

Voluntary Action Swindon

Strengthening the Swindon Community Sector



Annual Review 2020-21

Trustees, Staff & Volunteers

September 2020

Trustees

Arthur Amos (Chair to 31/3/21), **Bob Barrett** (Chair from 01/04/21), **John Markey** (Treasurer), **David Bell**, **Ram Thiagarajah**, **Stephen Henderson**, **Mark Flay**, **Sue Frawley**, **Sophie Peart**

Staff

Pam Webb, CEO, **Jol Rose**, Equality and Collaboration
Carol Willis, Funding and Governance, **Rachel Hobbs**, Business Admin Apprentice
Seniz Mutlu, Business Development, **Shaz Qaddus**, Finance (no photo),
James Moss, Property, Office and Shopmobility, **Chris Hills**, Maintenance
Mesut Mutlu and **Jonathan Harris**, Shopmobility.



Pam Webb



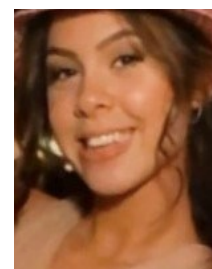
Jol Rose



Carol Willis



Seniz Mutlu



Rachel Hobbs



James Moss



Chris Hills



Mesut Mutlu



Jonathan Harris

Our valued regular volunteers

Linda West, **JB Gurung**, **Charmaine Fisher**, **Shabbir Ahmad**,
Meena Fernandes, **Pinar Tezcanli**.

Chair's Report

Arthur Amos and Bob Barrett

This last year has been a challenging one for everyone and not least the Voluntary Sector which has seen an increase in demand, coupled with a pressure on fundraising income. It's certainly highlighted the wisdom of charities carrying adequate reserves to survive the unexpected. As Chair of VAS I am pleased that we had worked hard to build up sufficient building and general reserves which has meant that we have been able to focus our priorities on helping the sector during this difficult time as well as replace a leaking flat roof!

We are also grateful to have received a grant from the National Lottery Emergency COVID fund which has helped significantly to offset the income we lost through meeting room hire, training and car parking space rental.



As well as expressing my congratulations to the Swindon Voluntary Sector for the way in which it has responded during the last year, I would also like to extend my thanks to Pam and the staff and volunteer team at VAS for their dedication and hard work during such a challenging time. I've recently returned to North West England after thirty years of living in Swindon, so as I hand over the Chair baton to Bob and conclude my time as Trustee at VAS after 6 years, I would like to say what a privilege it has been to serve this wonderful and vital charity and I wish it the very best of success for the future. *Arthur*

I would like to sincerely thank Arthur for his time and expertise as Chair steering VAS over the last 6 years and I look forward to steering the organisation forward. During the last year we said goodbye to long standing Trustee Tim Ward and welcomed three new Trustees Mark Flay, Sue Frawley and Sophie Peart. We are well placed as a Board and team to continue to serve the people of Swindon by strengthening the Swindon Community Sector. *Bob*



Chief Executive Officer's Report

Pam Webb

It seems like a lifetime ago I wrote the introduction to last years annual report. Little did I know when referencing the tail end of last year as having been focused on ensuring that the vulnerable people of Swindon had access to food whilst isolating and shielding, that we would still be managing the effects of the COVID pandemic a year later.



Last year I spoke of the collaboration and partnership working between the voluntary sector and the statutory sector that made the Swindon response so positive. I'm pleased to say that's still strong. The following pages report back on the range and diversity of support that VAS continues to provide to help strengthen the Swindon Community Sector.

In November 2020 we worked in partnership with Swindon Borough Council and its apprenticeship levy to recruit Rachel Hobbs as a business administration level 3 apprentice. Rachel has provided some much needed capacity to VAS as well as lowered the average age! Under Carol's leadership, Rachel is also championing apprenticeships within the Voluntary Sector as a member of the Young Apprenticeship Ambassador Network. We have also become the only member from the voluntary sector of the South West Apprenticeship Ambassador Network and have been able to provide advice about apprenticeships to the sector based on first hand experience.

Under Jols' leadership we were able to recruit a volunteer from the Media Trust to completely refresh and revamp the VAS website on a pro bono basis.

Since the COVID peak, a lot of my time has been spent representing and ensuring a strong voice for the sector in the developing Swindon Integrated Care system and wider Integrated Care Alliance across BaNES, Swindon and Wiltshire, part of a huge transformational change for the health and care system. I'm delighted that we have a strong sector representation on the Swindon Professional Leadership Network that supports this and I'm excited for a future of much more joined up care across the system.

Reflecting back on a year that has continued to be dominated by COVID, I'm very proud of the support the VAS team has been able to provide both to the sector and directly to residents:

We were able to demonstrate the agility of the voluntary sector by working in partnership with the SBC Live Well team and the Volunteer Centre to quickly launch the Compassionate Swindon appeal at the beginning of the year with a press release, on-line promotion and google form registration for volunteers. This led to more than 300 volunteers being onboarded and deployed under the coordination of the Live Well Hub.



We led signposting on food provision in Swindon by researching and updating a regular information flyer on where people could access free or paid for food during the initial lock down period. We established what is now the Swindon Food Alliance, a group of charities and statutory colleagues to maintain a strong sense of awareness of what is happening across Swindon and join up resources and responses as much as possible.

We triaged a range of queries to the VAS main switchboard from people in need of support.

We stood up a volunteer food shopping scheme to food shop for people who couldn't shop for themselves and thanks to a £5,000 grant from the Wiltshire Community Foundation, were also able to help people experiencing financial hardship. I'd like to say a huge thank you to James who led this and to the 16 volunteers who donated over 750 volunteer hours shopping for 100 customers and to Swindon Scrapstore who supported us with over 75 food boxes and to Shaz for processing all those card payments!

COVID Response

We also kept the Shopmobility service running when it was safe to do so and when it wasn't, Seniz and the team made regular wellbeing calls to customers to check they were OK and to signpost them into services as needed.

Through our membership of the Voluntary and Community Sector Emergencies Partnership we were able to share and learn with some of the key national charities as well as other CVS colleagues across the South West. Through this we were able to keep up to date with developments; source volunteers to help local charity TWIGS with the building of a pagoda to support outside working and collect and distribute a donation of 1,000 bottles of antibacterial soap to community groups across Swindon and Wiltshire. In addition, thanks to a kind donation from First City Care, we were able to distribute over 20,000 face masks across the Swindon Voluntary Sector.



We carried out two surveys with the sector to better understand the impact of COVID which enabled us to target support to those most affected and at risk of closure.

- 29 organisations report expected lost income this year totalling £1,065,000
- 27 organisations need a collective £346,000 a month to remain open
- Organisations reported holding the following reserves:
 - 7 with reserves of up to 3 months
 - 20 with reserves of 3 – 6 months

We increased the frequency of our weekly newsletter VAS-ID to twice weekly and provided regular COVID information on a range of issues via our website.



At the tail end of this reporting year, we were delighted to work in partnership with Swindon Borough Council on a Community Outbreak Management Fund, funded by a donation from Swindon Borough Council which into the next financial year will see over £200,000 distributed in over 30 grants to help with infection control measures across the sector.

We worked to expand a small group of VCSE organisations who met periodically to a much larger and representative group of organisations from across Swindon. We developed this initially as a VCSE COVID Recovery Group which we were able to update and take insights from to feed into and from the SBC COVID recovery groups. This group has developed to become an ongoing Swindon Voluntary Sector Alliance of some 40 organisations.

Collaboration and Sector Voice

During this year we have actively gathered the views from and represented the sector at 180 meetings including Health and Wellbeing Boards, various COVID Recovery meetings, Towns Fund meetings and meetings with the health system around the developing Integrated Care System and place based Integrated Care Alliance for Swindon.

We also led a Swindon VCSE response to the current Green Paper consultation over proposed changes to the Public Procurement System.



Cabinet Office

Transforming public procurement

We have continued to develop the alliance of Swindon Voluntary organisations who came together during COVID as a continued alliance that can share best practice and provide valuable insight into the developing health and care work



We agreed to utilise Sanford House as the Swindon Census Support Centre – as part of a national programme to establish support centres for people who may need help completing the Census which was digital and in English. We worked in partnership with the ONS Swindon Census Engagement manager as well as SBC who loaned IT equipment to support the project. We trained 11 members of staff and volunteers including volunteers able to provide support in Turkish; Punjabi; Urdu; Konkani; Gujarati and Nepali as well as English. The traffic to the centre was less than anticipated which was a common theme across the centres. During the 9 week period we managed over 100 queries to the help line and helped to complete 40 Census returns .

Collaboration and Sector Voice



Our monthly online networking for voluntary organisations, VAS-LIVE has provided a lifeline for people to stay connected over the lockdowns. As well as time for sharing news and issues, each session starts with a presentation on a particular area of interest. This year, we have had guest speakers covering communications and marketing, the Charity Governance Code, best practice in engaging communities and more.

A special VAS-LIVE session was held on 22nd January to bring together over 50 representatives of the Swindon Voluntary Sector to hear from and engage with both the Swindon MP's Robert Buckland and Justin Tomlinson as well as Sue Wald, Director of Adult Services.



VAS also held the first ever Swindon VX - a virtual expo to showcase Swindon's voluntary sector where over 40 organisations presented their services. The live presentations were also recorded and are now hosted on the specially-created [VAS directory](#). Over 120 people attended the live sessions and many more have viewed the recordings online. The event helped connect organisations together and promote a better understanding of what services the Swindon voluntary sector provides across the town.

We continued to deliver the Swindon Shopmobility scheme which is available for anyone with limited mobility and provides a selection of manually-propelled and battery-powered wheelchairs and scooters. These are provided to help people with mobility difficulties when using the facilities in Swindon's town centre.

Available equipment includes:

- Mobility scooters
- Power chairs
- Manual wheelchairs



We worked hard during periods of COVID lockdown to continue to provide this service on reduced hours and by appointment only, with robust infection control measures in place, understanding that it was the only way for some customers with mobility issues to access key services such as banks and pharmacies.

Headline stats for the year:

- 351 members
- Including 23 new members
- 10 people accessed the service as temporary day member
- The service was accessed 856 times during the year
- 12 people used the service for long term manual wheelchair hire
- 4 customers were referred to our COVID shopping scheme for support during lockdowns
- 150+ welfare calls made to customers during COVID lockdowns
- Service safely remained open in some form for all but 2 months of the year

Thanks to the Zurich Community Trust 40 Christmas hampers were given to customers.

We continue to proudly to manage Sanford House, Swindon's Community Hub, home to 11 of Swindon's support, advocacy, and advice charities.



Over the past year, due to COVID infection control measures, the building has on the whole remained closed to members of the public. However, support from the tenant services has continued and in many cases increased with support being offered remotely by the services based within the building.

We have however successfully and safely kept the building open to all staff and volunteers who needed to access. COVID safety measures were quickly put in to place to enable safe working within the building, these measures remained in place for the duration of the year.

We also took the opportunity of fewer people in the building to complete a full refurbishment of the building, which has included repainting all of the communal areas and upgrading of the furniture within the larger meeting rooms and conference room.

This followed on from the renovation work which was completed the previous year which means a full refurbishment of the communal areas, meeting rooms and washrooms has been completed across two financial years.



VAS has kept up momentum as coordinator of the Swindon Equality Coalition.

The newly formed core group has been meeting regularly over the past year, considering issues and raising awareness to help make Swindon a beacon for equality of access and opportunity for all.

Amongst other things, we have:

- ♦ Written [guidelines for organisations](#) that want to engage with different groups in our community.
- ♦ Started talking to police and commissioners about rising levels of hate and what we can do.
- ♦ Set up new pages on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#).
- ♦ Supported work to create a new equality forum for young people in Swindon (see next page).
- ♦ Raised questions with the local health service about accessible breast screening units, as well as the language they use in forms and leaflets.
- ♦ Worked with Great Western Hospital to make sure their prayer room welcomes everyone.
- ♦ Provided feedback to the council on its Diversity Impact Assessments (see next page).

VAS has also developed Equality and Diversity training for the sector.

**Equality &
Diversity
Training**

A forum for young people in Swindon

To work alongside Swindon Equality Coalition, we have set up a group of local organisations that work with young people around the town - our aim is to create a space for young people from all around Swindon to connect, share, learn and develop.



We want to have a fun and inspiring forum that helps young people talk about equality issues that affect them. As part of the planning process, we held the Speak Out Swindon survey for young people - over 100 people shared their views, which will go into the detailed project planning.

Final planning of the project and development of fundraising proposals is currently underway.

Diversity Impact Assessments (DIA's)

The council uses [these assessments](#) to help to make Swindon a fairer and equal place to live. DIAs aim to make sure that the council considers how any changes or developments to services will impact on Swindon's diverse population, particularly with reference to people with protected characteristics (as defined by the Equality Act 2010).

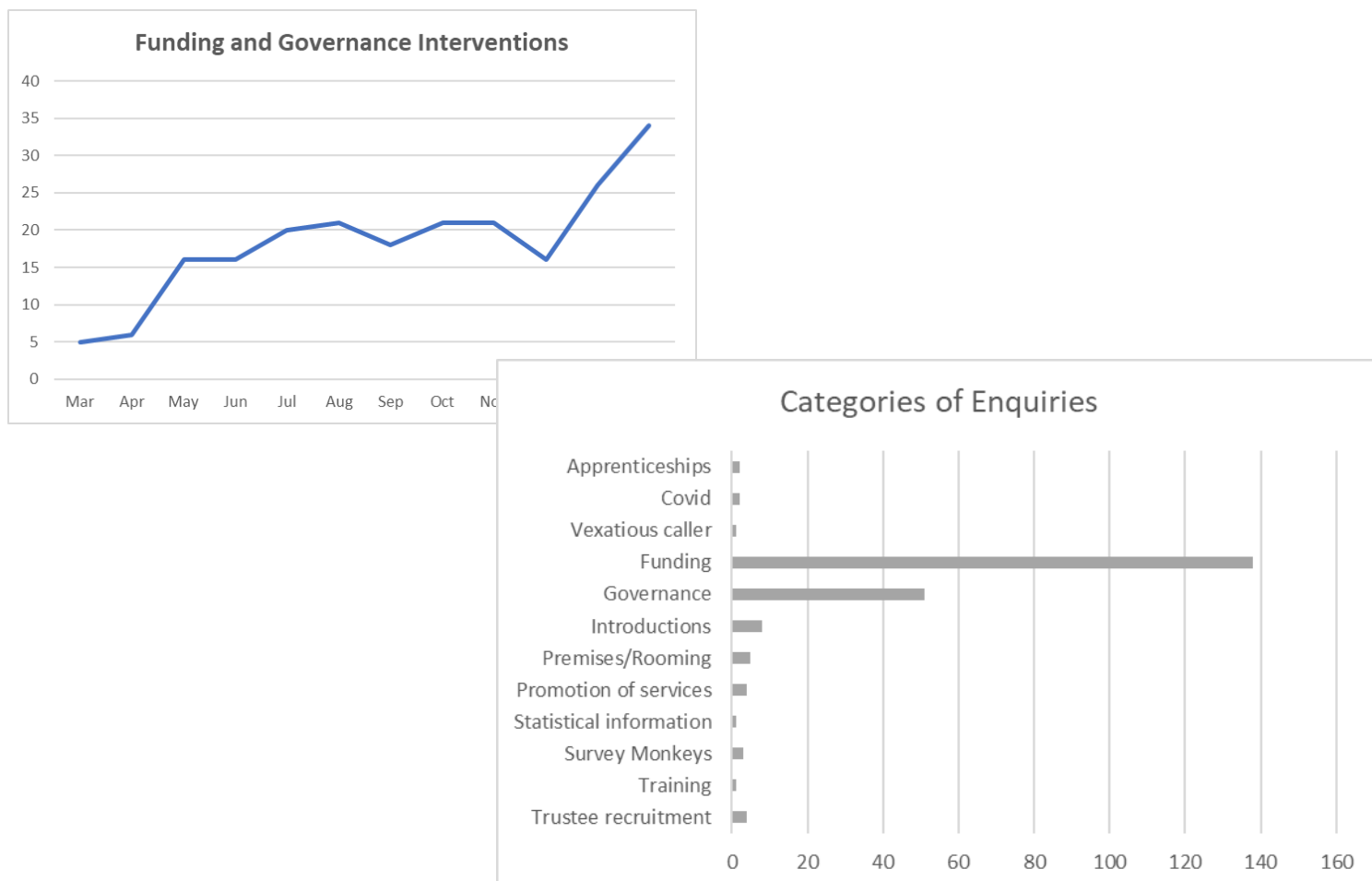
Our role at the SEC is to train and support community reviewers - our team of reviewers will look at any DIA the council sends our way, and can provide feedback to help improve the assessment. Let us know if you would like to find out more.

You can contact the Swindon Equality Coalition at,

equality@vas-swindon.org

Funding and Governance and Sector Support

VAS supported a total of 220 funding, governance and advice interventions during the period March 2020 – 2021.



These charts indicate the number of interventions per month which are increasing month on month, with dips during holiday periods. Help with funding was not surprisingly the most frequent request, with governance advice second. We have continued with regular meetings with the Wiltshire Community Foundation and the National Lottery.

Swindon Sisters Alliance CIC and @The Hub Swindon and Wiltshire CIC were provided with much more one to one support to get them established.

Swindon Sisters Alliance were helped to secure free premises in Swindon town centre; establish a board; form policies and procedures; be linked up with other domestic abuse services including the Domestic Abuse Forum and helped with funding bids, including funding towards a minibus from Wiltshire Community Foundation.

Funding and Governance and Sector Support

This new organisation is flourishing with the shop and is working in partnership across the town. Following an introduction, they are now supporting Wiltshire Women Empowerment with meeting room space and taking referrals from them for family holidays.

@The Hub were helped with their application to become a CIC; advised on forming a board; helped with a funding bid to ESFA successfully securing £20k for a 'boxing clever' project for young people who are NEET. Also helping with promoting the project with various local youth projects also linked with other organisations to establish partnership working.



In January VAS led a collaborative funding bid to the developing Integrated Care System for some much needed capacity funding to provide preventative services to take the pressure off the health system. We were pleased that £121,000 of funding to support posts in the Harbour Project, Citizens Advice, Swindon Carers Centre, Swindon and Gloucestershire Mind, the Swindon MS and Neuro Therapy Centre and Shopmobility was confirmed.

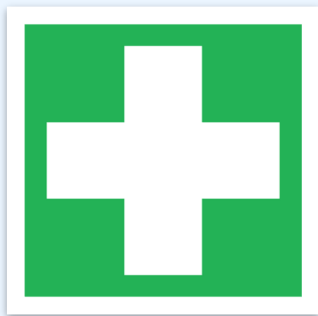
VAS also operates as an umbrella organisation for DBS checks, helping the smaller organisations for whom it is not viable to set up to administer this directly. During this year we signed up 4 new groups to the service, retrained staff in 3 existing groups and administered 113 DBS checks for 17 organisations.



We also offer a range of competitively priced or free training on the following topics and a full list of other courses and key services is shown on the next couple of pages.



Training courses at VAS



First Aid at Work

Make sure you are able to respond confidently to a range of first aid incidents and emergencies. This course will teach you the skills and knowledge to give emergency first aid in a low-risk work environment.



Manual Handling

Manual handling injuries are the main cause of lost working days in the UK. This training will look at how to prevent back injuries.



Fire Safety

Learn essential knowledge about fire safety, including carry out a fire safety risk assessment, implement appropriate fire precautionary and protection measures and maintain a fire management plan.



Life Support (basic)

Rapid response to emergency situations can save lives. This course will provide basic life support training.



Health & Safety

All employers are required to have the correct systems in place to ensure a healthy and safe working environment for employees and any other people who may be affected by their business activities.



Food Safety

This course reinforces the importance of food safety and provides learners with an understanding of how to identify and control food safety hazards

Other Services at VAS

Our key support to the local sector and community



Funding & Governance Advice

Carol is here to help you with funding sources, bid critique and governance advice.

Carol@vas-swindon.org



Equality & Collaboration

Jol is here to help you raise any equality issues and to encourage sector collaboration.

Jol@vas-swindon.org



Shopmobility

Enabling independence in Swindon town centre. Mobility Scooters and Power and manual wheelchairs for hire.

07379 689128



DBS Checks

VAS is registered umbrella body for standard and enhanced DBS checks.

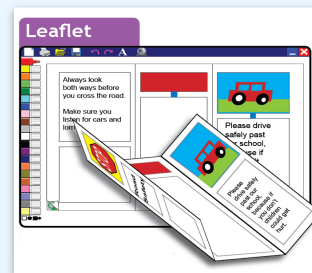
info@vas-swindon.org



Room Hire

A range of conference and other rooms available for hire from £15 an hour.

info@vas-swindon.org



Printing and Copying

Charity leaflets, newsletters, posters and all your copying needs at preferential rates.

info@vas-swindon.org

VAS id (information digest) is our weekly ebuletin, helping to keep you up to date with voluntary and community sector news. Sign up to receive national and local news, upcoming community events, training courses, funding opportunities, voluntary and community sector vacancies, charity law updates, and advice on fundraising and governance.

During the last year we:

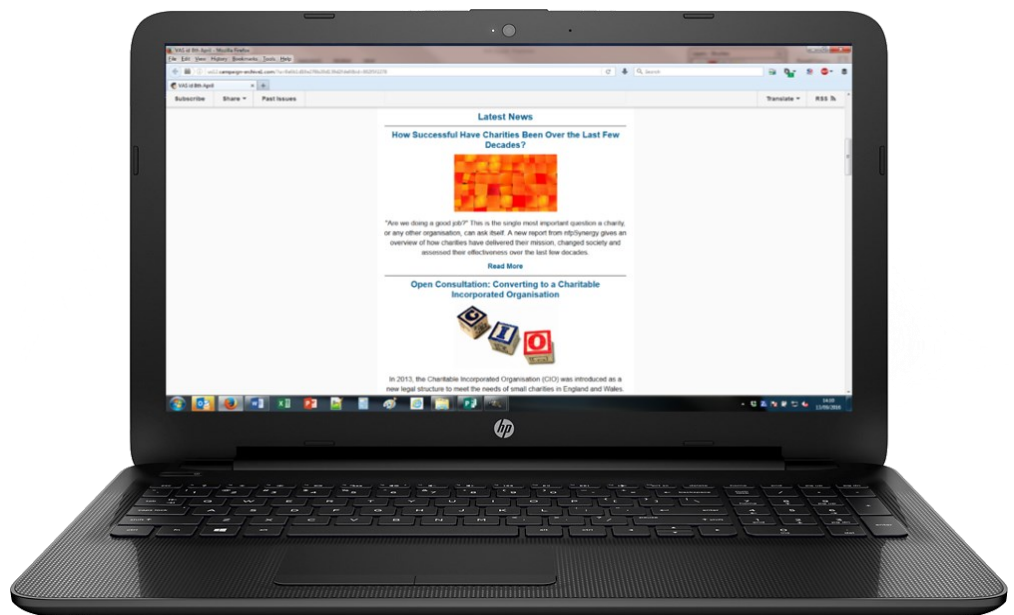
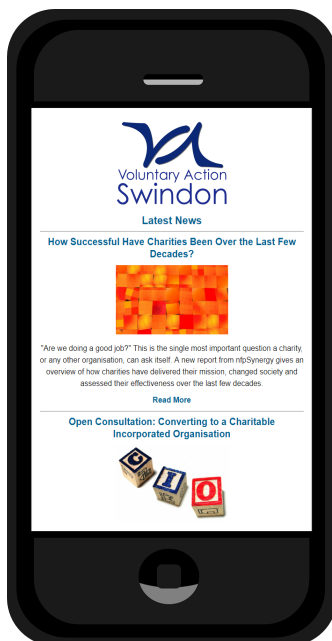
Sent 68 editions of VAS id (including a trustee week special)

Over 575 news items included

Over 85 job vacancies advertised

Over 130 funding opportunities advertised

10 trustee vacancies advertised



Sign up here:

<http://vas-swindon.org/subscribe>

Social Media



VAS Social media feeds across Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn regularly share information for the sector and cross promote activities within the sector.

This regularly includes information about local support services being provided by the VCSE in Swindon. For example, our posts in quarter four included:

- **How people could access support as we entered the 3rd lockdown,**
- **A call out for volunteers from the NHS,**
- **How vulnerable people can access Domestic Advice services during lockdown,**
- **information about Wiltshire Digital drive,**
- **Information about Mental Health services available in Swindon,**
- **The promotion of Census 2021,**
- **Regular updates from Health Safety Executive to support charities in re-opening of community spaces in a COVID safe way,**
- **Information about Shopmobility Opening hours,**
- **Vacancies in the sector,**
- **Information on support networks,**
- **Information on training courses,**
- **Vaccine Myth busting.**

We continued to see an increase in followers across all of our social media feeds last year.

Finance Report Summary

This summary financial information is taken from the trustees' annual report and statutory financial statements, which has been approved by the trustees before the AGM. The statutory financial statements, independently examined by Chris Vaughan, Chris Vaughan Accountants, will be submitted to the Registrar of Companies and the Charity Commission.

This summary information may not contain sufficient information to give a complete understanding of the financial affairs of the charity. The full Trustees' report, statutory financial statements and independent examiner's report may be downloaded from the VAS website or the Charity Commission website - <http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk>

VAS Accounts Summary: Year to 31 March 2020		
	2020-21	2019-20
	£,000	£,000
INCOME		
Rent/Room Hire	36	92
Printing	1	3
Training	0	2
Interest	2	2
Other (1)	12	13
PROJECTS/FUNDING		
SBC - Community Sector Support (2)	81	89
SBC - Sanford House	113	113
National Lottery	57	0
VCS - Involve	0	1
Wiltshire Community Foundation	12	5
Other Income	26	16
Total Income	340	336

VAS Accounts Summary: Year to 31 March 2020		
	2020-21	2019-20
	£,000	£,000
EXPENDITURE		
Staff Costs	-206	-189
Other Costs (3)	-132	-153
Audit/Independent Examination Fees	-1	-1
Total Expenditure	-339	-343
Net Deficit/Surplus	1	-7
BALANCE SHEET		
	2020-21	2019-20
	£,000	£,000
Fixed Assets	91	91
Bank Accounts	276	262
Other Assets	0	9
Total	367	359
Liabilities	-38	-31
Net Funds	329	328

(1)Other includes income from our DBS service, donations and charges for advertising in VAS ID.

(2)Includes SBC Community Sector Support and Shopmobility Service.

(3)Other Costs includes reinvestment of £22,507 Sanford House restricted funds, admin and management staff, premises expenses, community print and publications, governance costs and training costs.

How to Find Us



Voluntary Action Swindon

1 John Street, Swindon,

Wiltshire, SN1 1RT

Tel: 01793 538 398

Email: info@vas-swindon.org

Web: <http://vas-swindon.org>

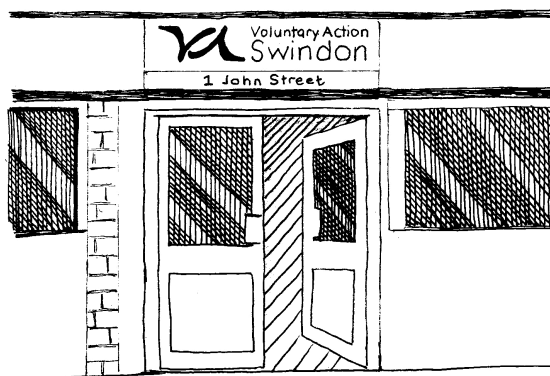


<https://www.facebook.com/VoluntaryActionSwindon>

<https://twitter.com/vaswindon>

We are based in the town centre, only 5 minutes walk from the Fleming Way bus station. You can reach us by turning off Fleming Way onto Fleet Street and following the road around to John Street. Our building is on the left.

The cheapest car parks near to us are the Whalebridge (Islington Street, SN1 1TN) and Spring Gardens (SN1 2BF) car parks.



Special thanks to our funders:

