



Executive  
Summary

# A Fairer Society

Strategy 2023-2028



#FairerSociety  
**hackney**  
cvs





**Vision:**  
a resourced and  
resilient voluntary and  
community sector, able  
to meet local challenges  
and tackle inequalities.

# Foreword

Charles Middleton  
Hackney CVS, Chair

**Since its humble beginnings in 1997, Hackney CVS has grown into a high impact, award-winning organisation with a local staff team of over 30 and a strong network of nationwide and local partners.**

We have long punched above our weight, empowering the local community to develop and lead solutions to the inequalities they face whilst providing the networks and spaces to help them work together on important projects and have a voice in the decisions affecting them. We have excellent strategic relationships, a strong reputation of trust and effectiveness, and access to several high-profile supporters and funders. The sector plays a vital role in helping to address inequalities and provide support to the most marginalised communities across City & Hackney. We see our role as bridging the gap between the depth of expertise held by the voluntary and community sector and our statutory partners.

However, the last few years have been a challenging time for local communities, the voluntary and community sectors, our partners, and us as an organisation. The impact of the pandemic laid bare the inequalities that exist in our society, with people from Black and Asian communities more likely to be affected and more likely to have less favourable outcomes. This points to a wider issue of racial inequality, which is critically important for us, given the rich diversity across City and Hackney.

Across the Capital, the cost-of-living crisis is affecting young and old alike people, and in particular people and families on low incomes, with many struggling to have their basic needs met such as being able to put a meal on the table, keep warm, or access affordable healthcare.

The pandemic has also created an increasingly challenging funding environment for the voluntary and community sector (VCS), as demands on their services grow, so does competition for funding. As people and communities struggle to recover from the impact of the pandemic, further compounded by the cost-of-living crisis, 13 years of austerity, and public services which are meant to support our communities under unprecedented pressures, our role in supporting local communities has never been more important.

Our dedicated, small team is increasingly being called upon to respond to these emerging challenges, yet we know it's not sustainable for us to continue to work in a constant state of emergency. This strategy, therefore, has been developed with the purpose of allowing us to be laser-focused, directing where we should deploy our limited resources to have the greatest impact to the widest range of VCS organisations and communities.

We know that voluntary and community sector organisations are closest to communities facing the starkest inequalities. Therefore, we need to support them to have a voice around decision-making tables. We know that they are often under-resourced, and therefore we must play a connector role, by holding spaces for the sector to convene, collaborate, co-produce, and develop partnerships. And finally, we know that we need to support the survival of the sector by providing organisational support, supporting them to access funding and using our position as an anchor institution to advocate for equitable partnership arrangements with public sector partners.

Therefore, *A Fairer Society: Strategy 2023-2028*, will guide our work over the next five years and help us deliver our vision for a resourced and resilient voluntary and community sector, able to meet local challenges and tackle inequalities.





# Executive Summary

**The purpose of our strategy, ‘A Fairer Society – 2023-28’ is to guide our focus for the next five years, and throughout the development process, our aim has been to ensure that our strategy truly reflects what people told us and provides us.**

It will be used as a compass to direct where we need to focus our resources to deliver the change our partners and stakeholders want to see and help us and potential partners identify new opportunities for collaboration and partnership.

It was developed with our staff, led by a cross-organisational working group, and through the appointment of a consultant who helped us to hold all staff and trustee development sessions and undertake extensive consultation with our partners from across the voluntary and community sector, and the public sector.

Our new vision, mission and values, and principles and behaviours, have all been informed by what we have heard as part of the development process and will be used to guide how we work across our organisation, with each other, and with our valued partners and stakeholders.

# Introduction

Tony Wong  
CEO

**‘A Fairer Society’ sets out our vision and approach for creating a resilient voluntary and community sector, resourced, and equipped to support local communities to thrive.**

For over two and half decades, Hackney CVS has supported the voluntary and community sector to be at the heart of providing solutions to Hackney’s problems. Our commitment has been based on our belief that everyone should have the best start in life, and opportunities to succeed, regardless of their background, race, social class, gender, sexuality, disability, or age. Our commitment remains unchanged; however, we must face the stark reality that life for many within society has become ever more challenging.

The Covid-19 pandemic touched everyone, and the ramifications are still evident three years on from when the UK first went into lockdown. People are still burdened by ill health, both physically and mentally, as a direct or indirect result of Covid-19. The pandemic brought into sharp focus the inequalities that exist for Black and Asian communities, which had the highest incidence and death rates respectively, as well as increased incidents of racism for our Chinese communities.

The 2020 murder of George Floyd, and the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement, shifted the dial on the anti-racist agenda, as did the local case of Child Q in the same year, all adding to the scar tissue for African-heritage communities that hold generational trauma from centuries-old oppression and discrimination.

And as we embark on our new 5-year strategy, we are faced with a cost-of-living crisis, the worst of its kind for over 40 years, with inflation peaking at 11%.

At the forefront of supporting local communities grappling with complex social, economic, and health challenges, has been the City & Hackney’s voluntary and community sector. The trust it holds with the community and the expertise it holds within from people living in the community with their own lived experience has been crucial to supporting residents weather the storm or rather storms. As the local infrastructure body, we have pivoted to support and connect the VCS to each other, and with statutory partners so that all residents can access the support they need.

This strategy isn’t about ripping up the rule book, but rather building on our 25-year history and re-organising ourselves to address the new world we find ourselves in. Our new priorities, Stronger voice, Effective bridge, and Thriving VCS will guide our work for the next five years. These have been developed through a process of internal dialogue between staff and trustees and with extensive consultation with local stakeholders from the VCS and public sector.

The commitments made in this strategy are dedicated to honouring the legacy of our founding Director, Adiaha Antigha, and the strong foundations Jake Ferguson’s 16-year leadership created which we can now take to the next level over the course of the next five years.

*Tony Wong*



# Vision, Mission, & Values

Our vision, mission, and values underpin all our work. They are important because they ensure our operations align internally and with those of our stakeholders and partners. They provide the foundation for our decision-making and ensure we remain faithful to our core purpose and function and support our stakeholders and partners to experience us as one united entity.



## Our Vision:

A resourced and resilient voluntary and community sector, able to meet local challenges and tackle inequalities.



## Our Mission:

To support City & Hackney's voluntary and community sector to engage and collaborate with each other, and local decision-makers, and to be respected as equal partners within the local health and care system.



## Our Values:

- Championing fairness and social justice
- Being a catalyst for equity, inclusion, and diversity



1.

## Stronger Voice



By stronger voice, we mean collectively empowering all community organisations, and seldom-heard communities, across City & Hackney to inform, shape, and influence the long-term transformative decisions affecting residents.

By 2028, we want to have achieved the following outcomes:

1. Increased understanding across the voluntary and community sector of the City & Hackney health and care system, and increased confidence to engage.
2. The views of City & Hackney's voluntary and community sector are reflected in health and care system partner strategies and policies.
3. Increased dialogue between City & Hackney's voluntary and community sector and local statutory partners.

2.

## Effective Bridge



By an effective bridge, we mean developing the channels that enable local VCS organisations themselves to be the agents of local change, and through these directly address the inequalities within City & Hackney.

By 2028, we want to have achieved the following outcomes:

1. The VCS is recognised and valued as a trusted partner by system partners e.g., resourced to engage in system meetings, core funded, and longer-term/sustainably funded.
2. The VCS is involved and empowered to coproduce service design e.g., delivery plans, implementation plans.
3. The voice of grassroots organisations is listened to and acted on by system partners.

3.

## A Thriving VCS



By a thriving VCS, we mean bringing all VCS in City & Hackney together to understand social inequality, addressing this through collaboration, and ensuring that all VCS organisations have the capacity and resources they need.

By 2028, we want to have achieved the following outcomes:

1. Increased collaboration and partnership working between City & Hackney's VCS.
2. City & Hackney's VCS workforce is supported and enabled.
3. City & Hackney's VCS organisations are (financially) resilient and confident of their sustainability.



We have also identified six cross-cutting themes which span all three of our strategic priorities, based on what we've learned through the delivery of our previous strategy, and what our members, partners, and stakeholders told us:

1. Agile and responsive
2. Being an anti-racist organisation
3. Approach to collaboration and partnership
4. Equality, diversity and inclusion
5. Financially resilient
6. Environmentally sustainable

Our three new strategic goals provide the framework for how our departments and teams will deliver their activities, and collaborate across teams and with our partners, to achieve our strategic outcomes. Underpinning this strategy is a **three-year business plan**, which provides our staff with a more detailed roadmap for delivering this strategy. We will only be able to deliver this strategy provided we have the necessary resources, and therefore we will also have a **fundraising strategy** setting out our fundraising priorities and approaches to securing the necessary resources outlined in our business plan.

We know that our ability to deliver this strategy, is dependent on the strength of the relationships we hold with our members, partners, and stakeholders. As part of developing this strategy, we have undertaken a stakeholder mapping exercise, which has informed our new **communications and engagement strategy**, which sets out how we will reach, communicate, and engage others in our work,

We also recognise that to deliver our strategic goals and achieve each of our nine outcomes, we need to work in alignment with our strategic partners. Our strategy, therefore, explains how our strategic priorities align with those of our strategic partners, and details our current relationships through existing partnerships. We anticipate these will evolve over the next five years, and moving forward, we will use our strategic goals, and correlating outcomes to determine future opportunities for us to partner and align our activities.





# Cross-cutting themes

## 1. Agile and Responsive

One of the key strengths of the VCS is its ability to be agile and responsive. This was never more evident than during recent crisis situations, such as the Covid-19 pandemic, the cost-of-living crisis, and the Turkey and Syrian earthquake disasters.

We commit to actively listening and being emotionally aware of challenges that require a rapid response, working together across the organisation and with trustees to provide respectful and effective support to our members, partners, and residents.

## 2. Being an Anti-racist organisation

As an organisation, we are committed to being anti-racist. When we say we are anti-racist, we mean that we actively identify and oppose racism in all its forms. We will continually evaluate, review, and refine our operational practices, ways of working, and people management practices to eradicate racism wherever it exists. We will regularly create spaces, systems, and times to talk, share experiences, and learn from each other, with an intersectional approach within EDI. These spaces will be led by Black and Global-Majority voices, and we will bring in expertise where it is lacking.

## 3. Approach to Collaboration and Partnership

No one agency or organisation can tackle City & Hackney's problems on their own – only by working together can we make City & Hackney a fairer place. A fundamental part of our role is to bring the VCS and public bodies together to work on common issues.

We have a strong track record of creating delivery consortia of local VCS organisations to work in partnership around key themes – such as loneliness and social isolation of older people or youth unemployment. These collaborations make better use of scarce resources. We will only lead programmes when we have the consent of local VCS organisations to be contract brokers and ensure we don't compete with the sector in doing so.

To achieve a step-change through collaboration and partnerships, we will drive innovation by encouraging new ideas that have the potential to deliver long-term and sustainable improvements to the health and wellbeing of local communities or that can tackle social injustices.



## 4. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

As an organisation, we commit to actively seeking ways to diversify our teams and ensure that our recruitment policies and procedures are accessible to a wide pool of candidates that reflect the diverse City & Hackney community. We will create structures and mechanisms that encourage a broad range of views at all levels of the organisation so that our approach to work is informed by a variety of voices. We will also commit to the development of staff, regardless of their background, ability, gender identity or sexual orientation, to ensure they can thrive in their roles.

Our communications and outreach will consider the accessibility needs of people with language barriers, and we will produce easy-read materials where appropriate. In our role as a convenor for the local VCS and our partners, we will ensure our spaces are inclusive and accessible for people with hearing and visual impairments and other access needs and will strive to reduce barriers that restrict access to smaller VCS organisations often led by and for Black & Global Majority communities. Additionally, we will make sure that our Hackney Giving grant application process and monitoring practices are accessible and proportionate.



## 5. Financially Resilient

Our commitment is to implement Full Cost Recovery Plus (FCR+) across all our programmes and contracts to support Hackney CVS's strategic objectives, ensuring that we only take on economically viable programmes and contracts. We will focus on multi-year programmes and contracts to support the provision of our work while diversifying our funder base to reduce any dependency on a single source of revenue.

We aim to increase the percentage of self-generated income to ensure our financial sustainability. We will actively seek opportunities for significant growth, including mergers, partnerships, and SPVs while also exploring opportunities to contribute to the circular economy and the multiplier effect. Our goal is to continually strengthen our financial position to ensure we can continue to provide essential support to our community.

## 6. Environmentally Sustainable

By committing to sustainable practices, Hackney CVS will become a truly green organisation by 2028, with all processes and systems being 100% digital, except for where this may serve as a barrier to our members and partners. Our commitment extends to sourcing all products and services from local ethical and fair-trade providers and suppliers, while also effectively managing our utilities to reduce the use of energy, water, and heating throughout our organisation.



# Theory of Change

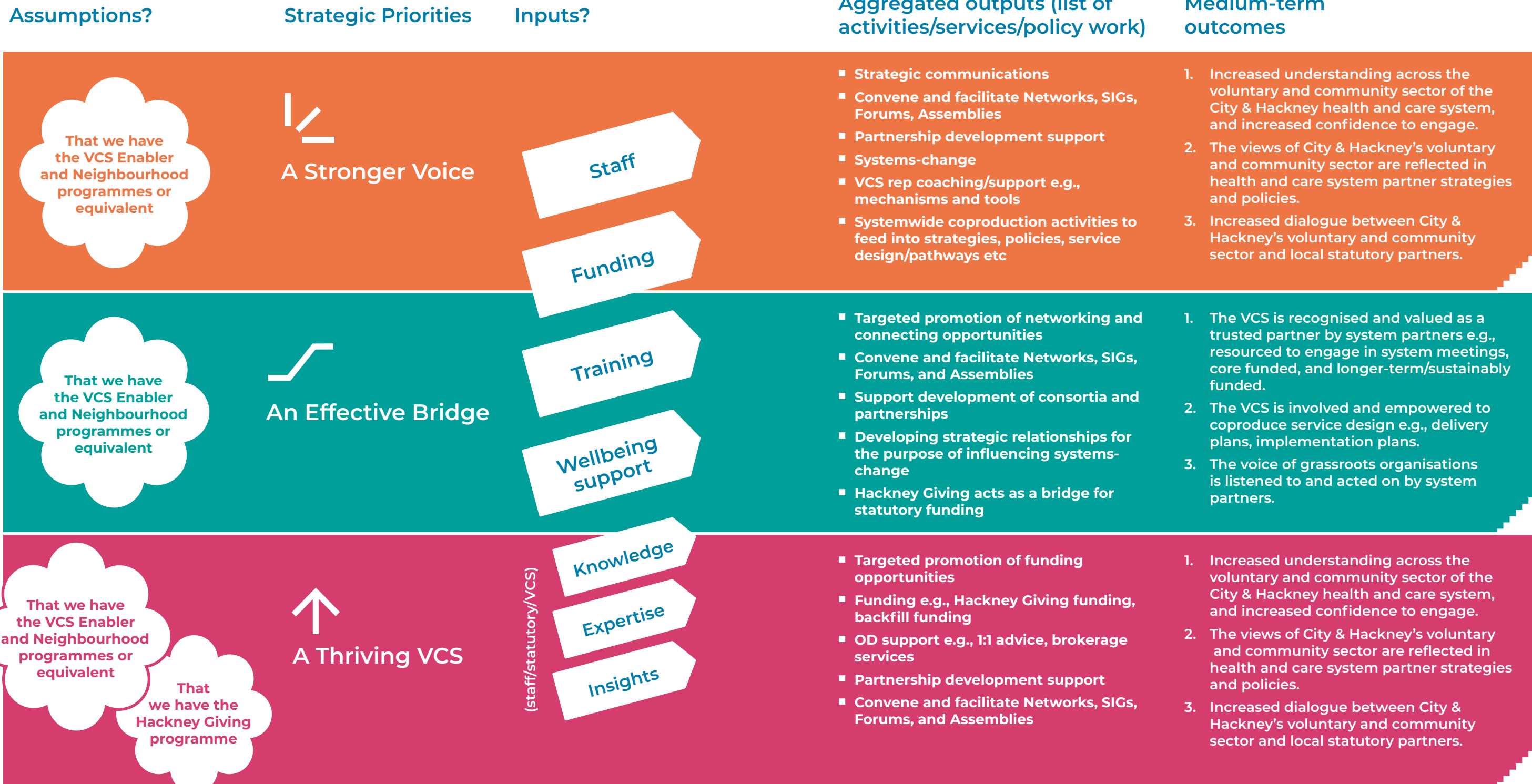
Outcomes

Statutory and voluntary sector working seamlessly together.

Service pathways include equitable inclusion of VCS partners.

Needs of communities, from the lens of the VCS, are evidenced in local strategies and policies.

Networks, Fora, and Special Interest Groups sufficiently resourced to provide collaboration and partnership opportunities.





# Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge and give special thanks to:

- All our voluntary and community sector friends, partners, and colleagues responded to our consultation survey and/or our consultation roundtable discussions.
- All our public sector friends, partners, and colleagues that responded to our consultation survey and/or our consultation roundtable discussions.
- All our funders that continually invest in us and support our work.
- All our staff, volunteers, and board members for supporting the development of the strategy, with particular thanks to the 'Strategy development working group'.
- Jason Pollard, Community Impact, who served as our consultant and led our staff, trustees and stakeholder engagement activities, and with the development of our strategic outcome's framework.
- Alice Haworth-Booth who designed our strategy to ensure we can easily engage our stakeholders and partners in our work.

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