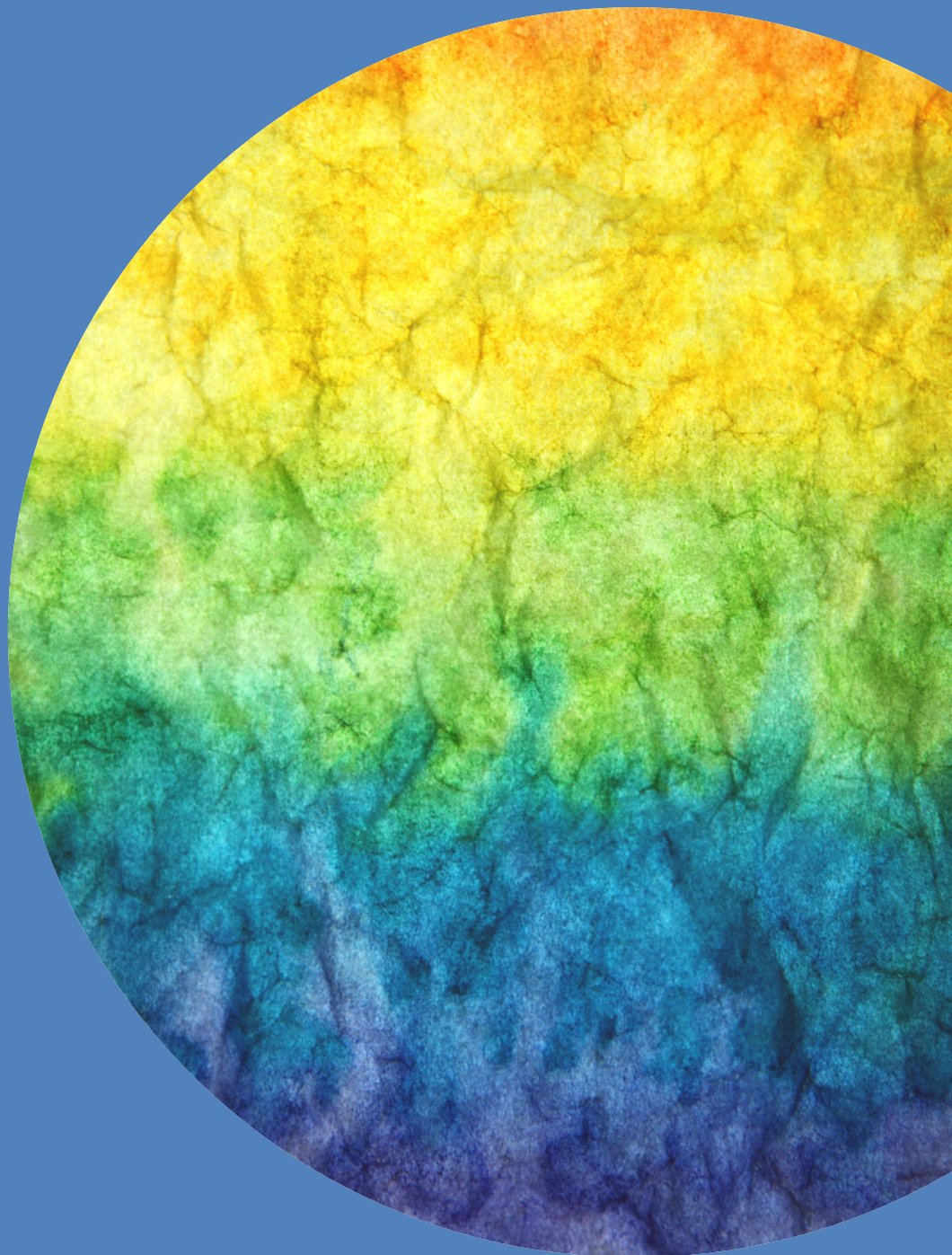
As per section 1.4, there are a number of local initiatives with priorities which overlap with those identified in this strategy. It will be imperative for collaboration and partnership working between the VCS and statutory bodies to maximise resources. Hackney CVS will use its position as an enabler, facilitator, champion and servant to local communities to broker partnership arrangements and will lobby for equitable resourcing of the VCS to deliver on any shared priorities where their skills and expertise are critical to success.

Thank you & acknowledgements

In capturing the needs of the residents impacted by COVID-19, and the voluntary community sector working to address these needs, we'd like to say a special thank, and acknowledge the following who played a crucial role in informing the content of this strategy.

- Abdi Hassan, Coffee Afrik
- African Support and Project Centre
- Children & families forum
- Faith Forum
- Hackney Refugee & Migrant Forum
- Joel Friedman, Interlink
- Lisa Taylor, Carers First
- Peter Merrifield, SWIM
- Sulekha Hassan, Volunteer Centre Hackney
- Supported Employment network

In addition to those listed, we'd also like to pay special thanks to all other contributors whose contributions included completing the COVID-19 Recovery and Resilience survey and attending the COVID-19 Recovery and Resilience strategy development event.

www.hcvs.org.uk

hackney
cvs

The VCS has the closest proximity to the issues being faced by Hackney's vibrant communities, it therefore makes sense that the VCS is resourced to take a leadership position to drive forward the actions included in this strategy.