

## **Camden Infrastructure Alliance (VAC, VCC, C4) Joint Statement: Cost of Living Crisis**

The Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) provides essential support for those in need, but it also finds itself under enormous pressure as a result of the current cost-of-living crisis.

The pandemic disproportionately affected voluntary and community organisations that were already struggling to meet demands with insufficient resources. Before we have even begun to recover from the impact of the pandemic, the sector is faced with another crisis that may last even longer.

We are deeply concerned for the continued resilience of our sector and are calling for cross-sector unity and resistance to the much-anticipated reduction in public spending.

The government has announced immediate, short-term action to support households, businesses, and the charity sector cope with soaring energy bills. For many households this will not abate the financial strain they are facing, nor will it alleviate continued pressure on already stretched frontline services.

We welcome Camden Council stepping in to help residents least able to manage soaring energy bills and everyday costs. However, we urge the council to remember the community services that are often the first port of call for people struggling to make ends meet. Current funding in the community sector is not keeping up with inflation or the increasing costs of providing essential services in the community. From foodbanks to debt advice, mental health services to animal rescue, every part of the sector is experiencing both extraordinarily high demand and rapidly dwindling resources.

As hardship deepens, particularly with winter looming, some donors are finding that they are no longer able to contribute to charities. We know that some local food banks are seeing demand increase while donations are slowing down.

We are pleased that the Government has listened to the sector's call for voluntary and community organisations to be included in support plans for businesses. As it stands, this support is only for six months, and all of the signs point to this crisis lasting much longer. We need a commitment to longer-term support to ensure financial stability and confidence.

The sector needs additional targeted financial support to deliver essential services, but we also want to work systematically with the council to tackle the crisis. Camden's response to the pandemic highlighted the value of cross-sector collaboration. It also demonstrated the importance of forming partnerships built on trust across the public and VCS sectors. We are inviting the council to join us in developing strategic plans to support residents struggling to cope with the cost of living.

Camden's VCS has consistently demonstrated its ability to respond quickly and efficiently. Nevertheless, the vital work of the voluntary and community sector simply cannot be spread any thinner.

We have the experience, community reach, ingenuity and resolve to tackle this latest crisis and ensure that meaningful support reaches those in need.

### **Signatories**

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