

BVSC Impact Report 2025-2026

Celebrating our achievements,
partnerships and the difference
we have made across the community





Contents

4	Foreword
5	Chief Executive's Report
6	About BVSC
7	Our Year in Numbers
Review of our Year	
9	Leadership and Advocacy
12	Partnership and Collaboration
16	Capacity Building
20	Volunteering
25	Health and Wellbeing
30	Looking ahead to 2026-27
30	Acknowledgements

Foreword

It is a pleasure to introduce BVSC's Impact Report for 2025–26, a year in which our organisation has continued to champion, connect and strengthen the voluntary and community sector across Bexley.

Looking back over the year, I am struck by the breadth and depth of what has been achieved.

From bringing local voluntary sector leaders together with MPs and decision-makers, to supporting grassroots organisations with governance and funding, developing volunteering across the borough, and expanding community-led health and wellbeing programmes, BVSC has remained focused on its purpose: enabling local people and organisations to make a lasting difference to our shared, vibrant, South East London community.

These achievements would not have been possible without the commitment, professionalism and energy of our staff team, who have worked with determination and care throughout a demanding year.

I would also like to thank our volunteers, trustees, partners and funders, whose contribution makes so much of this work possible. Their support helps ensure that local charities, community groups and residents can access the advice, connections and opportunities they need.



As Chair, I am proud of the role BVSC continues to play as Bexley's local infrastructure organisation. We have helped amplify the voice of the voluntary and community sector, supported collaboration across systems, and demonstrated the value of community-led action in improving people's lives.

There is much to be excited about as we look ahead. The team has ambitious plans for the coming year, including further development of volunteering, new approaches to place-based giving, continued investment in health and wellbeing programmes, and deeper support for grassroots organisations.

I look forward to seeing this work grow and to BVSC continuing to build strong foundations for the future.

Alongside the Board of Trustees, I am pleased to sign off this Impact Report and I hope it gives readers a clear sense of the difference BVSC has made during 2025–26 and the important work still to come.

Nigel Adams
Chair of the Board of Trustees

Chief Executive's Report



I am delighted to share this year's activity and Impact Report which records 12 months of significant progress, partnership and impact.

Across 2025–26, we have continued to work alongside voluntary and community organisations, statutory partners, volunteers and residents to strengthen Bexley's voluntary sector and ensure that community insight, experience and action are at the heart of local decision-making.

The year has demonstrated the scale and importance of BVSC's role.

Significantly, we were able to influence nationally by arranging a meeting with Sir Stephen Timms, Minister for the Department of Work and Pensions, to discuss the government's changes to disability benefits.

We were also able to meet with a number of MPs to discuss the issues affecting charities and communities.

We've continued to support organisations to access funding and strengthen governance, and launched our first State of the Sector Survey since 2019, receiving 53 responses from local organisations. Through our Volunteer Centre, we received more than 1,700 enquiries about volunteering opportunities, registered more than 1,000 new volunteers and supported a volunteer network that now includes 4,587 registered volunteers. Our Community Champions programme grew to 575 volunteers, while Bexley Buddies delivered 82 sessions, recorded 858 attendances and benefited from 1,786 volunteer hours.

We have also seen important investment secured for the future. This includes around £1M over three years for Health and Wellbeing Coaches and community outreach work.

These successes reflect both the strength of BVSC's work and the value placed on community-based prevention, partnership and support.

This report reflects on our activity through the lens of BVSC's strategic ambitions. The strategy, shown on the next page, sets out the priorities that guide our work and the difference we want to make for Bexley's voluntary and community sector. The report that follows is structured around these ambitions, covering Leadership and Advocacy, Partnership and Collaboration, Capacity Building, Volunteering, and Health and Wellbeing.

Together, these sections show how BVSC has worked to influence systems, connect partners, strengthen organisations, grow volunteering and support community-led approaches to health and wellbeing. They also show the creativity, resilience and commitment of Bexley's voluntary and community sector, which continues to respond to local need with compassion, flexibility and expertise.

I want to thank our staff, trustees, volunteers, funders, partners and the many organisations we work with across the borough. Your support, trust and collaboration have made this year's achievements possible.

As we look ahead to 2026–27, we do so with confidence and ambition. We're excited to build further on the strong foundations we've laid. We will continue championing a thriving, connected and resilient voluntary sector for Bexley, while expanding opportunities for residents to improve their health, wellbeing and quality of life.

Thank you so much for reading and please do get in touch with a member of the team if you have a question or some feedback. You can find out more about the team and how to contact us at: bvsc.co.uk/staff.

Annie Norton
Interim CEO, BVSC

About BVSC

Bexley Voluntary Service Council (BVSC) is the borough's voluntary sector infrastructure body.

We're the charity for charities in Bexley. We empower volunteers and voluntary organisations so residents get the support they need.

We provide support, connections and a voice for voluntary organisations and individuals who are part of our thriving community here in South East London. Whether you want to volunteer your time, are looking for volunteers, or you're a staff member or leader of a local charity, we're here to support you.

We help you find training or funding, keep you up to date with the latest news in the sector, and advocate for you and your interests in strategic forums across health, social care and the wider system.

Our Mission Statement

BVSC promotes voluntary and community action across Bexley, improving the quality of life for everyone living here.

We do this by

- Empowering volunteers and voluntary organisations to achieve their goals
- Advocating for volunteers and voluntary organisations on the issues which matter most to them
- Supporting people and organisations to identify and respond to unmet needs within the community.

Our Values

Inclusivity We value our differences and work well together because of them.

Accountability & Integrity We are committed to delivering effective solutions.

People (Respect & Supportive) We care about the happiness and wellbeing of each other.

Communication We communicate clearly and respectfully fostering trust and collaboration.

Creativity We continually seek to improve how we work to achieve the best outcome.



35

Events hosted by BVSC



5,096

Incoming calls



1,006

New volunteers registered



344

Attendees at events



4,587

Active volunteers

Our Year in Numbers



117.7K

Impressions on BVSC social channels



216

Carers assessments completed by One Bexley Pathways



1,315

Adult referrals received by Community Connect



858

Attendances at Bexley Buddies



575

Community Champions in Bexley



Review of our year Leadership & Advocacy



The voluntary and community sector holds a vital role in prevention, inclusion and community resilience across Bexley. As local systems continue to evolve, particularly within health and social care, it is essential the sector's voice is clearly represented from the outset and is consistently heard within decision-making structures.

Without strong advocacy and leadership, smaller and grassroots organisations, in particular, risk being overlooked in system planning. BVSC's role is to ensure that the insight, experience and contribution of the voluntary and community sector inform local priorities and policy development. Most importantly, the skills, experience and knowledge of the sector must be fully utilised in co-designing services. This should be the case whether the services are stand-alone or in partnership across the system. It's also important that co-designed ways of working, which strengthen the system as a whole, are implemented.

Over the past year we've provided robust and visible leadership as we actively advocated through partnership meetings, forums and roundtable events with key local decision-makers. We have also maintained strong governance and accountability, leading by example as a role model within the voluntary sector.

Engagement event with our local MPs

In April 2025, we brought together 28 local leaders with local MPs Louie French and Daniel Francis for a productive discussion about strengthening the role of the sector in supporting Bexley residents. Hosted by Chief Executive of BVSC, Jattinder Rai, the forum explored concerns around three themes. These were:

- Voice and collaboration
- Community spaces
- Sustainable funding

VCSE leaders highlighted the valuable insight and expertise held by small, local organisations and discussed opportunities to involve them earlier in policy and service design conversations. The discussion also explored the importance of ensuring access to affordable, accessible and appropriate community spaces, enabling VCSE organisations to continue delivering vital services, particularly for young people and older residents. Finally, leaders emphasised the importance of sustainable funding and support to enable local organisations to plan confidently, maintain continuity of service delivery and invest in long-term solutions.

There was also time for a general Q&A with questions around the cuts to benefits announced by the Department for Work and Pensions. The concerns raised led to a meeting with a Minister from the Department which you can read more about in the next section (Roundtable with Government Minister).

The event itself was warmly received by both MPs and those in the voluntary sector. Local leaders reflected that it was fascinating to attend and observed that MPs were gaining a lot from learning about the local voluntary sector. There was also agreement that good communication with local MPs is essential going forward and there is room for improvement on follow-through.

Roundtable with Government Minister

Following our MP engagement event, we were delighted in May 2025 to facilitate a roundtable with Daniel Francis MP and Sir Stephen Timms, Minister for the Department of Work and Pensions, to discuss the government's changes to disability benefits. Hosted at Bexley Mencap, the roundtable included representatives from a number of Bexley charities who shared frontline insights and community-led solutions. The meeting was part of the Government's consultation called Pathways to Work: Reforming Benefits and Support to Get Britain Working. The discussion gave organisations from across Bexley the chance to share real-life examples of how the changes could affect local people and to suggest solutions. This opportunity is an important example of how BVSC is helping the voluntary sector to shape national policy and is recognition of Bexley's VCSE leaders as valued partners and experts in their field.

Strengthening the voluntary sector through forums and networks

We continued to bring together the Voluntary Sector in various forums and networks throughout 2025-26, including through our Voluntary Sector Forum.

Through a formal nominations and election process, we appointed the Forum's first co-chairs, strengthening sector representation and creating greater opportunities for VCSE voices to influence key conversations. Tania Bushell, CEO of Bexley Deaf Centre, and Andrew Sayers, Services Manager at Alzheimer's Society, were elected to lead the Forum and support engagement between the voluntary sector and local decision-makers.

Their roles complement BVSC's network of elected Voluntary Sector Representatives, who attend strategic partnership meetings on behalf of the sector. During the year, representation included Kara Lee, CEO of Bexley Mencap and Vikki Wilkinson, CEO of Carers Support Bexley, as Adult Health and Social Care Representatives, alongside Pipa Norris, Children & Family Centre Manager at Danson Youth Trust and Kay Skelton, CEO of Bexley Moorings, as Children and Young People's Representatives.

Together, these leadership roles help ensure that the voice, experience and expertise of Bexley's voluntary and community sector are reflected in local decision-making and strategic planning.

Throughout the year we held four of these forums with a combined total of 77 attendees.

Alongside the Voluntary Sector Forum, BVSC hosts a range of networks that strengthen collaboration across the voluntary and community sector. These include two peer-to-peer spaces for discussion, shared learning and practical support: one for CEOs and another for volunteer managers. BVSC also convenes two thematic networks, bringing together colleagues working in adult health and social care, and organisations supporting children and young people across the borough.

These networks play an important role in connecting people with direct experience and specialist expertise, creating space to identify challenges, explore barriers, share solutions and highlight opportunities to improve services for residents. They also enable BVSC to share key updates from our leadership and advocacy work, while supporting stronger relationships between voluntary sector organisations and statutory partners.

Prevention and Early Intervention programme

As Bexley's Adult Health and Social Care commissioners began to prepare their 2026-2030 commissioning plans, we were tasked with gathering feedback from the voluntary sector organisations previously funded through the London Borough of Bexley's Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) programme. We shared feedback with the commissioners which emphasised the importance of long-term stability, the risks posed by funding reductions without adequate transition planning, and the added value of place-based commissioning rooted in community knowledge.

By uniting feedback into a collective voice, we led and advocated for the VCSE sector to inform decision-making within the next commissioning round.



Review of our year Partnership & Collaboration

Effective partnership working is essential to delivering sustainable and joined up support for communities. While statutory partners often bring scale and resources, the voluntary and community sector brings reach, trust and flexibility, with the ability to adapt quickly to emerging needs. When partnership working is strong locally, services are better coordinated, duplication is reduced and residents experience more seamless support.

Genuine partnership working is not automatic. Differences in language and organisational culture can create barriers between sectors. Smaller voluntary organisations may struggle to navigate complex but normalised systems, while statutory partners may not always have visibility of the full breadth of the community and voluntary sector offer.

As Bexley's local infrastructure organisation, BVSC holds a key role in strengthening relationships between sectors, creating routes for engagement.

Over the past year we've made great strides towards this ambition as we consistently brought together partners to facilitate their partnership and collaboration, including through the Direct Payment Support Service and work to strengthen community resilience.

Strengthening resilience

In February 2026, we received £3,000 from the Greater London Authority (GLA) to pilot the London Community Resilience Toolkit, where BVSC will work with a minimum of three organisations to strengthen emergency preparedness, volunteer mobilisation and community resilience.

BVSC continued to be an active partner in Bexley's Borough Resilience Forum, helping to strengthen local preparedness for emergencies and major incidents. We worked to ensure clear communication pathways with voluntary sector organisations, promote coordinated responses across the sector, and maintain the capacity to mobilise volunteers quickly should a crisis arise.

Direct Payment Support Service

We're delighted to have worked in partnership with Age UK Bexley, Carers Support Bexley and Bexley Mencap to secure and mobilise a new Direct Payment Support Service, strengthening joint responses to residents with changing and complex needs.

The Direct Payment Support Service is intended to give residents with care needs flexibility around the kind of support they wish to purchase.

While BVSC is the lead provider contractually, delivery will be a collaborative effort to ensure improved outcomes for residents. This programme aligns closely with existing services, particularly One Bexley Pathways, and will strengthen our ability to respond effectively to residents whose circumstances change.

The flexible delivery model, which aligns with the London Borough of Bexley's '*Your Life, Your Choice*' principles while remaining compliant with statutory requirements, has been agreed and recruitment for support workers has begun ahead of service delivery for 2026-27.

The difference this service can make is moving people from simply receiving support to actively directing their own lives. Through personalised planning, accessible information and ongoing support, residents will be empowered to pursue their ambitions, build meaningful relationships, develop independent living skills and participate more fully in their communities.

This increased autonomy can improve wellbeing for both the individual and their carers by reducing reliance on informal support networks and creating more sustainable support arrangements.

One local individual who received support from a direct payment service delivered by one of BVSC's partners was able to develop his independence skills. The young man, who had a passion for football, was able to access a football course with Charlton Athletic through direct payments.

Funding was used not only for the course itself but also for six weeks of travel and training with a support worker. As a result, he gained the confidence and skills to travel independently, completed the course successfully, and progressed to a Level 1 coaching qualification. What began as a personal interest developed into a pathway towards volunteering, employment and greater independence.

Representing the sector in different forums

Throughout 2025-26 we have maintained active representation across a wide range of multi-agency forums. We consistently ensured the voluntary sector's voice was also heard by decision makers in local service design, commissioning and policy development.

Forums we attended include:

- Bexley Safeguarding Adults Board
- Bexley Health & Wellbeing Partnership meetings
- Suicide Prevention Partnership
- Healthy Weight Strategic Partnership
- Adult Social Care Personalisation Board
- Bexley's inaugural Tobacco Alliance
- Integrated Care Board Forums
- Bexley 2050 Vision
- Carers, Autism and Disability Partnership

We've also attended local care networks and safeguarding forums. An invitation to join the South East London Neighbourhood Health Integrator Partnership Forum reflected the value placed on BVSC's knowledge of community needs, local services and the voluntary sector.

Connected Bexley

Connected Bexley is a directory of voluntary services that lists all services, activities, groups and clubs across the London Borough of Bexley. It enables residents to find the support they need and allows organisations to manage their own service information.

During the year we had 46 new organisations sign up to Connected Bexley with a total of 92 new services added. This increase underlines the importance of having a place for residents to find the support they can then access. In total, there were more than 15,700 searches during the year. The top keywords searched included 'child', 'mental health' and 'dementia'.

3+ Long Term Conditions Integrated Neighbourhood Team Pilot

During 2025–26, BVSC played a key role in the Clocktower Integrated Neighbourhood Team (INT) pilot, providing Health & Wellbeing Coaches to support residents living with three or more long-term conditions.

The pilot was designed to move beyond a traditional medical model by providing proactive, personalised and holistic support that helps people better manage their health and wellbeing before reaching crisis point.

Working as part of a multidisciplinary team alongside GPs, care coordinators, clinical pharmacists and other health professionals, our Health & Wellbeing Coaches supported residents to identify personal goals, build confidence, strengthen self-management skills and access local community resources.

The aim was not only to improve health outcomes, but also to help people feel more connected, informed and empowered to take control of their wellbeing. The pilot demonstrated strong engagement from residents, with 88% of people referred choosing to participate in coaching support.

Across the pilot, 138 referrals were received, 121 residents accepted support, and 185 onward referrals were made to community and voluntary sector services to provide ongoing support beyond the pilot itself.

Early outcomes were particularly encouraging. Residents who completed follow-up assessments reported an average 32 percentage point improvement in wellbeing scores, demonstrating the value of combining clinical care with personalised coaching and community-based support.

The impact of the pilot can be seen through the experiences of individual residents.

One participant, who had experienced prolonged grief and social isolation following the loss of her son, worked with a Health & Wellbeing Coach on self-care, rebuilding social connections and improving emotional wellbeing. Over time, she reported spending more time with family, going out socially for the first time in years and joining a local community group. The team observed a significant improvement in both confidence and wellbeing.

The success of the pilot demonstrated the value of integrating voluntary sector expertise within neighbourhood health teams and led directly to the decision to expand the model across Bexley's remaining Local Care Networks. This represents a significant step towards delivering more joined-up, preventative and person-centered support for residents living with multiple long-term conditions.



Review of our year Capacity Building

Voluntary and community organisations across Bexley are facing increasing pressure. Demand for services continues to grow, while funding remains uncertain, and organisational capacity is often stretched. Smaller, grassroots organisations, in particular, often lack access to the systems and resources needed to remain sustainable. Yet, a strong and resilient voluntary sector is essential to community wellbeing. Organisations that are well-governed, financially-stable and confident in their delivery are better able to respond to local needs, engage in partnership working and contribute to delivering prevention and early intervention services.

As Bexley's local infrastructure body, BVSC holds a pivotal role in supporting organisations at different stages of development, helping them to build confidence, strengthen governance and secure funding which is more sustainable.

In the past year, BVSC has continued to provide tailored advice, training and development support to voluntary and community organisations across the borough.

We are working to empower these voluntary and community organisations to be resilient, compliant and effective and to build further networks to continue to raise their profiles.



Funding and governance support

We continue to support organisations in ensuring they can find funding for their work and develop a robust governance approach. In November we delivered our annual Trustee Speed Matching event for charities with board vacancies. Taking place during Trustee's Week, we supported 20 prospective trustees to meet with 14 Bexley-based charities. Feedback highlighted the value of meeting organisations directly and the diversity of skills and experiences being matched across the sector.

In March we hosted the annual Meet the Funder event, bringing together 10 funders and 40 voluntary and community sector representatives. There were funding presentations by:

- National Lottery Community Fund
- Groundwork London
- BBC Children in Need
- Trust for London

The session provided local organisations with in-depth overviews of some larger funding streams, and opportunities for one-to-one conversations with potential funders, helping strengthen local organisations' ability to secure external investment.

Case study Never Forget Concerts (Bexley)

Never Forget Concerts is an emerging community initiative in Bexley with a clear vision to support local people through inclusive events and community connection. BVSC has helped the group translate that vision into a fundable, accountable and sustainable organisation.

At the outset, the organiser had a strong and well-defined vision for the community group, but limited experience of the practical steps required to make it sustainable – particularly around governance, legal structure and securing funding. Following a dramatic change in funding circumstances, the group was left without funding, causing disappointment to many vulnerable people who had engaged with the project and who still make contact by phone and email.

BVSC provided tailored, practical support to help shape the project into a legal, accountable and well-managed community group capable of attracting investment. This included guidance on appropriate organisational structures and the implications of different models, helping the organiser understand the distinction between establishing a registered charity

and setting up a community interest company, and how each could best “house” the group's vision.

Alongside this, BVSC has helped the group consider a range of funding opportunities by clarifying how to apply at both local and national levels, and by proactively connecting the organiser to potential local funders. For example, BVSC put the organiser forward to speak at a Bexley Rotary Club meeting. The Rotary members were attentive and encouraging, asked detailed questions about the project, and indicated they intend to hold a business meeting to discuss the project's funding needs in the near future.

As a result of BVSC's support, the organisation now has a clearer pathway from vision to delivery. The organiser reports significantly improved understanding of what funders look for, how to evidence need and apply for support, and what governance and legal arrangements are required to operate responsibly. This has increased confidence, improved readiness to seek appropriate funding, and created momentum through new local connections.



Grassroots support

BVSC's grassroots support work helped small, emerging and community-led organisations strengthen their governance, sustainability and confidence to meet local need. Across the year, we provided tailored one-to-one support to at least 25 organisations, including advice on governance, premises, partnership working, fundraising and funding applications.

Our fundraising support helped local groups access and pursue new investment. This included supporting 12 organisations to apply to the William Kendall Small Award, with seven securing £27,948, alongside reviewing a further 11 funding applications with a combined potential value of £44,000.

Engagement with grassroots groups continued to develop. We have had contact with 40 grassroots organisations throughout the year through a variety of methods.

Alongside direct advice and training, BVSC initiated new grant-making routes designed specifically for smaller and emerging organisations with turnover under £100,000.

The planned Grassroots Seed Fund will offer quick-access small grants of £50–£300, while a larger training-linked grants programme of up to £3,000 will support groups to build stronger governance, finance, fundraising and impact practice. Both grants will be launched in 2026.

Training and development

Training and development activity strengthened skills across the sector, with training sessions run throughout the year on topics including:

- Theory of Change and Project Management session attended by 11 VCSE staff
- DBS Explained guidance on safer recruitment and regulated activity
- Equity, Diversity and Inclusion programme supporting organisations to embed more inclusive practice.
- Interactive workshop on the use of artificial intelligence (AI) and Copilot for VCSE organisations. 14 organisations took part, exploring how digital tools can support volunteer recruitment, streamline administration and enhance community engagement.

State of the sector

BVSC launched its first State of the Sector Survey since 2019, creating an important opportunity to build a current, evidence-based picture of Bexley's voluntary and community sector. With 53 responses received from local organisations, the survey will help demonstrate the sector's breadth, value and contribution, while highlighting the pressures, opportunities and support needs shaping future delivery.

Analysis of the findings is now underway, with external support being explored to ensure the final report is robust, credible and useful for partners, funders and decision-makers. The research will strengthen BVSC's advocacy on behalf of the sector, inform future capacity-building support, and provide shared evidence to shape local strategy, partnership working, service development and funding bids. Publication is anticipated during summer 2026.

Bexley Giving

We received seed-funding from the Greater London Authority who tasked us with re-imagining a place-based giving scheme for Bexley. Named Bexley Giving – we began working with several stakeholders and developed a steering group.

Place-based giving schemes are local initiatives that bring together residents, charities, businesses, and public sector organisations to raise and invest funds in communities. These schemes encourage giving in all forms – including time, skills, and money – to address local needs and priorities, and they empower local people to decide how the resources are used.

Exploring the demographics of the borough, health and employment data, what residents think, and socio-economic factors, discussion led to potential areas of need that a Bexley Giving scheme could focus on.

Supporting children and young people to thrive emerged as a strong theme from discussions with the steering group. Participants highlighted the importance of investing in the wellbeing, aspirations and opportunities of Bexley's children and young people, recognising the long-term benefits this can bring to individuals, families and communities.

Supporting families to thrive was seen as essential to ensuring the success of young people.

It was felt that Bexley Giving could offer opportunity for hope – hope for young people's futures, for healthier community, hope through trust, voice and shared purpose that is created by local people shaping local solutions.

This is an emerging area of focus which will be further tested and refined through engagement with residents, community groups, businesses and partners before final priorities are agreed.

Disability Sports Network

The Bexley Disability Sports Network exists to increase and improve opportunities for the deaf and/or disabled community within Bexley to be able to engage and participate in sports and physical activities.

During the year we oversaw the process of granting £3,000 (up to £500 each) to sports clubs and community groups that are operating within the London Borough of Bexley and providing (or looking to provide) sports and/or physical activity opportunities to those from the deaf and/or disabled community.

One of those funded was the Dandelion Collective who used the funding to pilot three inclusive creative dance sessions during October 2025 half term. The sessions gave disabled participants, families and carers a safe, creative space to move together in ways that suited different energy levels. Across the week, 12 attendances were recorded. Families reported that knowing what to expect helped them support participants more confidently, and learning from the pilot is now helping shape Dandelion Collective's ongoing weekly dance sessions.

During the year, we were also awarded funding from the Lawn Tennis Association to deliver an inclusive tennis match play event with Disability Sports Network partners. This engaged 55 disabled participants in accessible, celebratory sporting activity.

Although external funding for the Disability Sports Network concluded this year, the network continued to deliver impact. Activities included neurodiversity in sport awareness training and a final round of small grants, supporting clubs and groups to expand inclusive sporting opportunities for disabled residents.

We worked with network partners to identify a sustainable future model, securing interim support through Access Sport under a service level agreement. BVSC will retain a strategic role on the steering group to ensure continuity, oversight and ongoing support for the sector.

We were delighted that the BVSC's work in supporting grassroots community sports organisations was recognised in a film by Sport England. The film highlights the wraparound support BVSC provides organisations, from helping them to get funding to advocating on their behalf to connecting them with volunteers. [You can watch the video on YouTube by clicking here](#) if you are reading this digitally or by searching Working with Councils for Voluntary Services on YouTube if you're reading a printed version.

Review of our year Volunteering

Volunteering is a cornerstone of community life in Bexley. It strengthens local organisations, builds social connections and provides opportunities for residents to contribute their skills and experience to the causes they care about, making a positive difference in their community. At a time of increasing demand on public services and growing pressures on local charities, effective and inclusive volunteering is more important than ever. However, recruiting and retaining volunteers is becoming more complex. Organisations may face challenges around capacity, safeguarding, role design, and volunteer management. At the same time, residents may encounter barriers to participation due to time, confidence or changing personal circumstances. Without structured support, volunteering can become inconsistent and harder to sustain.

BVSC holds a central role in supporting volunteers across the borough, by both enabling organisations to involve volunteers safely and effectively, and by creating accessible opportunities for residents to participate.

Over the past year we've continued to deliver and enable volunteering which meets local needs and strengthening volunteering practice across the voluntary and community sector.

Community Champions

The Community Champions project continued to strengthen community connection, health and wellbeing engagement, and volunteer-led action across Bexley. The programme supported a network of more than 500 local volunteers to share trusted information, connect residents with services, and bring community insight into local health and wellbeing conversations.

During the year, BVSC embedded regular check-ins, one-to-one support and inclusive recognition opportunities, ensuring Champions felt valued and able to shape their volunteering around their interests, skills and communities. A dedicated Community Champion category was introduced at the Bexley Volunteer Excellence Awards, while the programme's fifth anniversary was marked through borough-wide celebrations in trusted community settings. These events celebrated Champions' contributions, promoted local projects, strengthened relationships with community organisations, and created new opportunities for residents to get involved.

The project also delivered measurable growth and wider community impact. 33 new champions were

recruited, bringing the network to 575 volunteers. Champions supported public health messaging, took part in borough-wide events including Ageing Well and Diwali celebrations and supported local VCSE and grassroots-led initiatives. They also contributed evidence to the Care Quality Commission's inspection of Adult Social Care services across Bexley.

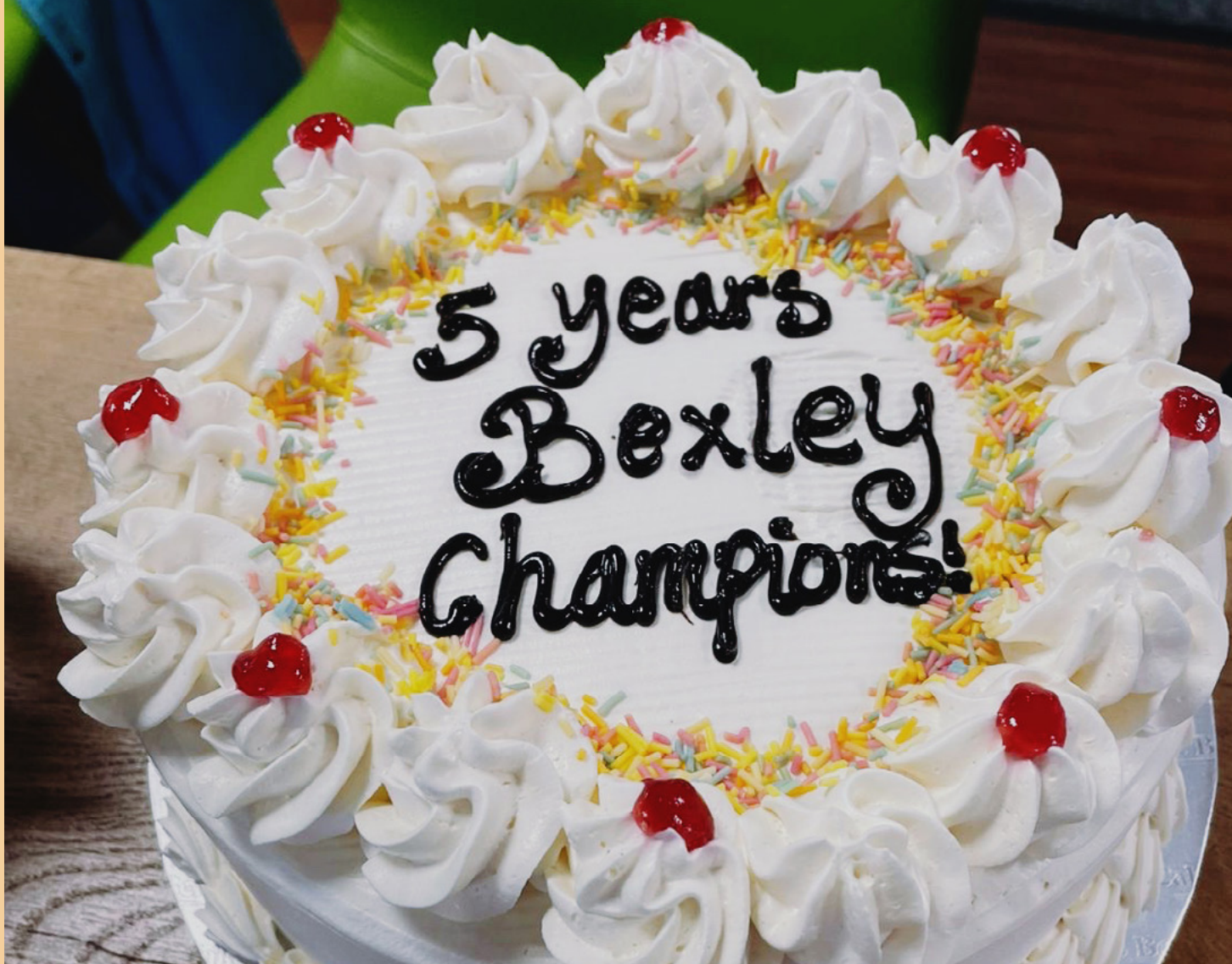
Training and development remained central to the programme, with Champions accessing sessions including:

- Mental Health First Aid
- Stop Smoking Support
- Hate Crime Awareness
- AI Safety
- Suicide Prevention

Importantly, Community Champions contributed directly to the development of the emerging Vision for Volunteering, ensuring that lived experience will inform future volunteering priorities across Bexley.

Looking ahead, BVSC is developing a future Community Champions model for 2026–27, with a focus on more hyper-local leadership roles and enhanced training. This will build on the programme's strong foundations, helping Champions continue to improve community life, amplify local voices and support better health and wellbeing outcomes across Bexley.





Case study Louise, Community Champion

Louise joined the Community Champion programme after a referral from her physiotherapist. When she started (16 September 2025), her confidence was low and frequent health appointments left her feeling isolated.

She began with training (including Deaf Awareness and Cancer Training) and progressed into a Cancer Champion role. Step by step, she started sharing health messages and taking on volunteering that felt manageable.

Over the following months, Louise became a regular at local activities and outreach, including NHS Long Term Conditions meetings, Ageing Well events, stop smoking and cancer outreach, and community hubs. She also became a Women and Girls' Health Champion, increasing the breadth of residents she could reach. Louise describes the change as: "I've come out of my shell and have something to focus on... now I have motivation to get out of bed and get involved."

She reports feeling less isolated and more confident in meeting new people.

The programme combined practical training with supportive, relationship-based coordination. BVSC helped Louise choose suitable opportunities, build confidence to attend meetings (including with NHS contacts), and contribute her lived experience to local conversations about access—such as making GP appointments work better for residents.

“Even if I help one person, it makes me happy.”

Support included training, accompanied attendance at Local Care Networks (LCN) meetings and events, preparation to speak up, and progression into themed champion roles (stop smoking, cancer, and women and girls' health). As her involvement increased, Louise developed a positive routine, grew in confidence, and became an active local messenger for prevention and early diagnosis.

Case study Peter, Volunteer

Peter was referred to Volunteer Centre Bexley by Community Connect in 2024, seeking to gain office-based experience, build confidence and develop professional references while balancing caring responsibilities.

One-to-one support helped Peter navigate the unfamiliar process of finding and applying for volunteer roles. He subsequently volunteered with the British Heart Foundation before successfully securing a Volunteer Administrator role at VC Bexley.

A year on, Peter has gained valuable office and teamwork experience, supported training sessions, developed resources for Connected Bexley, helped residents access volunteering opportunities and built stronger social connections with colleagues and the wider community. He has also gained information and connections to support him in his caring role.

Volunteering has given Peter the skills, confidence and references to move towards paid office-based employment, while also helping to reduce isolation and strengthen his sense of connection.

“The opportunity for personal development has been just as important as the actual office experience.”

Volunteer Centre

The Volunteer Centre connects people from Bexley who want to give time with organisations from the Borough looking for support. We run fairs, awards, and distribute newsletters, plus provide training and expertise for both volunteers and volunteer managers, so that volunteering in Bexley is safe, inclusive and impactful for all involved.

During 2025-26, Volunteer Centre Bexley registered 1,006 new volunteers, increasing the network to 4,587 registered volunteers and expanding the pool of residents available to support local organisations across the borough

In June, the Volunteer Centre team hosted the annual Bexley Volunteer Excellence Awards 2025. We received 58 nominations for seven award categories, and we were joined by the Mayor of Bexley, Cllr Christine Catterall, and Daniel Francis MP, who both presented awards.

Measure	Year total / year-end position
New volunteers registered	1,006
Total volunteers registered	4,587
New organisation registrations / organisations posting roles	27 recorded
New volunteering opportunities advertised	115 recorded
Enquiries about volunteering opportunities	1,719
Volunteer managers confirmed volunteer placements	185

Removing barriers and creating a vision for volunteering

During the past year we've continued to play a significant role in reducing barriers to volunteering, working on a partnership programme with South East London NHS Trusts, titled 'Volunteering Without Barriers'. A three-year funded programme, the aim is to improve accessibility, consistency and volunteer experience across the healthcare system. We conducted research and engagement by coordinating a review of the volunteering policies from across six NHS trusts, gathering feedback from more than 330 volunteers and developing a shared 'best practice' guide with neighbouring volunteer programmes.

We also identified key barriers and informed the development of a more consistent, inclusive volunteering model across NHS Trusts.

In partnership with Learning and Enterprise College Bexley, we also delivered an Introduction to Volunteering course for ten students with special educational needs, helping participants better understand volunteering expectations, commitment and pathways into community involvement

Alongside this work, we have initiated the development of a vision for volunteering in Bexley, setting out a shared borough-wide ambition for the future. Engagement activity included workshops with Community Champions and consultation with organisations that involve volunteers to identify barriers, opportunities and future priorities.



Women and Girls' Health Champions

The Women and Girls' Health Champions programme was launched in 2025, strengthening community-led approaches to improving women's and girls' health across Bexley. The programme recruited and trained local champions to share trusted, culturally sensitive health information in community settings, building confidence and awareness among women and girls who may face barriers to accessing mainstream health support.

Across the year, the programme established partnerships with 11 local organisations, trained 13 Women and Girls' Health Champions, and delivered targeted engagement activity reaching 292 women, girls and residents through seven community sessions and events. This work helped create safer, more accessible spaces for conversations about health and wellbeing, particularly in communities at higher risk of poor health outcomes.

A significant opportunity, unique to Bexley, was the launch of the Women and Girls Health Microgrants Fund, with £12,000 made available to support local community-led projects. The fund attracted strong interest with funding granted to seven projects focused on priorities including menstrual health, menopause awareness, healthy relationships and sexual health.

Funded projects include:

- **Beyond Sisterhood Sanctuary – Wellness Workshop**, delivered by Beyond Braidz CIC, supporting improved menstrual and menopause health literacy and reducing stigma around women's health.
- **Empower Her: Healthy Relationships & Sexual Health**, delivered by Thrive Impact, supporting women and girls – particularly those affected by domestic abuse – to improve sexual health knowledge, confidence and access to support services.

The programme's extension to March 2027 provides an important opportunity to build on this progress, embed learning from funded projects, and further strengthen community-led action to reduce health inequalities experienced by women and girls in Bexley.

Review of our year Health & Wellbeing

We know that the health and wellbeing of local people is shaped more by living conditions across our neighbourhoods, than healthcare. The pandemic, cost of living pressures and ongoing strain on statutory services have further highlighted the importance of keeping people well, with community-based initiatives that are preventative and accessible. Voluntary and community organisations hold a significant role in supporting residents' wellbeing and often reach people who may not engage with statutory services. Their ability to build trust, reduce isolation and provide early practical support makes them a vital part of the local health and care landscape.

As Bexley's local infrastructure organisation, BVSC supports the voluntary sector and healthcare system by strengthening collaboration between sectors, enabling referral pathways into community services and by delivering targeted initiatives that increase residents' access to voluntary sector support. We also provide co-ordination and oversight support to partner VCSE organisations which provide direct services to local people.

Over the past year we've been working hard to build on the solid foundations already in place and continuing to promote prevention and community-led approaches to health and wellbeing for the people of Bexley.

Bexley Buddies

Bexley Buddies tackles loneliness and social isolation by bringing together peer-run support groups in GP surgeries, building community connection and resilience. The volunteer-led sessions have included activities such as arts and crafts, as well as sessions on digital inclusion, CPR and mental-health self-care.

The programme expanded significantly during the year, strengthening its role as a volunteer-led programme supporting residents' social connection, wellbeing and community participation.

By year end, 16 surgeries had been engaged, with seven actively delivering sessions. Across the year, Bexley Buddies delivered 82 sessions, recorded 858 attendances and had 14 active volunteers who completed 1,786 volunteer hours.

One significant achievement during the year was hosting blood pressure screenings at Bursted Woods GP surgery alongside a local pharmacy, and offering training to participants about the five vital checks to tackle poor health.

The growth of the Bexley Buddies initiative reflects increasing recognition of its value in reducing social isolation, improving access to community support and contributing to wider health and wellbeing outcomes.

Case study Curtis, Bexley Buddy

Curtis, a local graffiti artist and creative facilitator from Belvedere, began volunteering with Bexley Buddies in February 2026 after being introduced through the Community Champion Coordinator. Motivated by a desire to give back to his local community, Curtis has become a valued contributor to our creative health programme, delivering monthly arts sessions at Bursted Wood Surgery.

Using his professional artistic expertise, Curtis has introduced patients to a range of creative activities, from graffiti-inspired lettering workshops to exploring the styles of renowned artists such as Picasso, Matisse and Kandinsky. His sessions encourage participants to experiment, build confidence and try new experiences in a supportive environment. Importantly, Curtis adapts his approach to different group dynamics, ensuring activities remain engaging and accessible for all participants.

Although an experienced facilitator requiring minimal support, Bexley Buddies worked closely with Curtis to align expectations, agree objectives and ensure his volunteering commitments remained sustainable. His contribution has already had a positive impact on patient engagement, generating enthusiasm for future activities and strengthening opportunities for social connection within primary care settings.

The success of Curtis's involvement has led to an expansion of his role. From April 2026, he will also deliver monthly sessions at Lakeside Medical Practice, supporting the development of additional creative and

social opportunities for patients and helping increase capacity within an established community programme.

Curtis's story demonstrates the value of integrating professional artists into community health initiatives. His work highlights how creative activities can support wellbeing, reduce social isolation and strengthen community connections, while also showcasing the potential benefits of investing in artist-led mentoring and creative facilitation programmes across primary care and voluntary sector partnerships.

“I have had more opportunities to take part in art projects in other parts of London, but I really want to give back to the community and bring arts to where I am based. The sessions are more than making something visual. They are also about experimentation, confidence and being daring enough to try something new. I am really looking forward to seeing how the project grows.”

Case study One Bexley

During a recent visit, a resident's husband contacted One Bexley when the visiting officer was delayed due to a traffic incident and roadworks. He shared the following about his experience with the person on the phone:

“The person I spoke to was really supportive and very nice to me on the telephone.”

Later, she called again to check that the appointment had gone ahead, the resident's husband added:

“That was so nice of her to contact me and check that she had arrived for her appointment. That was really kind of her to call me back – she was very helpful and supportive.”



One Bexley Pathways

BVSC continues to play a central role within the One Bexley Pathways partnership, working alongside seven other local charities to support the delivery of adult social care assessments and reviews on behalf of London Borough of Bexley. While much of the direct assessment activity is undertaken by Trusted Assessors employed by consortium partners, BVSC provides the coordination, triage and operational infrastructure that enables the service to function effectively.

During 2025–26, BVSC reviewed and triaged referrals, coordinated communication between Adult Social Care and consortium partners, provided administrative support to the assessment pathway and facilitated operational meetings across the partnership. We also handled 1,246 phone calls, helping residents access the right support at the right time and ensuring referrals were directed appropriately.

In the past year, the service supported the completion of:

- 1,084 Care Act Assessments
- 216 Carers Assessments
- 713 Support Plan Reviews

During the year, BVSC also played a key role in the development and implementation of significant changes to the Adult Social Care assessment system. Working closely with the London Borough of Bexley, Quality Assurance Leads, Operational Leads and Trusted Assessors across the consortium, we gathered feedback from frontline staff, ensured views were represented and contributed to the redesign of assessment and review documentation. The updated forms were successfully implemented in April 2026 and will support a more consistent and effective assessment process going forward.

We have also seen an increase in the number of residents approaching the service directly, demonstrating growing awareness of One Bexley Pathways and confidence in the support available through the partnership. As the link between Adult Social Care and the voluntary sector consortium, BVSC continues to ensure that residents receive a coordinated, responsive and person-centred service.

Case study Community Connect

A resident was referred to Community Connect by their GP following divorce, a child leaving home and a recent bereavement. As a single parent receiving benefits, they were experiencing financial pressure, anxiety about finding work and concerns about their mental wellbeing.

The resident identified employment as their main priority. Community Connect referred them to Reinstatement, where they received one-to-one support with their CV and job applications and attended an IT course. This helped them develop new skills, rebuild confidence and feel more positive. They continued to receive employment support from Reinstatement after leaving Community Connect.

As their immediate concerns reduced, the resident became ready to consider additional support, including counselling and housing advice.

Over three months, the resident became less stressed, more confident and better equipped with practical skills. The case demonstrates how Community Connect can listen to what matters most, respond at the right pace and help residents take sustainable steps towards improved wellbeing.

“Over three months, the resident became less stressed, more confident and better equipped with practical skills”

Community Connect

Community Connect helps Bexley residents improve their health and wellbeing by connecting them to local community, voluntary and statutory services.

Adults, children and young people are able to address issues such as poor mental health, social isolation, financial hardship, caring responsibilities and significant life changes through a personalised social prescribing approach.

The service experienced significant growth during 2025–26, receiving 1,315 adult referrals, exceeding both contracted and stretch targets, while referrals for children and young people continued to rise throughout the year, reaching their highest levels during the final quarter with a total of 268 received. Residents accessing support through Community Connect reported an average 36 percentage point improvement in wellbeing scores, demonstrating the positive impact of early intervention and community-based support.

A key achievement during the year was the successful recruitment of a fully staffed team, including new leadership, administrative support and wellbeing coordinators. This increased capacity improved consistency, strengthened service delivery and enabled the team to eliminate the Children and Young

People waiting list by October. This achievement was maintained throughout the remainder of the year, with referrals typically contacted within 48 hours and appointments offered within two weeks.

Relationships with GP practices, Primary Care Networks, schools, mental health services and community organisations were strengthened through regular joined-up working. New referral pathways were developed, additional community venues secured and awareness of the service increased across the borough.

Throughout the year, residents were connected to a wide range of local support, including counselling, talking therapies, welfare advice, employment support, community activities, carers' services and mental health provision. The service facilitated well over 2,500 onward referrals and signposting interventions, helping residents access the right support at the right time and reducing the likelihood of issues escalating into crisis.

The service places a strong emphasis on quality, continuous improvement and resident feedback. In addition to safeguarding oversight and regular case reviews, outcome reviews are completed following discharge from the service.

During these follow-up conversations, residents are asked about their experience of Community Connect, whether the support helped them achieve their goals

and whether they would recommend the service to others. This feedback helps us understand the difference the service has made, identify areas for improvement and ensure we continue to deliver a responsive, person-centred service.

No formal complaints were received during the year, and the team further strengthened service quality through nationally recognised Information, Advice and Guidance qualifications alongside a broad programme of safeguarding and specialist training.

Community Connect ended the year with strong performance, growing demand, improved access to support and measurable improvements in resident wellbeing, providing a solid foundation for continued growth and impact.

Health and Wellbeing Coach Expansion

A major strategic achievement during 2025–26 was securing the expansion of the Health & Wellbeing Coach programme across Bexley following the success of the 3+ Long Term Conditions pilot. This will bring approximately £1M of investment into the sector over three years, supporting community infrastructure and delivery.

In February 2026, BVSC successfully secured the contract for the expanded programme, covering all Local Care Networks across the borough. Rather than delivering the expansion directly, BVSC took a system leadership role, designing a partnership model that will bring voluntary and community organisations together to deliver additional Health & Wellbeing Coaches, Vital 5 Coaches and Community Health & Wellbeing Workers across Bexley. This collaborative approach reflects our commitment to partnership working to further increase experience and capability, especially within grass roots organisations, and to increase investment in VCSE sector organisations across Bexley.

The expanded model will increase support for residents living with multiple long-term conditions, while also strengthening prevention and early intervention through dedicated roles focused on reducing health inequalities and improving population health outcomes. Recruitment will take place during 2026/27.

Building on the success of the original pilot, the expansion represents a significant step towards a more preventative, community-based approach to health and wellbeing, enabling more residents to access personalised support, build confidence in managing their health and seek help before reaching crisis point.

Digital Champions

Our Digital Champions programme recruits and trains volunteers to help local residents build confidence using online health tools and digital services

Throughout the year the project helped more than 300 residents, including building their confidence in using:

- NHS App
- Online health services
- Digital communication tools

Sessions at a Bexley-based housing association led to a noticeable increase in residents' confidence with many now able to use the app to order prescriptions and access digital letters.

Beyond improving digital skills and access to healthcare, the project is strengthening community resilience and enabling earlier intervention through improved access to healthcare and online support, helping to prevent issues from escalating and reducing longer-term support needs.



Looking ahead to 2026–27

As we look towards 2026/27, we're excited to build on the strong foundations laid over the past year.

We will continue championing a thriving, connected and resilient voluntary sector for Bexley, while expanding opportunities for residents to improve their health, wellbeing and quality of life.

Some of our key priorities for the year include concluding a borough-wide Vision for Volunteering, expanding the successful Bexley Buddies programme across all GP surgeries, and increasing participation in our networks and forums so that more organisations can help shape local decision-making.

We will also launch our State of the Sector Report, capacity building support for grassroots organisations through new funding programmes, and extend our infrastructure support offer into Greenwich, creating new opportunities across South East London for learning, collaboration and growth.

In Health and Wellbeing, we will expand community-based preventative services, embed new support programmes including Direct Payment Support and Crisis & Resilience Social Prescribing, and introduce social prescribing within Urgent Treatment Centres.

Alongside this, we will continue deepening partnerships across health, care and safeguarding systems, ensuring the voluntary sector remains at the heart of delivering person-centred support for local residents.

Together, these ambitions reflect our commitment to creating stronger communities, reducing inequalities and ensuring that voluntary and community organisations continue to play a vital role in shaping a healthier, more connected Bexley.

We've already begun, see you out there!

Acknowledgements

Thank you to our Board of Trustees for their continued support and to our dedicated staff.

Thank you also to all the volunteers who dedicate their time and energy to BVSC and other voluntary sector organisations across Bexley.

Thank you also to you, for reading this report, supporting the voluntary sector and for championing the important work we do.



