



THE CROYDON VCS MANIFESTO MAYORAL TERM 2022-2026

INTRODUCTION

This Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Manifesto, spanning the 4-year Mayoral term, is based on decades of VCS delivery, brought into sharper focus over the last two years. Since the first lockdown in 2020, Croydon's VCS has taken a strategic and operational lead in managing a succession of crises on food poverty, social isolation, mental health, knife crime and now the cost-of-living. This Manifesto makes a statement of intent – to carry on that leadership role on behalf of our local communities and the people who came together so magnificently in response to the pandemic, George Floyd's murder and the Council's bankruptcy and withdrawal of its frontline services.

The VCS intent is clear, to help rebuild this borough from the bottom up, working through its greatest asset - our local communities - to retain the resilience and enterprise shown over the last two years and put it to use in managing Croydon's long-term recovery. The Manifesto presents Croydon's Mayor with a series of pledges on the borough's long-term challenges. Whilst these pledges have been individually themed, it is important to emphasise the linkages and interdependencies between them. As such, investment or disinvestment can either boost or negatively impact across multiple service areas.

In supporting this Manifesto, Mayor Perry is asked to champion the borough-wide *reset* that our strategic partners - the Council and the NHS - signed up to during the pandemic. We invite Mayor Perry to adopt the Manifesto as a centrepiece of Croydon's levelling-up agenda over the next four years.

THE PLEDGES

On the Cost-of-Living Crisis:

- **The VCS will** tackle the cost of living crisis by giving residents the specialist and accredited legal advice that gets more money into their pockets, unlocking the everyday problems that prevent people from getting the cash and entitlements they need to lead their best lives
- ❖ **The Mayor can support us by** making investment in legal advice a priority – backing VCS bids for external funding and using central government grants and One Croydon Alliance commissioning to bring more capacity into Croydon's legal advice sector

Croydon Advice Providers Network

On Food Poverty:

- **The VCS will** mobilise its network of Food Banks to tackle the cost of living crisis, making best use of the food (accessing an extra tonne each week) and essentials donated in Croydon to support struggling families

- ❖ **The Mayor can support us by** partnering with the Food Bank and Soup Kitchen Network to eradicate food poverty by backing a Food Hub operation in central Croydon to access the food supplies and act as a distribution point

Croydon Food Bank and Soup Kitchen Network

On Knife Crime

- **The VCS will** strive to end knife crime in Croydon by creating a *Croydon Model of Youth Provision* that brings mentoring, relationship building and positive sports, arts and environmental activities into primary/secondary schools, colleges and Community Hubs, targeting our most vulnerable young people – and their parents
- ❖ **The Mayor can support us by** backing a borough-wide strategy that embeds the Croydon Model of Youth Provision across all six localities, with every one of our schools and colleges on board

Young Londoners Fund Network

On Mental Health:

- **The VCS will** support Croydon NHS' plans to transform mental health provision by delivering the preventative services like employment support and social networking that enable early intervention and reduce the demand on more costly statutory services
- ❖ **The Mayor can support us by** reviewing the current decommissioning of Council services – for example to employment support – that is putting the NHS' transformation plans at such risk
- **The VCS will** support Council, NHS and SLAM Commissioners by working in partnership through the Croydon Mental Health Alliance to coordinate and align community responses to critical mental health issues. The VCS has resolved to support young people across the transitions – from birth to extended adolescence - in tackling knife-crime, eating disorders, self-harm and other issues that have traumatised the generation hit hardest by Covid19
- ❖ **The Mayor can support us by** setting new targets for investment from the Council's mental health budgets in early intervention programmes that address the specific needs of young people overcoming mental health challenges

Croydon Mental Health Alliance

On Learning Disabilities:

- **The VCS will** create a Learning Disabilities Alliance with the remit to ensure Croydon is the happiest, healthiest, safest place for children and adults with learning disabilities to live the lives they want to live
- ❖ **The Mayor can support us by:**
 - Working with the Alliance to develop a Learning Disability strategy
 - Putting personalisation at the heart of the eligibility processes
 - Reducing bureaucracy, ensuring transparency and good communications
 - Using outcomes focused commissioning

The Learning Alliance

On Older People

- **The VCS will** offer person-centred, dynamic and holistic support to older people to enable them to live safe and meaningful lives
- ❖ **The Mayor can support us by:**
 - Enabling the valuable contribution almshouses makes to older people's lives by supporting our growth and removing planning obstacles
 - Committing to exploring a pilot(s) to trial and evaluate new models of Homecare and an overhaul of commissioning and purchasing
 - Prioritising on the Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care's agenda the VCS-funded *Older People Deserve Better – gap analysis and call to action*
 - Working in partnership to achieve Dementia Friendly status for Croydon by prioritising early diagnosis of dementia

Croydon Almshouse Charities and Relief in Need / Age UK Croydon

On Volunteering

- **The VCS will** build on the legacy of volunteering during the pandemic by recruiting, supporting and training record numbers of volunteers to support Croydon's recovery. Our vision is of Croydon as a place where anyone who wants to should be able to make a difference by giving their time and talents through volunteering
- ❖ **The Mayor can support this by:**
 - Recognising the difference that volunteers make to their communities and celebrate their contributions by awarding certificates and attending celebration events
 - Supporting strategies that make volunteering accessible to more people, helping with costs such as travel, adaptations to buildings or equipment
 - Championing volunteer development and management to ensure volunteers have a rewarding experience and get the right skills and support to make a real difference
 - Encouraging the Council & NHS to set targets for the management and development of volunteering - the aims being to increase volunteer numbers, involve volunteers in a broader range of roles, improve their experience and maximise the impact of volunteering
 - Encouraging senior Council officers to become Volunteer Champions - raising awareness of how volunteers can make the most impact, and changing the culture of volunteering

The Volunteer Organisers Forum

On Health Inequalities:

- **The VCS will** continue to play a lead role in Croydon's post-pandemic recovery, mobilising its resources to support the people in our most disadvantaged communities to overcome health inequalities and cope with the cost-of-living increases
- ❖ **The Mayor can support us by** ensuring that the commitment made during the pandemic - to an investment in the preventative, community-led services delivered by Croydon's VCS - is met through the One Croydon Alliance budget-setting process

Croydon Voluntary Sector Alliance

On Carers:

- **The VCS will** identify, recognise, value and support unpaid carers (children and adults) in the borough who are providing essential care for a relative, close friend or neighbour because of chronic illness, disability, or older age.
- ❖ **The Mayor can support us by:**
 - Recognising that more care is being provided by carers than ever before and that the ongoing impact of the covid-19 pandemic, the cost of living crisis and the strain on health and social care services has significant repercussions for the 34,000+ carers in the borough
 - Understanding that carers are facing unprecedented pressures and that without additional help, many carers, and the people they care for, will face real and increased hardship and suffering
 - Ensuring therefore that specialist VCS services are adequately supported to work in partnership with statutory services to continue to meet the needs of carers and prevent increasing levels of carer breakdown

Carers Support Centre

On supporting grassroots communities:

- **The VCS will** give residents from every community in Croydon a stake in the life of the borough by ensuring that grassroots community organisations play a central role in the *Local Community Partnerships*, set up through the One Croydon Alliance to give local people more scope for running local activities and having a say in decision-making
- ❖ **The Mayor can support us by** giving the Local Community Partnerships a constitutional role in representing every section of the Croydon community – and by putting more resources into grassroots organisations, strengthening their work and ensuring that the communities they represent are never left out

North-East Local Community Partnership

On Community Assets:

- **The VCS will** help to give local residents easy access to vital services at a network of *Community Hubs* - being set up to host VCS delivery organisations and grassroots community groups alongside the Council and NHS multi-disciplinary teams providing local services
- ❖ **The Mayor can support us by** championing a programme of *Community Asset Transfers* to free up buildings in every locality for use as Community Hubs and/or to rescue services at risk of reduction or closure

Community First

June 2022