



Trustees' Report and Financial Statements

Year Ended 31st March 2026



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Trustees, Directors, Principal Officers, and Advisors

Trustees

Tim Edwards	Chair	
Joe Varley-Martin	Vice Chair	
Simon Harris	Vice Chair	
John Farrar	Treasurer	
Neil Dawson		
Pooja Batta		
Cliff Hathaway		
Cathy Jones		
Rob Craddock		
Hayley Currie		
Melanie Dunn		Resigned 24th June 2026
Michael Stubbs		
Sophie Barber		Appointed 18 th March 2026
Suzanne Roberts		Resigned 17 th September 2025
Bruno Ornelas		Resigned 11 th June 2025

Auditors

B K Plus Audit Limited,
Graphic House,
City Road,
Stoke-on-Trent,
ST4 2PH

Bankers

Unity Bank, Plc,
Nine Brindley Place,
Birmingham,
B1 2HP

Company Secretary

Lisa Healings FCCA

Key Management Personnel

 Lisa Healings Chief Executive	 Charlotte Bennett Infrastructure, Community, and Partnerships Director	 Brenda Ford Finance and Business Operations Director from 1st June 2026
 Andy Meakin Chief Executive from 24th June 2026	 Natalie Hawkins Infrastructure,, Community, and Partnerships Manager From 1 April 2026	 Debra Hefferon Finance and Business Operations Manager
	 Jackie Wheeler Facilities Manager to 6th April 2026	

VAST is the trading name of VAST Services (1920)

Chair's Foreword

I'm privileged to introduce our latest annual report for VAST, I'm delighted that despite a challenging environment, that through the hard work and prudent decisions taken, VAST has again delivered more during the year than budgeted, reflected in increased revenue and a financial outcome better than planned. The report reflects the range and depth of the work undertaken by VAST on the sector's behalf.



Our strategic alliances with Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Integrated Care System, among others, are growing from strength to strength, giving us the platform to strategically influence and engage in the wider decision-making processes on the sector's behalf. At an operational level, partnerships with organisations such as Support Staffordshire and Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce facilitate resource sharing, skill development, and information exchange. These collaborative efforts are crucial for co-designing solutions that meet the needs of our communities.

We recently approved our new corporate strategy, which provides a clear direction for the organisation to build on its existing strengths in supporting the four functions of infrastructure, while addressing the wider challenges for VAST and the sector as a whole.

The report is a testament to the work of VAST colleagues in supporting and helping maintain a strong and resilient voluntary, community and social enterprise sector in the area. The operating environment for charities remains challenging, and we remain at the sector's disposal to help and support the organisation to adapt and, wherever possible, to maintain the important services that the sector provides.

We are fortunate to have a strong, diverse and skilled Board who support VAST's vision and values, and I appreciate the support provided by my fellow Board Trustees in supporting the work of the Board.

To support the delivery of our updated strategy, we have undertaken an organisational review to strengthen our senior management capacity in anticipation of future needs and to plan for the pending retirement of our current Chief Executive. Our team continues to support the development and growth of the sector through our capacity-building work and provision of core support services such as accounts and payroll. This development work is core to our purpose in helping VCSE organisations to develop and thrive, creating greater strength and diversity within the sector.

Through our regular newsletters, meetings and events, we have maintained a steady flow of vital information and resources to our members. We are also committed to engaging with and listening to the voice of the sector locally, which helps shape our priorities and to advocate on your behalf. This year's conference, with its focus on inclusion was a huge success, gaining national attention and drawing over 200 people from across the VCSE and public sectors.



I am proud to have the opportunity to lead an organisation that has social impact at its heart, and am inspired to hear the stories of how the sector is leading positive change. A special mention should also go to our current Chief Executive, Lisa Healings, who announced her decision to retire this year, we will note this in due course, but would put on record our thanks for her outstanding leadership, that places the organisation in a good position for the future. Thank you to my fellow trustees, the VAST team, our partners and volunteers in achieving so much on the sector's behalf.



Tim Edwards, Chair



Strategic Report

The Trustees who are the Directors for the purposes of company law present their strategic report for the year ended 31 March 2026 in compliance with Section 414C of the Companies Act 2006.

Fair Review of the Business

VAST is now firmly established as the recognised Local Infrastructure Organisation in Stoke-on-Trent and continues to build on the strong foundations created through its five-year collaborative working agreement as a Strategic Partner with Stoke-on-Trent City Council. Alongside this, continued support from The National Lottery Reaching Communities programme for Totally Stoked, investment in programmes such as Volunteering for Health and Know Your Neighbourhood, and sustained funding to co-facilitate the Healthy Communities Alliance have ensured that VAST remains at the heart of the VCSE sector, acting as a vital link between community organisations, statutory partners, and the Integrated Care System across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.

Over the year, this stability of core funding, alongside a diverse and successful portfolio of additional grants and commissioned work, has enabled us to sustain, expand and adapt our offer. New programmes such as our inVOLved project working in partnership with Expert Citizens to provide activities and opportunities for individuals affected by homelessness, community cohesion activity, and locality-based health inequality work have added depth to our delivery, whilst we have also begun planning for the continuation of key programmes such as Totally Stoked beyond their current funding period.

This has allowed us to continue to embed and mature the Four Functions of Infrastructure: Leadership and Advocacy, Partnerships and Collaboration, Capacity Building, and Volunteering. Our leadership role has strengthened significantly over the year, with VAST increasingly recognised as the 'go to' organisation for the VCSE sector locally, evidenced through growing membership, high satisfaction levels, and increased engagement across our networks, communications channels and strategic partnerships. Our influence has extended into key areas such as commissioning, system design and the emerging Civil Society Covenant, with national recognition of our work and approach.

Partnership working continues to be a defining feature of VAST's approach. We have convened and supported a wide range of networks and forums, including the VCSE City Alliance, Healthy Communities Alliance for Stoke-on-Trent and North Staffordshire, the Collaborative Network, and the Stoke-on-Trent Food Partnership, which has grown significantly in size, reach and influence. Our work in supporting the development of the Locality Improvement Framework has also strengthened relationships between VCSE and statutory partners, enabling more place-based, preventative approaches to addressing health inequalities.

Our capacity-building offer has continued to evolve in response to the needs of the sector. We have delivered an increased number of support sessions, expanded and tailored our training offer and development opportunities, and supported organisations to engage more effectively with funding, governance and commissioning processes.



Our communications reach has also grown, with increasing website traffic, social media engagement and sustained high levels of user satisfaction with our services and support.

Volunteering remains central to our work and has continued to innovate. We have developed more flexible and inclusive models, including micro-volunteering and targeted programmes supporting people facing multiple disadvantage. These approaches are enabling new demographics to engage, including younger people and individuals experiencing isolation, whilst also responding to emerging challenges such as mental health barriers and changes in how people want to volunteer.

We have also played a leading role in supporting community cohesion and inclusion across the city. Through funded programmes and strategic engagement with initiatives such as One Stoke and the City Council's Future 100 Strategic Boards, we have supported grassroots organisations, strengthened community leadership, and responded to increasing tensions and challenges within communities. This work has been particularly important given rising concerns around social division, misinformation, and access to services for marginalised groups.

Across our thematic work, we have continued to respond to key issues affecting our communities, including loneliness and isolation, support for older people, family services, youth engagement and cost-of-living pressures. We have supported the development of preventative, neighbourhood-based approaches, particularly in areas such as ageing well and frailty.

Organisationally, VAST has begun a period of transition and development. Following the announcement that Lisa Healings will retire as Chief Executive after 7 years in post at the end of September 2026, a management restructure has been carried out which has strengthened alignment with our strategic priorities, staff numbers have increased as a result of new projects, and succession planning has been successfully delivered, including the appointment of a new Chief Executive and Finance and Business Operations Director to lead the organisation into its next phase.

However, the external environment remains highly challenging. Stoke-on-Trent City Council and the Integrated Care System continue to operate under significant financial pressure and ongoing structural reform, creating uncertainty for both VAST and the wider VCSE sector. This is compounded by increased demand for services, workforce pressures, rising costs, and continued reliance on short-term funding arrangements. In this context, VAST's role as advocate, convenor and system partner has never been more important. Through our work, we have strengthened our position at the centre of Stoke-on-Trent's VCSE sector, ensuring that organisations are better connected, better represented, and better equipped to respond to both immediate challenges and longer-term opportunities.

Thanks to the commitment and expertise of our staff and volunteers, the strength of our partnerships, and the continued support of our funders, VAST has made significant progress over the year. We remain well-positioned to support both the VCSE sector and the communities it serves, and while challenges remain, we move forward with confidence, continuing to work collaboratively to improve outcomes for people and communities across Stoke-on-Trent.



Achievements and Performance

Key Objectives from our Strategic Plan

1

To be the recognised voice of the VCSE sector in our chosen geography.

2

To be a first-choice provider of services, and a centre for innovation to the VCSE Sector.

3

To have adequate resources to sustain and grow both our organisation and the local VCSE sector.

The lasting impact of the cost-of-living crisis following so closely behind the pandemic means that there is still less appetite for the purchase of non-essential services and budgets are being tightly managed even for essential services.

Our Online Performance



413,531

Facebook Feeds
reached



156

Email
Newsletters

31,686

Unique
Website Users

778



Social Media Posts

206



New Facebook
Followers

513,889

Total Website
Visits



Chargeable Services

Dudson Centre Occupancy

82%

Income

from chargeable services

£558,190

Dudson Centre Meeting Room Hire



365

Bookings



3,259

Hours



31

**New
Customers**



What we said we would do

- Explore the market in Cheshire and other surrounding areas where there is currently no similar Local Infrastructure provision.
- Grow payroll bureau provision and actively seek new tenants for The Dudson Centre.
- Develop a range of packages of support for VCSE and SMEs, for example, start-up package etc.
- Advertise more widely outside membership base.
- Develop provision to Social Enterprises and other types of not-for-profit organisations.

What we did

- Although we have not specifically carried out targeted advertising, we have continued to grow and develop our range of networks and forums and reviewed and refocused our newsletters to ensure more targeted messaging and information is reaching those that need it. Our social media presence has also continued to grow.
- The increased presence of our projects team across the city has contributed to a continued growth in membership numbers.
- Our accountancy and payroll services continue to attract clients from a wide geographical area, and demand for meeting rooms is continuing to grow.
- Income from our business support service, café and refreshment income, and income from rentals was £362,996 in the year.
- We have continued virtual or hybrid delivery for most of our training packages and now have a comprehensive annual training offer.
- Whilst for the majority of our work our target geography continues to be Stoke-on-Trent, changes to the footprint of our local Integrated Care Board, together with proposals for Local Government Reform mean that we need to begin to think about what this will look like in future.
- We are continually looking for relevant funding opportunities and are working closely with Local Authority and Health Colleagues to secure continuation funding for our services.



How successful we were

Our support services continue to provide a value for money option for the VCSE sector and we want to continue to build our potential to offer these services more widely.



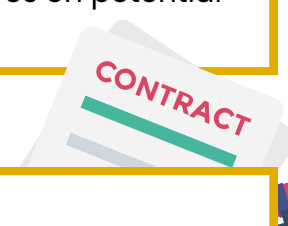
Pressures on funding for our client base and the added pressures placed on both our clients and ourselves in recent years has meant it has been difficult to expand our services.

Our training and events offer has been successful, and we received many excellent reviews and pieces of participant feedback, however numbers of attendees are lower than in previous years due to time pressures on potential attendees.

Grants and Contracts

What we said we would do

- Continue to develop as needed to meet demand of the Integrated Care system and changes within Local Authority.
- Explore funding opportunities to ensure that we can continue to deliver in key areas such as Volunteering and VCSE developmental support.
- Develop projects in line with identified needs of the local VCSE sector and national agendas.



What we did

We have successfully secured additional project funding in the year to continue to expand our core services and to embed inclusive volunteering within our volunteering offer. We also continued to develop our work in enabling community-based organisations to participate in health research through the Research Engagement Network project.



How successful we were

Our five-year, strategic partnership with Stoke-on-Trent City Council and ongoing funding from the National Lottery Community Fund enabled us to fully deliver the Four Functions of infrastructure. We received continuation investment into the Healthy Communities Alliance to fund facilitation of relationships between the VCSE sector and the local Integrated Care System and continued to increase the number of additional projects delivered to complement our core work.



Advocacy and Voice

What we said we would do

- Ensure VAST remains the recognised representative and voice of the local sector.
- Remain strategically engaged with the City Council and Integrated Care System.
- Develop and grow networks and forums according to identified need.

What we did

- Our role in facilitating the Voluntary Sector Chief Officers Group (VSCOG) and in continuing to grow the Healthy Communities Forums has enabled the local sector to work together more effectively and improved relationships with statutory bodies. Through the Healthy Communities Alliance, we have also continued to facilitate, alongside our partners Support Staffordshire, the participation of VCSE representatives in all Portfolio Boards across the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Integrated Care Board.
- We have continued to create new forums, in response to the needs of our members, as well as growing our existing forums.
- Our Advocacy and Voice Lead and our Senior Management Team continue to have seats on key Boards across the area and to meet regularly with senior-level employees of both the Local Authority and the Integrated Care Board.

How successful we were

We are well recognised by both the VCSE sector and statutory partners as the representatives of the sector; however, constant staff changes and interim posts across statutory bodies continue to make it difficult to retain relationships.



Factors Relevant to the Achievement of Objectives

VAST's objectives and supporting activities have once again been delivered in a highly complex and evolving environment, shaped not only by ongoing financial pressures but also by significant structural change across both local government and the health system. The period has seen the early stages of Local Government Reform and continued restructuring within Integrated Care Systems, creating uncertainty around future decision-making, commissioning arrangements and the flow of funding into the VCSE sector. While our core funding remains relatively stable, this wider context continues to impact the sector's confidence, planning horizons and sustainability.

Both Stoke-on-Trent City Council and the Integrated Care Board continue to face substantial financial challenges, alongside the requirement to transform services in response to national policy and reform. These pressures are compounded by the shift towards more localised, neighbourhood-based models of delivery and the emerging expectations of Integrated Neighbourhood Teams and locality working. While these approaches present opportunities for stronger VCSE involvement, they also bring a risk of fragmentation, duplication or delays where governance arrangements and system leadership are still evolving, with progress at times being slowed by governance complexity and system uncertainty, highlighting the importance of continued coordination and trusted infrastructure support.

At the same time, there remains a clear and growing recognition from statutory partners of the critical role played by the VCSE sector in delivering preventative, community-based solutions. This has been reflected in continued engagement through the VCSE City Alliance, the Healthy Communities Alliance, and wider partnership forums, as well as in the increasing involvement of VAST and sector representatives in discussions around commissioning, service design and system reform. There are also promising developments, such as work to align with the emerging Civil Society Covenant, and increasing interest from national partners in the collaborative models being developed locally. However, while these relationships are strengthening, the translation of this engagement into long-term, sustainable commissioning and investment in the VCSE sector remains limited, with many arrangements continuing to rely on short-term extensions or pilot funding.

The wider operating environment also continues to present significant challenges for VCSE organisations. Demand for services remains high, particularly in relation to cost-of-living pressures, mental health, loneliness and isolation, and support for marginalised communities. At the same time, organisations are facing increased competition for funding, rising delivery costs and workforce pressures, often alongside reduced reserves following several years of sustained demand.

These factors are further exacerbated by wider societal challenges, including community tensions, misinformation and barriers to engagement for some groups, all of which increase the need for trusted, locally embedded organisations and effective coordination across the system.



In this context, VAST's role as an infrastructure organisation has become increasingly important. The uncertainty created by reform and financial constraint has reinforced the need for strong leadership, advocacy and partnership working to ensure that the voice of the VCSE sector continues to be heard and that organisations are supported to engage effectively in emerging system structures. While the environment remains challenging, the strengthening of relationships, the maturing of partnership models, and the continued recognition of the sector's value provide a platform for future progress, even as reform continues to unfold.



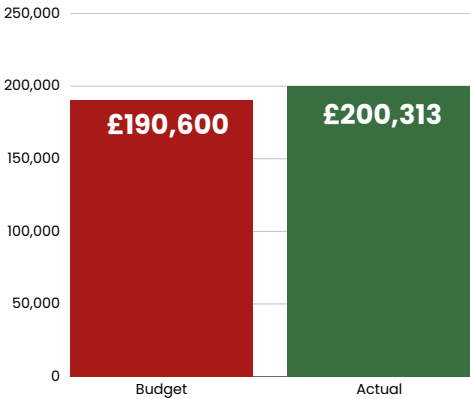
Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

During the year the main key performance indicators used by management to assess performance against objectives were as follows:

Chargeable Services

Income against budget for chargeable services

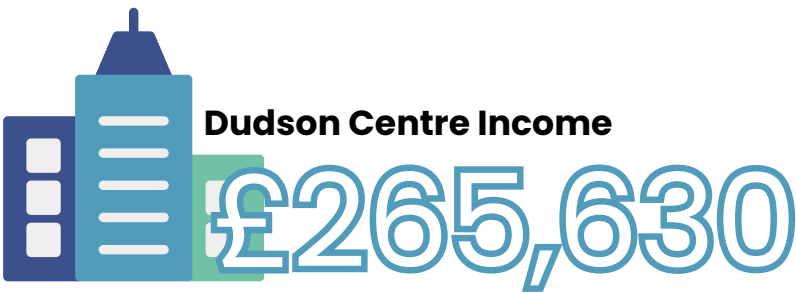
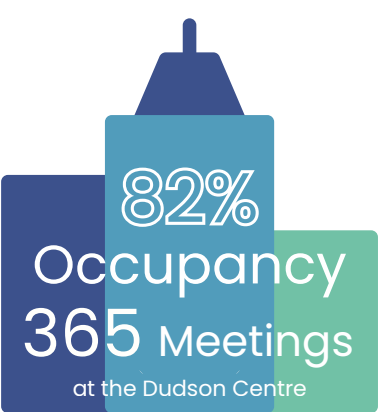
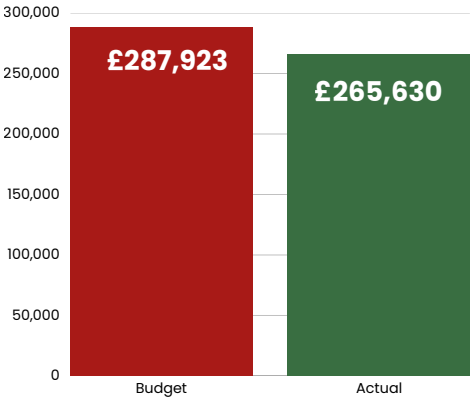
Our accounts and payroll services continue to be successful and once again exceeded budget expectations.



Facilities

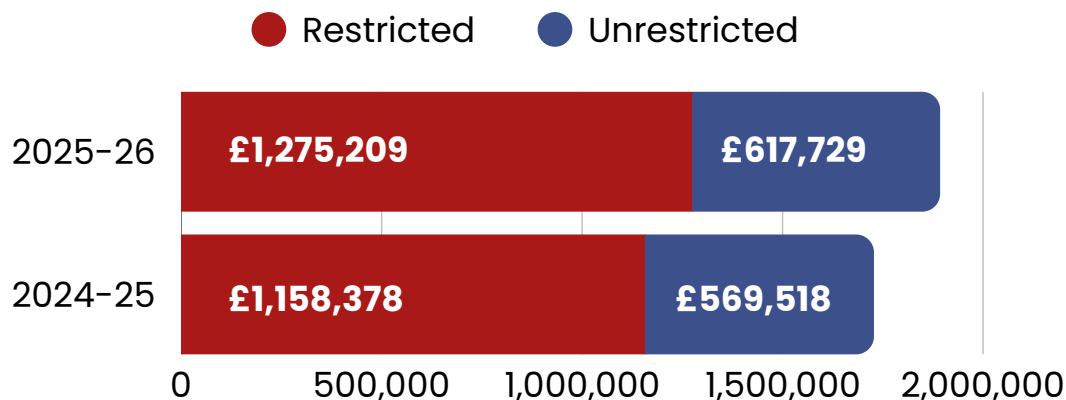
Overall income from the Dudson Centre

For the year to 31 March 2026 based on income received against total possible income the Dudson Centre was 82% occupied compared to 89% in 2024/25

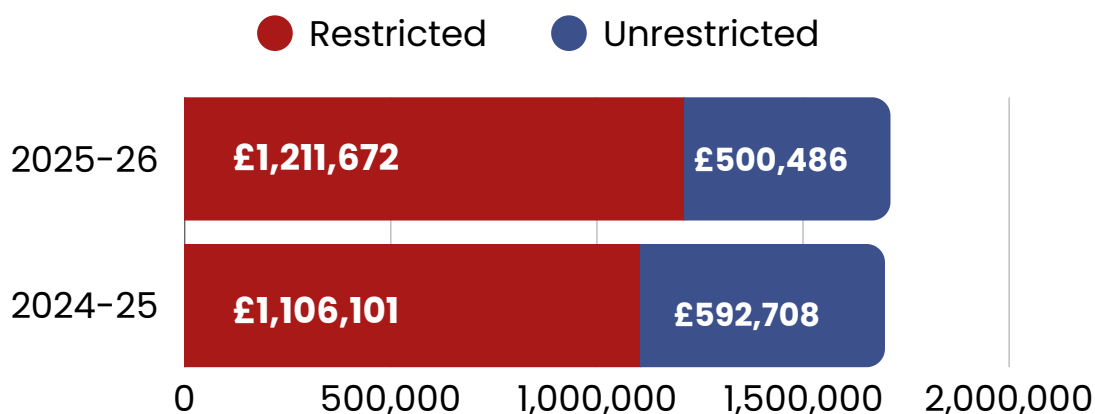


Financial Review

Income: £1,892,938 (2024-25: £1,727,896)



Expenditure: £1,712,158 (2024-25: £1,698,809)



INCOME

£1,892,938

EXPENDITURE £1,712,158



Reserves

Of the designated reserves, £50,000 is set aside to allow for times of under-occupancy and unexpected repair work at The Dudson Centre and £25,000 is set aside for the running of the Dudson Museum should funding not be available, £50,000 is set aside to cover any unfunded period of core delivery, and £30,442 is set aside to cover salaries of staff on fixed term contracts to the end of their current contract period.

VAST's principal funding sources for 2025/26 were Stoke-on-Trent City Council who funded our work with the local VCSE sector, Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Integrated Care Board, which funded our work with the Staffordshire NHS VCSE Alliance, Community Health Champions project, and Locality Improvement Framework, and The National Lottery Community Fund, who fund our Totally Stoked Support project.

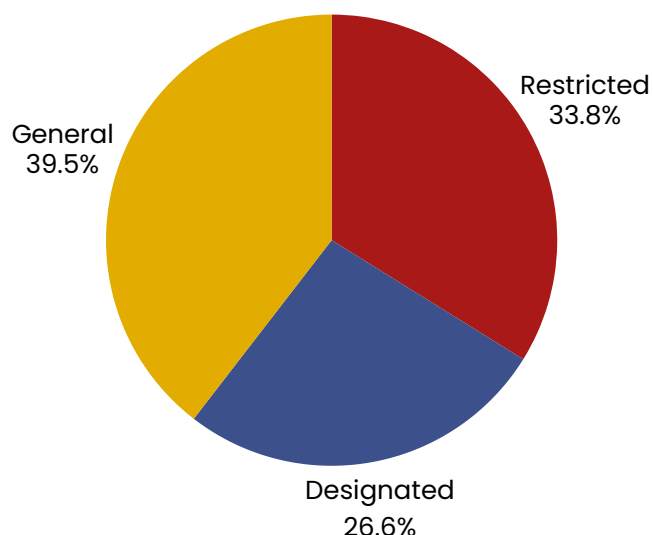
A large amount of VAST funding comes from our chargeable services, which in 2025/26 accounted for 25% of income (75% of unrestricted income).

2025/26 reserves

Restricted
£232,679

Designated
£182,942

General
£271,808

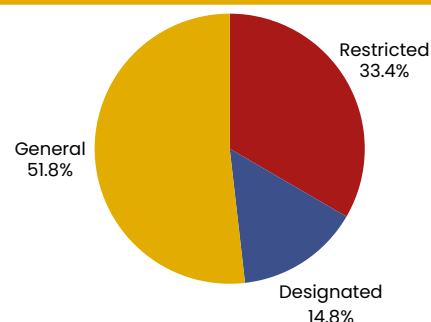


2024/25 reserves

Restricted
£169,142

Designated
£75,000

General
£262,507



Principal Funders for 2025/26



Agents over cash held

The charity acts as agent over cash held for the following not-for-profit organisations:

1. RSPCA North Staffs Branch
2. Headway North Staffs
3. Emmaus North Staffordshire
4. ASHA
5. Haregate Community Centre
6. Uttoxeter Gateway
7. Extreme Tour
8. Trentham Pre School
9. Ruff & Ruby (Ruby Girl) Ltd
10. Oakwood Road Community Association
11. NSAAA
12. Stoke on Trent Foodbank
13. Disability Solutions West Midlands
14. Whispers of Hope
15. North Staffs Carers Association
16. Expert Citizen CIC
17. Packmoor Community Association
18. Staffordshire Parish Councils Association
19. RCCG Living Water Parish
20. Biddulph Methodist Church
21. Breakthru' Support Services
22. Green Door Hub
23. Abbey Hulton Sports and Social Club
24. Voice of Hope
25. St Andrews with St Peters Pre School
26. Meadowcare Farm CIC
27. North Staffs Medical Institute
28. Staffordshire Sight Loss
29. Willoughbridge Garden Centre
30. Audley Parish Council
31. Whitmore Parish Council
32. Number 11 CIO
33. TWOCO
34. Silverdale Parish Council
35. Keele Parish Council
36. Open Door
37. Lea Road Community Centre
38. Newcastle Community Transport
39. SAGE Staffordshire
40. Biddulph Youth and Community Zone
41. Stone Community Hub
42. Kidsgrove Sports Centre CIC
43. Stoke Creates CIC
44. Uttoxeter Heritage Trust
45. Deaflinks Staffordshire
46. Tri Services Veteran Support
47. Madeley Rural Community Association
48. Rehoboth well CIC
49. Windmills Charity
50. Association of Dogs and Cats Homes
51. Peter Pan Nursery
52. Restoration Shack
53. Stoke on Trent City Council – Residents Association grants
54. Make Some Noise
55. Haven Community Project
56. Kinetic Heights

This money is held in order that invoices can be paid on behalf of these organisations, enabling them to achieve their charitable objectives. These monies are held in the charity's bank account and a separate nominal code kept to record any transactions. These balances are not included in the year-end financial statements.

Policy on Reserves

The policy of VAST has been to invest surplus funds in the growth of the charity. VAST aims to carry sufficient cash of up to £150,000 in bank current or deposit accounts to fund its predicted working capital requirements.

Surplus funds over £150,000 are deposited in a higher interest deposit account, in a higher interest fixed-term bond or within an investment portfolio.

The VAST trustees aim to maintain sufficient free reserves in unrestricted funds to ensure the charity remains sustainable in the event of a significant loss of funding or other unforeseen financial difficulties arising.

The trustees have carried out a review of the level of reserves necessary, taking into account the key risks identified, to ensure the sustainability of the organisation. This review indicated the need for free reserves in the range of £480,000 to £1,100,000.

**Currently, we hold
£261,446 of free
reserves.**

**Total reserves stand
at £687,429, of which
£454,748 is
unrestricted, and of
this £182,942 is
designated.**



The long-term aim of the trustees is to be able to set budgets which can increase the level of free reserves to the required level.



Plans for Future periods

VAST's strategy and business plan were fully reviewed in 2025/2026 and will next be reviewed in 2029/2030.

Our Vision

Our overall vision is for a future where everyone belongs, contributes, and flourishes, and where people are recognised for the strengths they bring.



Key Objectives

VAST will be recognised as a quality, diverse, inclusive and sustainable Local Infrastructure Organisation for the VCSE Sector in our chosen geography, which is financially sustainable for the future.

Local Government Reform and Health System restructuring will shape funding, commissioning, and decision-making through this strategy period; our priorities are designed to safeguard VCSE voice, continuity of services, and fair access to resources throughout the transition.

Organisational

VAST will lead by example in embedding EEDI (Equity, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) across the organisation and the wider sector. It will advocate for the VCSE sector in local government and health system reforms, ensuring representation and influence. Strategic leadership will be values-driven, with a focus on navigating political uncertainty and maintaining sector visibility.

Many VCSE groups—especially newer, smaller organisations—lack capacity to engage consistently with statutory partners. As Local Government Reform and Health system changes progress, our role is to aggregate lived experience, amplify it at system tables, and protect local voice so that community priorities shape decisions and resources.

Leadership and
Advocacy



Partnerships and Collaboration

VAST will strengthen cross-sector partnerships, geographic networks, and thematic collaborations.

VAST will leverage the Dudson Centre as a strategic enabler of system change by utilising it as a neutral space for co-production and collaboration, providing a trusted space for lived-experience forums, ensuring communities, especially under-represented groups, influence commissioning, policy development and neighbourhood health planning, and a place where VCSE organisations can connect and learn.

Relationships with new partners, such as educational institutions and housing associations, will be developed.

A relatively small, under-resourced sector faces rising demand and complex commissioning landscapes. We will turn relationships into delivery capacity—reducing duplication, building joint bids, and creating cross-sector solutions that local groups could not achieve alone, particularly across Health where collaboration is perceived as weaker.

Capacity Building

VAST will support VCSE organisations through training, mentoring, and digital transformation. It will promote sustainability and resilience, helping organisations adapt to funding shifts and governance reforms.

With low reserves common and many new organisations entering the ecosystem, practical, hands-on capacity support (governance, finance, income, digital, data) is mission-critical. Our priority is to stabilise and strengthen organisations so they can keep pace with demand, win funding, and deliver safely and effectively.



Volunteering

VAST will champion inclusive volunteering across all age groups. It will develop programmes that align with health and wellbeing priorities and support community cohesion.

Volunteer power is essential where funding is tight and needs are high. We will grow inclusive volunteering and improve volunteer management practice so more people—especially those currently under-represented—can contribute and boost community wellbeing, while helping VCSEs sustain services despite resource pressure.

Activities Planned to Achieve Objectives

We will achieve our key objectives by implementing the following activities:

Organisational

- Be exemplars in charity governance.
- Provide high quality, responsive and forward thinking service across our operations.
- Secure our financial sustainability to ensure we can continue to deliver the four functions of infrastructure.
- Respond proactively to evolving landscapes and the challenges of Local Government Reform and Health Service Reform.

Leadership and Advocacy

- Facilitate two-way communication and engagement with the Local Authority.
- Facilitate two-way communication and engagement with the local Health System.
- Be the mechanism to facilitate cross-sector and inter-sector information sharing, collaboration and engagement.
- Lead by example on cohesion and Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EEDI).
- Support lived experience organisations and ensure their insights are integrated into policy commissioning and system design.

Partnerships and Collaboration

- Promote and provide a wide range of thematic and relational networks.
- Facilitate effective engagement and coproduction within and across sectors.
- Encourage collaboration to create more impactful projects.
- Continue to develop our partnership and collaborations with Support Staffordshire, and expand to partnerships with other LIOs as the statutory geography changes.
- Engage with a wide range of partners to provide opportunities for VCSE sector involvement .
- Foster a collaborative and inclusive culture at The Dudson Centre.
- Community development.

Capacity Building

- One-to-one support.
- Provide a high-quality training programme, encompassing emerging priorities and tailored to the needs of the local VCSE sector.
- Support Corporate Social Responsibility activity.
- Provide a high-quality payroll and accountancy service to VCSE sector organisations.
- Develop the Dudson Centre as an inclusive community providing high-quality serviced offices and meeting space, in a supportive environment, while preserving the history and heritage of the site.

Volunteering

- Continue to develop the City's Vision for Volunteering.
- Provide quality volunteer brokerage.
- Continue our Quality Accreditation programme.
- Provide quality, accessible training.
- Support inclusive volunteering.



Principal Risks and Uncertainties

The major risks to which the charity is exposed, as identified by the Trustees, have been reviewed, and systems or procedures have been established to manage those risks.

The principal risk is considered to be the loss of a major funding stream, meaning that VAST cannot continue to exist as an infrastructure organisation. However, sources of income have been diversified over recent years, and a significant portion of income is generated through chargeable services to mitigate this risk.

In approving these financial statements, the Trustees have considered the level of free reserves together with the potential impact of the loss of, or failure to renew, one or more contracts, as they come up for renewal over the next year.

Other risks considered to be high are damage to reputation, loss of influence, and loss of key staff.

The Board and the finance and general purposes sub-committee have developed a detailed reserves policy which is closely linked to the key risks identified for the charity, including the potential loss or non-renewal of contracts. Quarterly management accounts and cash flow forecasts, include a rolling forecast to the end of each financial year, are updated and presented to these groups for regular review and comparison to the reserves policy papers. This enables the Board to react to any pending cash flow issues and gives fair warning of any looming difficulties. The Board have examined alternative strategies to ensure any such issues can be faced and costs reduced accordingly to ensure the charity remains a going concern. On this basis the Board had concluded that the charity remains a going concern and the risks identified are manageable.

The trustees consider all of these risks regularly and have taken steps to mitigate them where appropriate. These steps include close regular monitoring of performance, maintaining quality standard awards and ensuring all staff are appropriately qualified and trained.

This strategic report was approved by the trustees on 16th September 2026 and signed on its behalf by



Tim Edwards, Chair



Trustees' Report

Incorporating the Directors' Report

Year Ended 31st March 2026



Our Purpose

The objects for which the charity is established are to promote any charitable purposes for the benefit of the community within Staffordshire and the West Midlands, with particular reference to Stoke-on-Trent. These are the prevention or relief of poverty, the advancement of education, heritage and health, and citizenship or community development.

In furtherance of the purposes below, but not further or otherwise, the Charity may:

Promote and organise co-operation in the achievement of the objects and to that end to bring together Council representatives of the statutory authorities and voluntary organisations engaged in the furtherance of the above.

Assist any body or bodies financially or otherwise.

Obtain, collect and receive monies and funds by way of contributions, donations, affiliation fees, subscriptions, legacies, grants and other lawful methods, and accept or receive gifts of property of any description (whether subject to any special trusts or not).

Procure and provide information.

Procure to be written and print, publish, issue and circulate gratuitously or otherwise any reports or periodicals, books, pamphlets, leaflets or any other documents.

Arrange and provide for or join in arranging and providing for the holding of exhibitions, meetings, lectures and classes.

Promote, encourage or undertake experimental work.

Operate a museum and heritage centre.

Our Role

VAST is a Local Infrastructure Organisation that specialises in providing a range of support functions to the VCSE in Stoke-on-Trent and North Staffordshire enabling them to deliver high-quality services that benefit local communities.

VAST also promotes the VCSE sector and advocates on their behalf at a strategic level with a wide range of key stakeholders and encourages and facilitates partnerships and collaboration.

Public Benefit

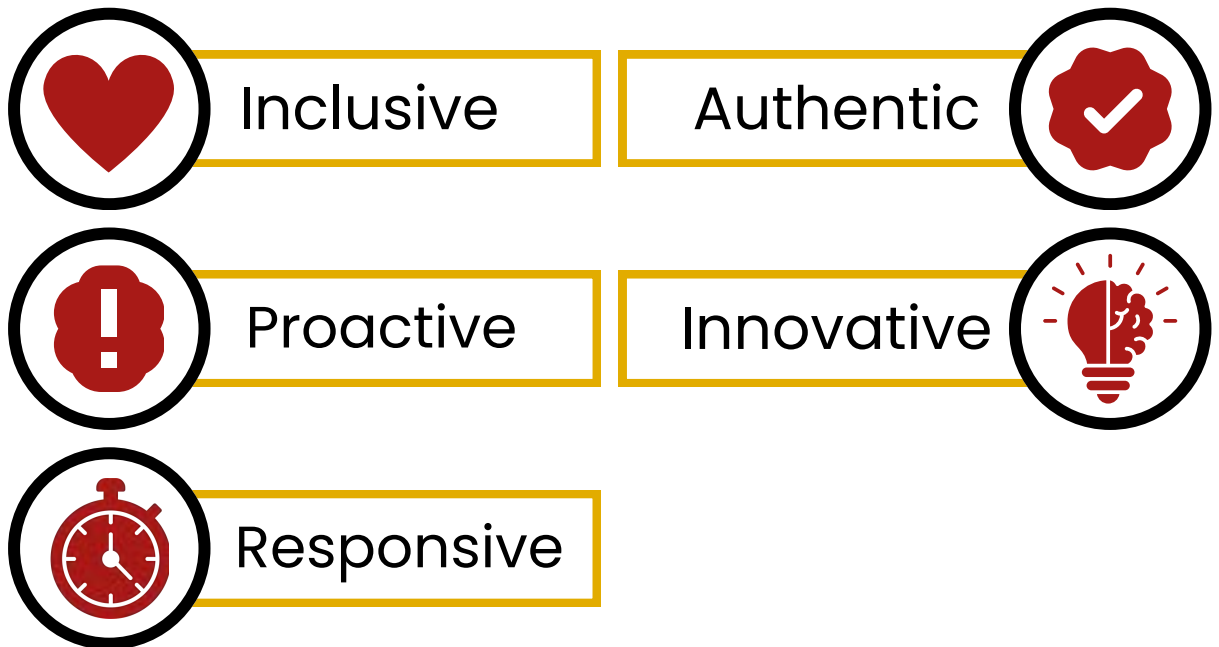
The Trustees confirm that they have referred to the Charity Commission guidance on Public Benefit when planning the activities of the charity.



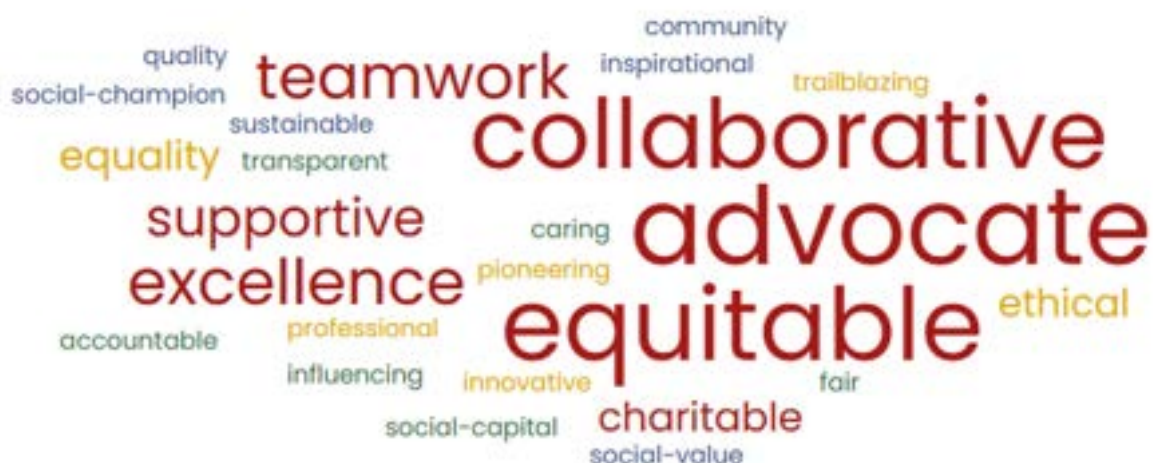
Mission Statement

To enable an inclusive, thriving
VCSE sector which strengthens
local communities.

Our Values



All delivered with integrity and underpinned by these behaviours...



Kate Lee, Chief Executive, NCVO

As the national membership body for charities and volunteering, NCVO is always keen to learn from organisations making a difference in their communities. I had the opportunity to visit VAST and see first-hand the important role it plays in supporting voluntary and community organisations across Stoke-on-Trent.

What I saw was a strong commitment to partnership, convening power and a deep understanding of community needs.

VAST brings together charities, local authorities, Integrated Care Boards, commissioners and other public service partners to tackle shared challenges and improve outcomes for local people. In doing so, it helps ensure the voice of the voluntary sector is heard in decision-making while supporting more collaborative and community-focused approaches to public services.

What particularly stood out during my visit was the trust VAST has built across sectors. The work being led through the City Alliance demonstrates the value of open dialogue, co-production and shared problem-solving, creating stronger relationships between the voluntary sector and public services and helping to shape services around local need.

I was also delighted to see VAST represented at NCVO's Small Charity Week APPG event in Parliament, bringing the experience and insight of Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire into national conversations. It was particularly encouraging to see VAST create opportunities for others by bringing along Alice Charity, a small local charity supporting families facing hardship.

It is clear to me that VAST is a valued partner, connector and advocate, and an important part of the local voluntary sector ecosystem. The organisation's leadership, insight and commitment to collaboration are helping to strengthen communities and create better outcomes for local people.



Leadership and Advocacy

Gathering the thoughts, needs, and experiences of the sector and local communities, bringing them to the attention of policy and decision makers; influencing conversations at a strategic level; representing and advocating for local voluntary sector organisations, diverse groups, and marginalised or hard to reach communities.



How we do it

Leadership

We **lead and facilitate groups, networks and forums** to gather our members' thoughts, needs, and experiences, and those of the communities they work in. Knowing what the problem is and what our members and their communities need is part of the solution.



We also **facilitate one-off workshops and engagement events**. Bringing people together across sectors to make sure VCSE organisations can be involved in shaping decisions and solutions at the earliest opportunity.

Advocacy

We **sit on and chair different boards**, and we attend all sorts of consultation events to advocate for our member organisations, for their communities, and for the sector as a whole. We share our members' thoughts and experiences to partners like The City Council, Public Health, Health Authorities, and Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce.

Our sector does amazing things all the time, and everyone should know about it!



Why this matters in Stoke now

With decision-making shifting through Local Government Reform and health system changes, there is a real risk that smaller, place-based organisations lose influence just as community need rises. VAST's advocacy ensures local insight informs policy and commissioning, keeping community voice central to decisions that affect Stoke-on-Trent. We will embed lived experience systematically across our leadership work, ensuring it directly informs strategic decision making, and service design.

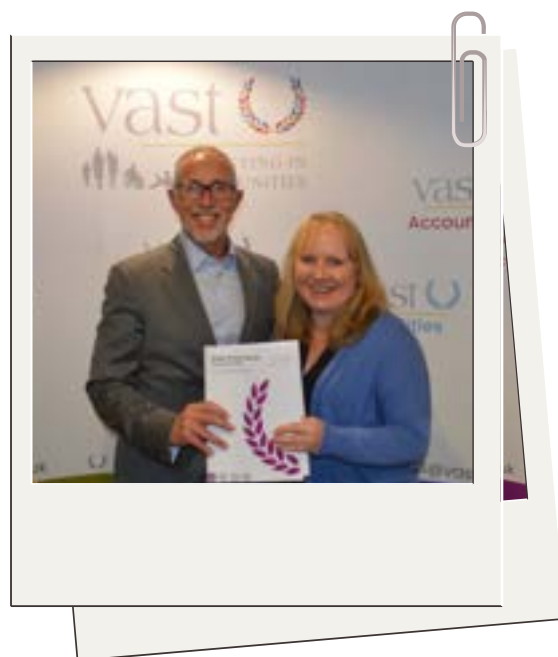


What we did

Throughout the year we strove to expand our knowledge, and to ensure that we can mobilise this insight to support advocacy for our sector.

In so doing, we were able to harness the knowledge and collective intelligence of 107 VCSE organisations to produce our **2025 State of the Sector report**, launching this with partners in December and following up with three webinars in early 2026.

The report covers 10 Talking Points featuring less-understood knowledge and insight about the VCSE sector locally. It aims to enhance the background knowledge of statutory colleagues and stakeholders, as well providing power to our members' elbows – in other words, effective self-advocacy in the face of often-adverse narratives that all too often frame the city as a 'charity desert.'



Following its release, Stoke's State of the Sector report 2025 been mentioned in Parliament and circulated to MPs, Ministers and national advocacy organisations such as NAVCA and NCVO.



As part of our continuing work with the VCSE City Alliance, we offered a series of collaborative workshops and action learning sets throughout the year, bringing together commissioning and procurement teams and other colleagues from the local authority, with VCSE colleagues from across the sector.

At our largest session, in May, we focused on equity and accessibility of process, but through conversation also identified a surprisingly strong degree of alignment between

often-distinct worlds, particularly in the shared will to build dialogue at earlier stages of the commissioning process.



Our conversations are underpinned by growing trust and mutual respect and have proven to be a springboard for further collaborative discussion around making contracts proportionate, and for an overhauled approach to market engagement which is both early and meaningful.

As engagement has grown, we have worked with Stoke-on-Trent City Council to ensure that our work reflects the qualities of early, ongoing and meaningful dialogue.

We act together to hold space for communities and VCSE organisations alike to influence new work – with a series of commissioned Wellbeing Pathways being first in line for a new approach, with engagement starting in November.

Meanwhile, the VCSE City Alliance agreement also allows us to hold a mirror up to our local systems, highlighting the fact that leadership lives at all levels – operational and strategic – and that colleagues at any level can be perfectly placed to light the way forward.



Case Study: Ageing Well in Whitfield

Embracing emergent trends in Health, and harnessing the connectivity of the Healthy Communities Alliance, VAST responded to a call to action from Stoke-on-Trent City Council in June 2025, working at pace to form a partnership response to the challenge of frailty in the north of the city, and ensuring that VCSE partners less visible to the rest of the system were included as equitably as possible.

Convening four stakeholder forums, initially alongside MPFT, Whitfield Primary Care Network, and Stoke-on-Trent City Council, we were able to highlight the unseen role of 22 VCSE organisations, nurture closer working relationships, and develop better mutual awareness between VCSE organisations of all sizes and our health system.

Prior to funding arriving, we have been a collaborative quartet, as peers and system leaders, to champion a deliberately relational, equitable approach to this work, bringing a community of practice with us.

This approach continues to enable VAST and sector colleagues to advocate for a softening of challenging power dynamics. We have also been able to safeguard the qualities that we know are important to our sector, while neighbourhood approaches continue to develop more widely, in the wake of the Government's Ten-Year Plan for the NHS.

"I see VAST as an important bridge between communities, VCSE organisations and statutory partners. It brings people together, helps create and maintain relationships, advocates for the VCSE sector, shares insight from across the community, and helps ensure that grassroots voices are not lost in strategic discussions."

Lucy Marquis – Transformation Clinical Lead for Integrated Care, MPFT

The year closed with the launch of the Government's long-awaited Neighbourhood Health Guidance. With elements of this having been anticipated by Ageing Well in Whitfield, we find ourselves in a strong position to advocate all the more strongly for the equitable role of VCSE organisations in this developing field.



Case Study: Ageing Well in Whitfield (AWW)

Lucy Marquis – Transformation Clinical Lead for Integrated Care, MPFT

Much of my work focuses on integrated care, healthy neighbourhoods and building partnerships across NHS, local authority, VCSE and community organisations. Personally, I'm passionate about partnership working and asset-based approaches. I strongly believe that healthier communities are built with people and communities rather than for them, and that no single organisation holds all of the answers. Much of my role is about helping create the conditions for people, organisations and communities to come together around shared goals. At MPFT, there is a growing commitment to prevention, neighbourhood working, reducing health inequalities and working alongside communities as partners. Ageing Well in Whitfield feels like an opportunity to put those principles into practice and test what is possible when we genuinely work differently.

What has been different about the role of the VCSE sector in Ageing Well in Whitfield?

For me, what has felt different is that the VCSE sector has been invited into the conversation from the beginning, rather than being brought in once the plans were already made. The project sponsors have also created some valuable time and space for relationships, listening and shared thinking, rather than expecting decisions to be made quickly or in isolation. There has been a genuine intention to listen to community knowledge, relationships and lived experience, and to recognise that communities already hold many of the answers. Whilst there have inevitably been challenges as we navigate more traditional systems and ways of working, it has felt much less like "procuring or delivering a service" and more like collectively shaping something together.

How do you think VAST can (or does) play its part in this?

I see VAST as an important bridge between communities, VCSE organisations and statutory partners. It brings people together, helps create and maintain relationships, advocates for the VCSE sector, shares insight from across the community, and helps ensure that grassroots voices are not lost in strategic discussions. VAST also has an important role in helping partners avoid duplication by creating opportunities to learn from one another and build on what is already working locally. Perhaps most importantly, it helps translate between the NHS, local authority, and VCSE sectors, which can sometimes view the world through different lenses, helping people find common ground and a shared purpose.



What are your hopes for the future of AWW?

My hope is that AWW becomes something that genuinely belongs to the community rather than being seen as just another project. I would love to see more people feeling connected, confident, and supported to live well for longer, while helping to reduce some of the unfair differences in health that we see across the city. More than anything, I hope it demonstrates what is possible when residents, communities, VCSE organisations and statutory services work alongside one another as equal partners. If we can show that this way of working makes a meaningful difference, I hope the learning from Whitfield will help shape how neighbourhood health develops more widely across Stoke-on-Trent in the future.

Liz Daly – Locality Manager, MHA

From your perspectives, what (if anything) has been different about the VCSE role you've been invited to play in shaping and delivering Ageing Well in Whitfield?

I honestly believe that this is the best project that I have been involved in during my 19 years in the sector. It has been really well orchestrated and there is plenty of options to share and learn from the wealth of experience in the area. VAST have brought together the right mix of local organisations and supported them to reach the intended target. We know that if we need any advice that Tom will always help or signpost us to someone who can. It's working so well.

How do you think VAST can (or does) play its part in this?

I feel that VAST taking the lead on this project, and their wide connections in the voluntary sector, has meant that this project has been seen through and not lost along the way as so many others have. VAST have brought together the relevant parties to deliver the project and created genuine community relations of support, advice and encouragement within the partners. I feel proud to be a part of this group. I don't remember a project coming together so well before.

What are your hopes for the future of AWW?

My hopes are that this is the first of many projects that VAST work alongside us with, they put the structures in place that are needed to make it all come together for the betterment of the community and city. I think VAST are the glue that's got this project to where it is now, and the fun is only just beginning.

"We first came to know Tom, when he was our lottery officer and he supported us so well through our partnership opportunity, so I was aware of how he would benefit the sector in this project. You have to have that reliable, trusted person, to lead on something like this and Tom had already proved this to us. People will get on board when they know the lead will see things through."



Networks and Forums

VAST facilitates a range of peer support networks for key VCSE sector roles. Our networks and forums create much-needed opportunities to share best practice, and exchange ideas, skills, and knowledge, together with collaboratively addressing challenges and focussing on key issues.

Thematic forums enable organisations to come together around shared areas of work or common agendas. They are often run in partnership with other key local organisations. Membership is often cross-sector, enabling our sector to be fully integrated into local thinking on important issues.

Find out more about our networks and forums [here](#).

VSCOG

The Voluntary Sector Chief Officers Group (VSCOG) is a network for VCSE sector leaders in Stoke-on-Trent.



Funding Network

This network is an opportunity to talk all things funding.



VCSE Finance Forum

Staff members and volunteers who are responsible for any VCSE finance functions are invited to join the VCSE Finance Forum.



Communications and Events Engagement Network (CEEN)

A space for those responsible for comms, marketing, and/or events.



Volunteer Managers Network

This network gives people working with volunteers an opportunity to share ideas, network, and provide mutual support.

Connections for Connectors

A session for anyone working in a social prescribing or community connecting type role.



SEND Forum

A networking opportunity for organisations providing support to children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities in Stoke-on-Trent.

Food Partnership Network

Stoke-on-Trent Food Partnership is a network of organisations who want to ensure that food is accessible and affordable across Stoke-on-Trent.



Hyper-Local Support Network

A peer networking opportunity for hyper-local organisations, like community hubs and Welcoming Spaces, working in and around Stoke-on-Trent to support people in their neighbourhoods.



Healthy Communities Forum

Hosted by the Healthy Communities Alliance, this forum enables cross-sector collaboration with health and care system partners. This forum covers Stoke-on-Trent and North Staffs as part of a series of thematic and county-wide location-based forums.



Members Mixer

A space for members to meet each other and VAST staff.



Case Study: Networks and Forums

As a Local Infrastructure Organisation, one of the key functions of VAST is our ability to hear, represent, and respond to the voice of our local VCSE sector.

VAST acts as Stoke-on-Trent's voluntary sector advocate when interacting with both local and national statutory services. It is important to remain well-informed about our member organisations' successes, concerns, needs, and opinions. We also act as sector leaders, sharing important news and information, and ensuring that our membership is well informed, with access to all of the guidance and resources available to them.

One pathway for us to maintain this leadership and advocacy work is through the number of networks and forums which VAST host, chair or participate in.

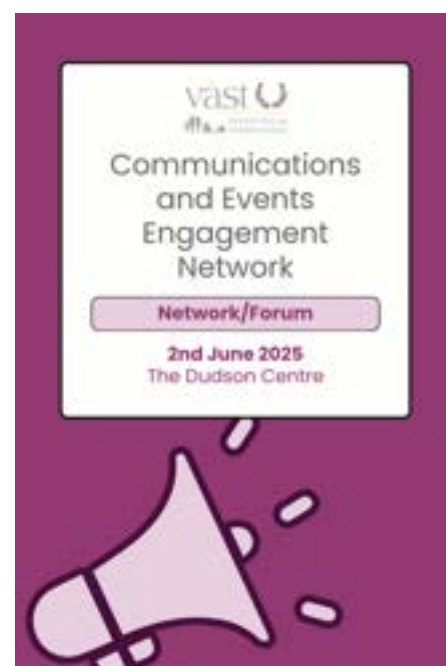
These networks have developed over time, with new networks being added or adapted to reach new audiences. 2025 saw the addition of new regular networks and the growth of existing ones, all aiming to meet needs established through conversations with member organisations.

Communications and Events Engagement Network (CEEN)

Although we originally planned two separate networks, many VCSE staff handle multiple roles, so a combined comms and events network is most efficient to meet sector needs. With these staff members often working "behind-the-scenes", and with the shifting nature of the comms and events landscape (e.g. the mass adoption of AI for comms work in 2025), this network - started in late 2024 - provides a much-needed space for peer networking, resource sharing, and open discussion.

2025 networking sessions have seen collaboration with the University of Staffordshire, with Lecturer in Business and Digital Marketing Management Craig

Holdcroft hosting two sessions around the use of AI in the VCSE sector, including a session at the University where attendees were invited to network with students looking for AI-focused work placements.



Hyper-Local Support Network

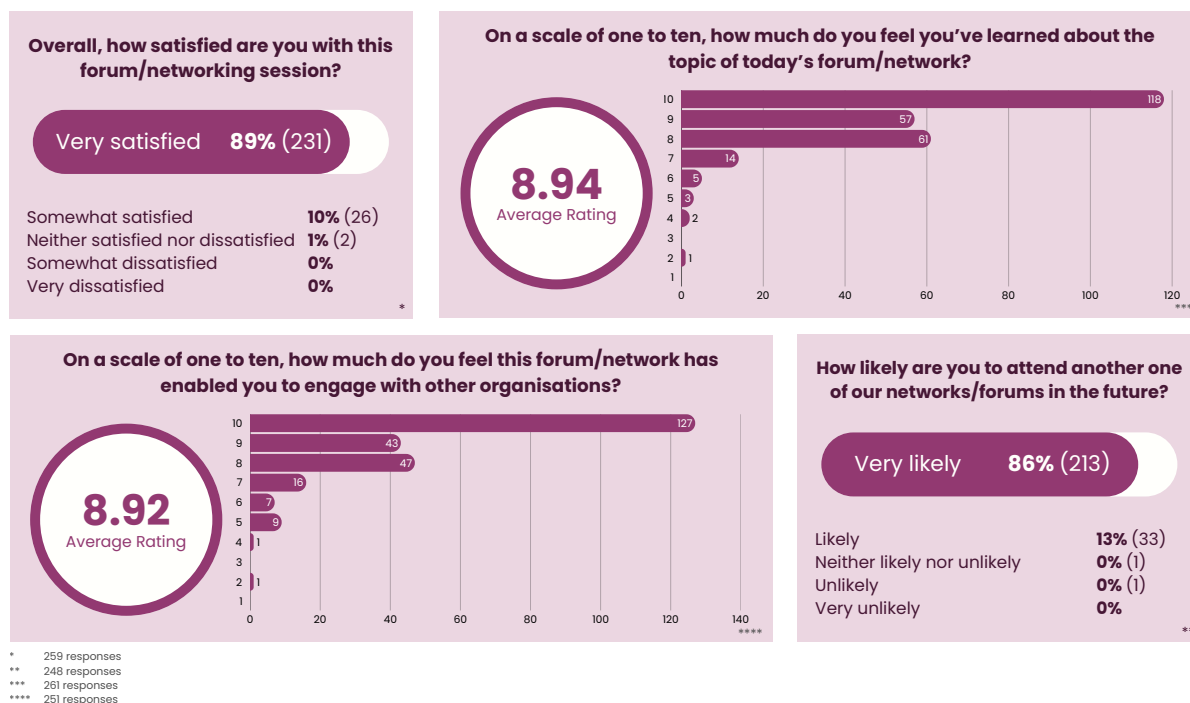
A significant number of VAST's member organisations are locality-focused organisations, serving one town, neighbourhood, or even street. These organisations provide essential support to local residents – from reducing isolation through social clubs, to supporting with paperwork and form-filling, to supporting with the provision of food, clothing, or other essential items.

This network provides a space to offer peer support, build partnerships with larger VCSE organisations and statutory services, request support, and have their voice heard. 2025 sessions have been a success, with attendees saying they appreciated the space for open, honest conversation, and the opportunity to meet other organisations offering similar services.

Funding Network

The Funding Network continues to draw on our existing partnerships and expertise within the organisation to provide Stoke-on-Trent's VCSE sector with information, guidance, and resources around funding. 2025 sessions have seen the introduction of a 'Funding Preparedness Checklist', and sessions hosted in partnership with large-scale funders like the National Lottery Community Fund.

Networks and Forums Feedback



"Laid back format – everybody's voice is heard. Great networking and information sharing opportunities."

"The staff at VAST make you so welcome and it's like talking to a group of friends."

"Comfortable to speak up and say what I felt. Plenty of time for people to talk and speak out."

"Connecting with other organisations to see what work they do and how to better work together."

Our Impact

Leadership and Advocacy



113

Connections for
Connectors
Members

250



Healthy Communities
Alliance Members
(North Forum)

107

State of the
Sector responses



85

City Alliance
Supporters



51

Networks and forums held



4

VSCOG
Sessions



"The City Alliance, contact with Local Council leaders and community events such as Burslem Communities Together have started to help us give a voice..."

Peter Mellish, Number 11

"I'm encouraged by the genuine progress already taking shape. Even in a climate where finances are stretched and community needs are both high and complex, there is a real and growing appetite for better ways of working, deeper collaboration, and meaningful co-production. Change on this scale never happens overnight. It takes time to turn a tanker. But I'm energised by the direction we're moving in, and hopeful about what sustained commitment can achieve. Step by step, we're building something with the potential to make a profound and lasting difference on this long journey."

Mandy Rollins, Disability Solutions

"I do want to commend to the debate the [State of the Sector] report that recently came out from VAST, the infrastructure organisation for the city that I represent, that brings together multiple different parts of our charity sector. The report points out that there are 396 registered charities operating in Stoke-on-Trent, and they are spending a collective amount of £144.7m. That is a phenomenal amount of investment into my city. But equally, the value of that investment is huge because that money is being spent on preventing much greater demands on other services, closing the gaps that we have in some communities to give them the life chances and opportunities that they wouldn't have."

Gareth Snell MP

"As third sector organisations, all working toward the same end and frequently supporting the same or similar vulnerable client groups, we are better able to influence policy and funding when we speak with one voice. VAST has a key role to play in facilitating this, especially through the Chief Officers' Group (VSCOG)."

Craig Browne, Citizens Advice Staffordshire North & Stoke-on-Trent



Partnerships and Collaboration

Creating accessible and inclusive opportunities and driving effective collaborative working through the building of networks and partnerships between local organisations and strategic partners.



How we do it

Partnerships

We have a number of partnerships at both strategic and operational level. These include:

Strategic partnerships with Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent Integrated Care System which enable active strategic engagement and provide a flow of information to and from the VCSE sector.

Operational project-based partnerships with many others including Support Staffordshire and Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce to enable shared resources and skills and information exchange.

Collaboration

We enable **collaboration both within the VCSE sector and across sectors** by enabling networks and forums for people to come together and build relationships and identify synergies and facilitating engagement events and sessions to co-design and co-produce solutions to address the needs of our communities.



Why this matters in Stoke now

Fragmentation across changing geographies and systems makes collaboration essential to avoid duplication and keep services viable. Partnerships extend scarce capacity, connect smaller groups to larger programmes, and help the sector speak with one voice.

Our Projects and Partnerships



What we did

Case Study: Jericho: Come As You Are

Jericho: Come as You Are was established in 2025 to support residents experiencing multiple disadvantage in Abbey Hulton and Bentilee, including homelessness, substance misuse, domestic abuse, mental health challenges and barriers to accessing services. Working in areas with some of the highest levels of deprivation in Stoke-on-Trent, Jericho operates an inclusive, trauma-informed "open door" model designed to reach people who may be reluctant to engage with traditional services.

Partnership working has been central to Jericho's development and delivery model. From its inception, Jericho collaborated with St Stephen's and St John's churches, using church venues to provide regular community triage and support sessions. The organisation also developed links with the Keys Project, a peer-support programme for people affected by drug and alcohol issues, while signposting individuals to specialist services including the Community Drug and Alcohol Service and the Rough Sleepers Team.

VAST's support placed a strong emphasis on helping Jericho strengthen and expand its partnership network. This included reviewing existing collaborations, addressing early partnership challenges, and exploring opportunities for future joint working. A particular focus was supporting relationships with church partners as Jericho considered becoming an independent charitable entity while maintaining positive working relationships with its founding organisations.

Jericho was also connected into wider community and statutory networks through introductions to stakeholders involved in Communities Together and the Pride in Place initiative. These links increased the organisation's visibility and ensured it was engaged with local developments affecting Bentilee and Abbey Hulton.

VAST provided direct, hands-on support tailored to the needs of a newly formed grassroots organisation. This included:

- Guidance on organisational development and governance.
- Support to identify target beneficiaries and develop a clear model of support.
- Advice on building sustainable partnerships and collaboration.
- Volunteer development and safeguarding guidance.
- Capacity-building support, including awareness of local funding and development opportunities.
- Ongoing mentoring and trusted advice around future organisational structures, including options such as becoming a CIO or CIC.
- Connections to wider networks, stakeholders and support programmes.



This approach was deliberately relationship-based and accessible, providing practical support in person rather than relying solely on written guidance.

As a result of this support, Jericho:

- Successfully became a constituted community group.
- Developed robust policies covering safeguarding, lone working and financial controls.
- Secured its first grant of £5,000 from the Food Partnership Fund to deliver food support, cooking sessions and emergency food provision.
- Increased confidence and organisational capacity to pursue future funding opportunities.
- Built stronger connections with community, voluntary sector and local authority partners.
- Positioned itself as a valuable contributor to collaborative work tackling health inequalities across Stoke-on-Trent.

The case highlights the importance of supporting grassroots organisations to navigate partnership development and organisational growth. Early concerns from church partners about Jericho becoming a separate organisation were successfully addressed through dialogue and relationship-building, demonstrating how collaboration can evolve while preserving shared goals. The experience also shows the value of identifying and supporting community-led organisations that are already addressing health inequalities and multiple disadvantage in local communities.



"Thank you for your input and knowledge of how things work, it is going to be invaluable for us, I'm excited that you're going to be part of Jericho's journey because I can see and feel your genuine passion for what we're doing, praise God we met you."

Craig, Jericho Founding member



Case Study: Totally Stoked Giveaway Day

In August 2025, over 100 charities, voluntary organisations, and community groups across Stoke-on-Trent and North Staffordshire benefitted from the enormous generosity of local ceramics production company, Steelite International.

Following the success of 2024's event, which saw 7,500 items distributed, this year's Totally Stoked Giveaway was over three times the size and spanned two days to share the mammoth donation with the local voluntary sector.

The brand-new pottery will help voluntary, community, and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations to deliver a range of services to benefit local communities and improve the lives of local people, with a huge variety of organisations taking part, including the Breastfeeding Network, who planned to use their new tableware for their National

Breastfeeding Week teddy bears picnic celebrations. The almost 29,000 items donated will furnish tables at lunch clubs, create craft projects, and help set the stage for community theatre companies, alongside many other uses.

Representatives from over 100 local not-for-profit organisations were able to see the items available and take what they wanted from the Dudson Centre courtyard. Visitors to the centre were supported by VAST staff and volunteers, including staff from Steelite, from arrival, from choosing what they needed to loading stock onto trolleys and into their waiting vehicles to take it away.

When the initial donation of around 11 tonnes of plates, bowls, mugs, cups, and more, worth approximately £100,000, began to run low on day one, Steelite were already arranging another delivery to arrive for day two of the giveaway!

The event, always very popular and extremely busy, was again a huge success and received a lot of positive feedback from the local voluntary organisations who benefitted from the donation.



"Everything worked fantastically, huge thanks to the volunteers doing the hard labour of shifting ware and trollies."

Re-form Heritage

The VAST-Steelite collaboration that brings the hugely popular initiative to life has run over a number of years and is always well received by VAST's membership. In 2024, 47 voluntary sector organisations benefitted from the donation. This year's event matched that in less than half a day!

It's not just VAST's work that makes events like this come together, it takes weeks of planning, cross-sector collaboration, and community spirit. Local retailers and organisations received a certificate of thanks for their support in loaning trolleys, baskets, and even wheelbarrows to get stock to and from the courtyard.

While all of this was going on, Affordable Food Stoke popped in to pick up some free stock for their



community events, before they even got their share of the Steelite haul, they asked for some help in donating several crates of bread, which was swiftly distributed – and that's what Totally Stoked is all about:

communities giving together!

Natalie Hawkins, Support and Volunteering Projects Manager said: *"We knew that the small trolleys and sack trucks we'd normally use weren't going to do the job, but we also knew that we could count on our neighbours and community for support. Thank you to Pak Foods, B&Q, Emmaus North Staffs, and Paula at Birches Head Get Growing. And thank you to Rhianna and Adele for lending a hand this morning when they got here early!"*

Faye Angus, Communications and Content Manager said: *"We would like to say a heartfelt 'thank you' to Steelite for such a generous donation! £100,000 worth of stock will make an enormous difference to local voluntary and community groups across the city, and for decades to come. We were also thrilled to have Matt from BBC Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent join us too – their short film and radio piece was such a great opportunity to reach more community groups, meaning that they could also benefit. And ultimately, that's what we want to do; support the incredible VCSE sector in and around Stoke-on-Trent, in absolutely any way we can!"*



Case Study: Totally Stoked Conference 2026

Following the success of last year's Totally Stoked Conference, 2026's event focused on inclusion, connection, and community cohesion.

The conference brought together representatives from the local VCSE sector, from volunteers to CEOs, and statutory partners, to discuss allyship, inclusion, and accessibility through interactive workshops, lived experience storytelling, and action focused sessions, building the first steps of a **Charter For Change**.



The Workshops

Alongside two keynote speakers, participants were invited to take part in two of six workshops:



Designing Inclusive Spaces and Events

The beginnings of a Stoke-on-Trent-wide inclusivity pledge for community events and public engagement.



Inclusive Recruitment and Representation:

Identifying minimum standards for inclusive recruitment and representation in VCSE organisations in Stoke-on-Trent.



Allyship in the VCSE Sector

Creating a Stoke-on-Trent Allyship Manifesto - a set of core responsibilities and appropriate behaviours for allies.



Inclusive Communications

Identifying challenges to develop the 'golden rules' for a set of inclusive communication guidelines for VCSE organisations.



Equity in Service Delivery

Developing the elements that are needed for a shared equity checklist for designing, delivering, and evaluating services.



Responding to Hate

Understanding how to respond to incidents of hate, to propose a set of protocols for appropriate response and community support.

The Charter for Change

The day's workshops allowed us to begin to shape the inclusive and cohesive future of Stoke-on-Trent with a co-developed cohesion manifesto – a Charter for Change.

Participants in each workshop were incited to share their responses to a key question, reflecting their lived experience, expertise, ideas, and the learning gained from the workshop they attended. The morning's workshops looked at ways to embed inclusion into everyday organisational practices, helping to shape leadership, spaces, and connections; the afternoon's workshops focused on how we can communicate, deliver services, and respond to challenges, all while ensuring that equity and compassion guide every interaction.

Responses were collected live via Mentimeter in each session and shared in the closing statement of the event.

Planning

Planning and organising the Totally Stoked Conferences is a full-team effort; from workshop coordination, to communications, packing gift bags, and on-the-day support; the whole VAST team plays an active and important role.

Workshop themes highlight sector strengths (e.g. Expert Citizens' Andy Meakin's workshop around inclusive service delivery highlighted how they prioritise, support, and utilise lived experience) and provide space for learning around potential gaps, as keynote speaker Sandra Meadows highlighted, belonging isn't just having somebody in the room; allyship needs to be an active, continued, and growing commitment.

VAST is well placed to host large-scale, central networking events for the sector, and we are pleased to be able to draw on our existing sector relationships, for speakers, sponsors, workshop hosts, and attendees, to build a cohesive, inspiring, and well-connected event.

On the day

The day of the conference was a huge success, with almost 200 attendees enjoying a day of learning, networking, and developing the local sector.

We have been working on the Charter for Change and look forward to launching this to kick off our local infrastructure awareness communications campaign later in 2026.



Our Impact

Partnerships and Collaboration



"Always willing to help the Friends of Hanley Park, [VAST] assistance has been invaluable."

Ivan Hodgkinson, Friends of Hanley Park

"It was incredibly efficient and clearly organised so well! The volunteers at VAST are always so friendly and lovely, TG, Alice and Iris helped us out today and deserve a shout out!"

Adele, Kinetic Heights CIC

"The Shirley David YPL Foundation is grateful for the immense support we have received from VAST so far. The free hour-long session I had with Tunji from the Community Development team helped to put perspective to some of the visions we have and gave us practical know-hows on the way things work in this environment. I also learnt from our interactions that relationships matter a lot, and in addition to providing good advice, I was actually connected to a few other organisations that we can partner with. We have also received preliminary support with registering our organisation and we are about to begin the process with the support and guidance of VAST. It's a profound work the team at VAST are doing, and we, the Shirley David YPL Foundation appreciate it very much."

Aguebor, Shirley David

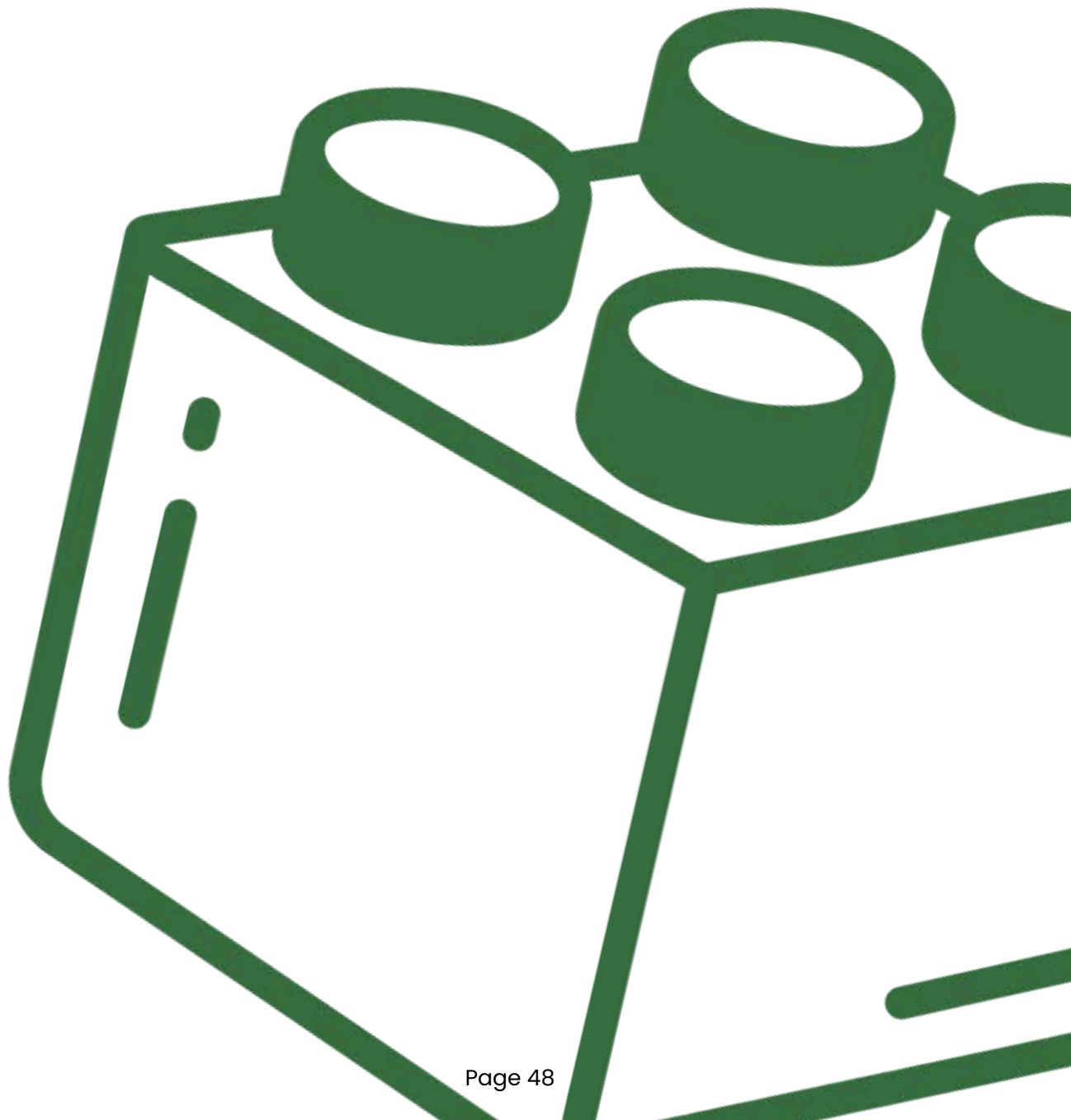
"VAST has played an important role in helping Rehoboth Community Project build stronger connections across Stoke-on-Trent. Through their support, we have been able to develop valuable relationships with other organisations, strengthen partnerships and connect with people who share our commitment to supporting the local community."

Ash Leach, project Manager, Rehoboth Community Project



Capacity Building

Providing practical support, guidance, information, advice, training, and essential business services to VCSE groups to enable them to become more resilient and efficient, to achieve their goals, improve lives and help communities to thrive.



How we do it

Capacity building is a huge part of our work; to ensure that our members and their communities are as resilient and empowered as possible, it is important that we help them build their skills, knowledge, and networks.



One-to-One Support

Our support team provide free one-on-one support to our member organisations, with tailored support available from the beginning of their organisation or project. We have supported organisations with funding, governance, organisation start-up, volunteering and more.

Information and Resources

Through our regular newsletters, targeted support, and resources available on the VAST Vault, we ensure that our member organisations have ongoing access to important information, resources and learning.

Example Guides and Resources from the VAST Vault

What is a Trustee Guide, Advertising Trustee Roles Guide, Sustainability Guides, Inclusive Volunteering, and Working with Young Volunteers Guides.

Training

VAST provides a full training programme, covering a range of topics - from essential governance, to volunteer management, and event planning. We also work with expert organisations to provide training around themes like Hate Crime Awareness, Business Continuity, and Health Literacy.



Why this matters in Stoke now

Many organisations report rising demand, tougher fundraising, and low reserves; early-stage groups need rapid upskilling in governance, finance, and commissioning to stay solvent and scale impact safely.



What we did

Case Study: Supporting Community Success through the Let's Celebrate Stoke 100 Grants

To mark Stoke-on-Trent's centenary in 2025, the Let's Celebrate Stoke 100 grants were launched to support community-led events and activities. At VAST, we recognised that many local organisations would be eager to apply but might need support to submit strong applications. By delivering targeted guidance and follow-up support, we helped seven organisations secure a total of £20,237 in funding, demonstrating the power of early engagement and tailored assistance.

We anticipated a high level of interest in the grant programme from voluntary and community groups. However, many organisations have limited experience in writing competitive funding applications. Without support, they risked missing out on this unique opportunity to celebrate their communities and contribute to the city's centenary legacy.

To address this, we took the following steps:

- Hosted an online information session attended by 12 organisations, where we explained the grant criteria, shared examples of eligible projects, and offered tips on writing compelling applications.
- Provided tailored follow-up support including reviewing draft applications and offering constructive feedback to improve clarity and alignment with the fund's goals.
- Extended support beyond the session assisting additional organisations who had not attended the webinar but sought help with their applications.

"That was a really useful run through of the requirements. Thank you"



Funded projects included:

- A community event and celebration mosaic
- An art installation
- A textile project
- A folk day event
- Interactive community workshops
- A street party
- A football tournament and social inclusion event

Feedback from participants indicated that the support helped them gain clarity about their projects and improved their confidence in applying for funding. These events are expected to foster community pride, encourage participation, and leave a lasting legacy for future generations. Building on this success, we plan to offer additional funding focused sessions for grants in the future.



Case Study: Training Programme

Since launching the training programme in 2023, we have continued to grow and improve, adding new sessions every year to meet sector demand, and to address gaps we have identified through our other capacity building work.

In 2025, we added new sessions to cover topics which had been requested in the feedback of previous training sessions, including:

- **Creating a Funding Strategy.**
- **Having Difficult Conversations.**

We also sought expertise from other organisations to deliver partner training:

- Training on **Procurement and Commissioning** and **Asset Transfers**, delivered in partnership with Stoke-on-Trent City Council.
- **Hate Crime Awareness Training**, delivered by Uniting Staffordshire Against Hate.
- **dDeaf Awareness Training**, delivered by dDeaflinks.
- **Dementia Awareness Training**, delivered by the Beth Johnson Foundation.

New sessions were also added based on frequent requests and discussion topics from our one-to-one support sessions, from discussions at our regular networks and forums, and from the sector as a whole.

Sessions were rescheduled or repeated as requested by our membership to ensure need was being met – for example, as 2025 was Stoke-on-Trent's Centenary year, there was an increase in the number of organisations looking to deliver community events as part of the celebration. To support this, we ran two additional sessions of our **Planning a Community Event** training.



"Interactive all the way through. Allowed to give opinions. Everyone had open questions/nice to get other people's views."

"[Presenter] is a great trainer, she delivered a large amount in an accessible way."

"The great knowledge and connections of the trainers, you could ask them anything and they were great."

"I loved that the training was easy to understand and we had time to practice. Well paced, with great presenters."

Overall, how satisfied are you with the training/workshop?

Very satisfied **95% (173)**

Somewhat satisfied **5% (10)**
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied **0%**
Somewhat dissatisfied **0%**
Very dissatisfied **0%**

*

How likely are you to attend another one of our training sessions in the future?

Very likely **92% (159)**

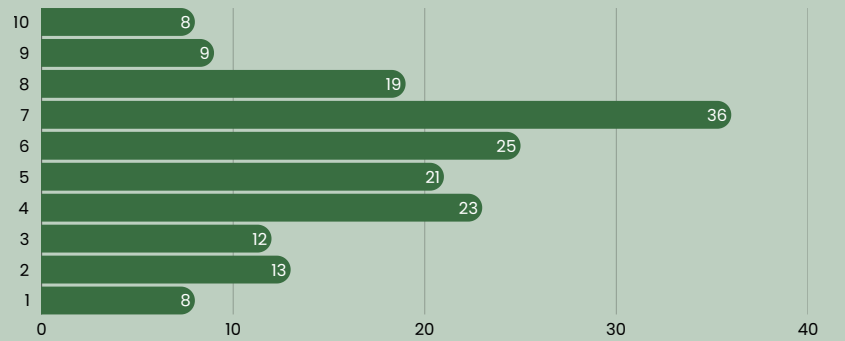
Likely **8% (14)**
Neither likely nor unlikely **0%**
Unlikely **0%**
Very unlikely **0% (1)**

**

On a scale of one to ten, how would you rate your knowledge of this topic before attending the training session/workshop?

5.64

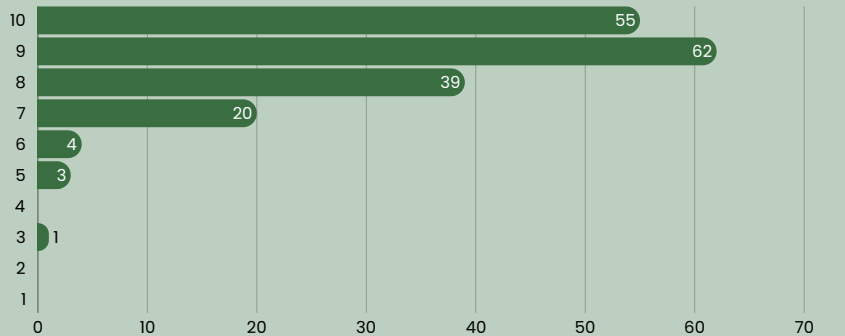
Average Rating



On a scale of one to ten, how would you rate your knowledge of this topic after attending the training session/workshop?

8.71

Average Rating



* 183 responses
** 173 responses
*** 174 responses
**** 184 responses

Some responses reported a lower level of knowledge when leaving the session for positive reasons - for example:
"The session did what it should - now need to ask more questions - so the scores above are not negative to VAST"
"Raised questions and awareness in a positive way that challenged what I thought I understood"

"The training was straight forward and easy to understand. It also helped me to feel more confident."

"Very informative and the trainers were approachable and made the session enjoyable."

"Nice and friendly people, accessible and super informative. Good engaging activities and discussions."

"Feels like a huge topic was diluted into a very digestible, understandable, and conversation-starting topic and we feel really informed!"

"I enjoyed the open space to chat and share experiences etc. - feel like it helped me put what was spoken about into a real life situation"

Capacity Building



"I wouldn't have been able to do this [funding] application without Kelly and VAST. I've always been scared of applying for funding, but this has been a massive turning point. Now, we feel empowered to apply for other funding opportunities."

Janet Stanway, Pink Sisters and Misters

"Kelly's support has been invaluable to us at Jericho, Kelly has been hands on with us and guiding us on every step of our journey. Keeping us up to date with any changes to the law and safeguarding. She's always on hand for any questions or advice on anything. Nothing is too much trouble for her."

Louise Davies From Jericho Come As You Are CIC

I was totally blown away by the level of support that is available at VAST. Despite working with them previously, I was completely unaware of the open availability of this service. Indeed, had the council planner not referred VAST, I would still be unaware to this day. My meeting with Kelly has reinforced my passion, and helped me to believe that my business idea actually could be achievable; regardless of the time and funding it may require.

VCSE Orgainsation Founder



Volunteering

Tailored volunteering support to voluntary sector groups including training, guidance, and best practice; encouraging and nurturing high-quality, accessible, and inclusive volunteering opportunities; and a personalised volunteer matching service.



How we do it

At VAST we're passionate about Volunteering. We know that volunteering is a great way to improve your health and wellbeing whilst making a huge difference in your local community. Our volunteer service benefits both volunteers and the organisations they volunteer with.



Volunteer Brokerage

Supporting organisations to find the volunteers they need, and volunteers to find the role that's right for them.

Inclusive Volunteering

Supporting those who may need a little extra support to get into volunteering, and helping organisations ensure they're prepared to work with them.

CSR

Creating connections between private companies/corporate businesses and the VCSE sector for Corporate Social Responsibility.

Volunteer Managers Network

Giving people working with volunteers in and around Stoke-on-Trent an opportunity to share ideas, network, and provide mutual support.

Volunteer Voices Forum

Giving volunteers in and around Stoke-on-Trent an opportunity to share ideas, network and provide insight into the volunteering landscape locally.

Training

Providing in-depth training and support around volunteer management.

Volunteer Quality Standards

A framework through which organisations can work towards accreditation based on their volunteering policies and procedures, and the way they work with new and existing volunteers.

Our 'Vision for Volunteering'

"Our vision for volunteering is to create a community where everyone comes together to make a positive impact. We believe that together we can create meaningful connections, foster empathy, and create a real sense of unity.

Putting the 'unity' in community, our mission is to inspire others to join in and help make the world a better place for all."

We have spent extensive time researching, engaging and developing a local Stoke-on-Trent Vision for Volunteering. We have consulted with our Volunteer Managers Network and Volunteer Voices Forum and launched this Vision during Volunteers Week 2025.

Stoke-on-Trent Vision For Volunteering

The Vision has four key themes:

Investing in Volunteers: Investing in Volunteers should take a strengths-based approach to ensure volunteers feel **valued, rewarded, and recognised** ultimately improving **retention** rates and community impact.

Community Connections: Volunteering should be all about positive community connections. Volunteers need the opportunity to discuss their **ideas, network** with other people and **share** issues to develop solutions.

Experimentation and Innovation: Communities should feel empowered to develop their own innovative solutions to engaging and supporting volunteers through strong **partnerships, mentoring** schemes and **sharing** learning.

Encouraging Individuality: Volunteers should be encouraged to express their individuality and feel valued for their unique contributions. This can be done through encouraging higher levels of **accessibility**, looking at **inclusion** through a holistic approach and **reducing barriers**.

Stoke-on-Trent
Vision for
Volunteering



Why this matters in Stoke now

Volunteering plays a critical role in sustaining local services at a time when many organisations face rising demand, limited reserves, and widening workforce pressures. With 73% of VCSE organisations reporting increases in service demand and around 75% holding fewer than six months of reserves, volunteers are often the difference between a service continuing or closing. Yet many groups struggle to recruit and retain volunteers or to offer inclusive, well-supported opportunities that meet the needs of Stoke-on-Trent's increasingly diverse population.

The city's changing demographics — including a rise in communities experiencing social or economic marginalisation — also highlight the need for equitable, culturally competent volunteering pathways that build cohesion and strengthen community resilience.

Volunteering provides important employability benefits, helping individuals build skills, confidence and work readiness if this is what they want and need.

Volunteering brings people from different backgrounds together, helping to build social connections, reduce prejudice and strengthen cohesion.



What we did

Case Study: Nurturing Nahom – A Volunteers Journey

Nahom came to VAST looking for a volunteering opportunity. Emma, Project Officer, chatted with him to find out a little bit about Nahom and his hobbies. It was important to establish why Nahom wanted to volunteer too! He wanted to develop his English and was interested in filling some of his spare time, making new friends and becoming more involved in his local community.

Through VAST's volunteer brokerage service, Emma referred Nahom to the Bloomin' Longton project. Nahom began volunteering with the group in March 2026, firstly attending a Community Action Session.

Bloomin' Longton is a community project that brings people together to improve local green spaces while encouraging participation, wellbeing, and community involvement. Through gardening and growing activities, volunteers help make the town centre more attractive for residents and visitors alike.



Emma recognised that Bloomin' Longton would be a positive opportunity for Nahom, providing both practical volunteering experience and the chance to become part of a welcoming local group. Following the referral, Nahom quickly became a regular volunteer, attending weekly sessions and getting involved in all aspects of the project.

Sheila Cowell, Chairman of Longton Community Partnership and Project Manager of Bloomin' Longton said that Nahom settled into the role very quickly. In an update to Emma, she described him as *"a pleasant and well-presented new volunteer who very quickly settled into a weekly volunteering session."*

She also highlighted his commitment to the project, noting that he had *"consistently arrived on time, shown a genuine willingness to work as part of a team, and also to support other volunteers and myself as the Project Manager."*

Nahom has become a valued member of the team, helping to maintain working spaces, tools, and equipment, while also developing new skills and learning from those around him. The feedback from Bloomin' Longton reflects not only his dedication but also the positive relationships he has built with fellow volunteers.

For Emma, supporting people into meaningful volunteering opportunities is about more than simply making a referral. It is about helping individuals find places where they can contribute, develop confidence, and feel connected to their community.



Nahom's experience with Bloomin' Longton demonstrates the impact that finding the right opportunity can have for both the volunteer and the organisation. Reflecting on Nahom's contribution, Sheila concluded, *"Nahom has been a real blessing to our team"* and described him as *"a great contributor and effective reliable volunteer."*

Through Emma's support and Nahom's commitment, this partnership has been a positive outcome for everyone involved. Nahom has found a place where he can make a meaningful contribution, and Bloomin' Longton has gained a dedicated and valued volunteer. Nahom's story demonstrates how VAST's volunteer brokerage service can connect individuals with local organisations, helping community groups recruit dedicated volunteers while creating meaningful opportunities for people to become involved in their local area.

Case Study: Ebony's Volunteer Journey

At the end of November 2025, Ebony, supported by her mum Shelley, contacted VAST to enquire about volunteering opportunities. Ebony is a 20-year-old young woman with a learning disability who is quiet, kind, and independent, although she benefits from some support with certain daily tasks. She enjoys routine and familiarity and was looking for a volunteering role on Thursdays or Fridays, as she attended Cauldon College from Monday to Wednesday.

During her time at college, Ebony successfully completed a supported internship in a bistro, which helped her develop valuable workplace skills and sparked her interest in continuing to learn and contribute to her local community through volunteering.

Ebony, Shelley, and her aunt Steph met with Emma, Project Support Officer, at The Dudson Café to discuss potential opportunities. During the meeting, it became clear that structured activities, routine, and repetitive tasks would help Ebony thrive in a volunteering role.

Emma was immediately struck by Ebony's confidence, determination, and warm personality, as well as the fantastic support network surrounding her.

Ebony was keen to continue building her confidence, developing her skills, and increasing her independence. Shelley, who works in a school, has been a constant source of encouragement and support, helping Ebony to achieve her goals and embrace new opportunities.



Reflecting on their first meeting, Emma said:

"It's so inspiring to meet such a wonderful family who want the very best for Ebony and encourage her in every aspect of life. We immediately connected and had such a positive and constructive conversation about her volunteering journey and future aspirations."

After exploring several volunteering options and considering factors such as accessibility, transport, and location, Emma suggested Temple Street Methodist Church. The church runs a thriving lunch club on Thursday afternoons and regularly welcomes volunteers. Known for its inclusive and supportive environment, Temple Street was an ideal placement to consider. The opportunity proved to be an excellent match for Ebony. She was familiar with the area, transport links were readily available, and the timing fit perfectly with her existing commitments.

Later that same day, Emma submitted a referral to Temple Street and shared Ebony's details with Glenn Parkes and the team. Within a few weeks, Glenn Parkes, Church and Community Team Leader at Temple Street Methodist Church, contacted Emma with a positive update:

"I thought you'd like to know that Ebony has been in today with her mum, Shelley, and her aunt, Steph. Rachel showed them around to give them a feel for what we do on a Thursday morning. The Community Lounge was extremely busy today. In fact, one of our volunteers even roped Shelley in to help put the Christmas decorations back into the church loft! I think Ebony enjoyed it and, once her college timetable is finalised, hopefully she can join us on a Thursday morning."

Emma was delighted to receive such encouraging feedback. During a follow-up conversation, Ebony shared that she had enjoyed the visit and felt positive about the opportunity. Shelley also spoke warmly about the welcome they had received and said they would be delighted for Ebony to become a regular volunteer.

Looking ahead, Ebony has many ambitions and aspirations. Through volunteering, she hopes to further develop her independence, gain new experiences, and make a meaningful contribution to her local community. Her journey so far has demonstrated her determination, enthusiasm, and willingness to embrace new opportunities.



North Staffs Pensioners' Convention – An Organisation's Story

Cliff Hathaway has been a valued part of the North Staffs Pensioners' Convention (NSPC) for many years and plays a vital role in its day-to-day operations. Supported by a dedicated team of volunteers, trustees and its chairman, Cliff is passionate about ensuring the organisation continues to support older people across Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire.

NSPC has worked closely with VAST and its support team for some time. As the organisation evolved, Cliff recognised the need to bring in new volunteers but was unsure which roles would best support the charity's growing activities.

Kelly Smith, Capacity Building Lead at VAST, mentioned Cliff's volunteering needs to Emma, Project Officer. The two arranged to meet Cliff in the Dudson Café to explore the organisation's requirements and discuss the options available. Through this conversation, it became clear that NSPC would benefit from recruiting volunteers in three key areas:

- Social media volunteer.
- Fundraising volunteer.
- Advisory volunteer.

The Advisory Volunteer role was particularly significant as it supports the Potteries Silver project, which provides information and advice about benefits and entitlements for older people. The role also offers free training through Citizens Advice, giving volunteers the opportunity to develop valuable knowledge and skills while making a meaningful difference within their community.

Emma worked closely with Cliff to create detailed role descriptions for each position, ensuring they accurately reflected NSPC's needs and the opportunities available to volunteers. Once the roles were agreed, they were promoted through the VAST website and volunteer network. Within a short period, the VAST Volunteering Team referred several potential volunteers to NSPC. Cliff met with applicants, discussed the available opportunities and identified individuals whose skills and interests aligned with the organisation's goals.

Over the following months, all three volunteer vacancies were successfully filled. The new recruits have quickly become a valuable addition to the organisation, helping to strengthen its capacity and expand its reach.



Emma received an email update from Cliff, and the news was incredibly encouraging. She shared the update with the wider team, who were delighted to see the positive impact their support had made.

Cliff said *"Both volunteers have had an overview training meeting with our lead from Citizens Advice and are both happy to undergo further training for our Potteries Silver project and will attend a public PCU event next week. Ali has set up an eBay account and is also selling books from our store cupboard to help. Tamsin also has recruited a retired CA staff member, so we are going from strength to strength. Onwards and upwards thanks to you and your perceptive screening of applicants."*

The update highlighted not only the success of the recruitment process but also the enthusiasm and initiative shown by the new volunteers. Their contributions are already helping NSPC expand its activities and build greater resilience for the future.

Emma reflected on the experience: *"It's so satisfying knowing you have been able to support an organisation to find volunteers to assist with the smooth running of their charity, especially one as committed as The North Staffs Pensioners' Convention. They do so much for the pensioners of Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire."*

NSPC also achieved the Bronze VAST Volunteer Quality Standard Award, recognising its commitment to supporting volunteers and maintaining effective volunteering practices.

This partnership demonstrates how successful volunteer recruitment helps local organisations build capacity, attract the right people and continue delivering vital community services.



our impact

Volunteering



"It was an amazing forum filled with idea sharing and self-opinion which was good for me"

Volunteer Voices Forum member

"Thank you for bringing people together in a welcoming space, to explore issues that connect us and that can help us to inform and shape the work that we are all doing."

Volunteer Managers Network member

"It was a great opportunity for in-depth conversations as well as group conversation, with people linked into wider forums that influence planning and decisions in Stoke on Trent. It has been a really great opportunity to be involved in shaping the Volunteer Standards."

Volunteer managers Network member

"Loved seeing where everyone else is from and meeting others and seeing the future goals for volunteers with the vision."

Volunteer Voices Forum member



Governance

Organisation Structure

VAST is governed by a Board of no less than three Trustees who are appointed by the Board based upon a skills matrix to ensure a range of skills and representation from all communities. This is achieved in one of three ways:

1 Any voluntary organisation or community group either based in or operating in Staffordshire is eligible for voting membership, on becoming voting members they may nominate trustees.

2 Trustees try to ensure an ongoing and appropriate skills and diversity balance, where any gaps are noted they seek to appoint appropriately through an application process.

3 Occasionally the Trustees may co-opt individuals with relevant skills to strengthen the Board. All of these appointments are then ratified by members at the AGM.

The day-to-day management and running of the charity has been delegated to the Chief Executive, supported by the senior management team via a written scheme of delegation, which is reviewed and updated annually.

The Board meets quarterly and also has finance and general purpose, board recruitment and succession planning, and remuneration sub-committees. Task and finish working groups are set up and meet as required to deal with specific issues.

Governing Document

VAST is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association, last amended in 2022.

Trustee Induction and Training

All trustees receive an induction into VAST and receive a handbook. Training is provided for all trustees as required, and all best practice guidance is reviewed and discussed at Board meetings regularly.



Sub-committee Membership

Finance and General Purpose Committee	John Farrar, Simon Harris, Tim Edwards, Joe Varley-Martin, Neil Dawson, Mike Stubbs
Recruitment and Succession Planning Committee	Tim Edwards, Joe Varley-Martin, Cathy Jones, Pooja Batta, John Farrar, Robert Craddock
Remuneration Committee	Neil Dawson, John Farrar, Robert Craddock

Statement of Trustees Roles and Responsibilities

The Trustees (who are also Directors of VAST for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and regulations.

Company law requires trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year. Under that law, trustees have elected to prepare the financial statements in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice (United Kingdom Accounting Standards and applicable law).

Under company law trustees must not approve the financial statements unless they are satisfied that they give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charitable company for the year.

In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- Select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently.
- Observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP.
- Prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in operation.
- Make judgements and accounting estimates that are reasonable and prudent.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the charitable company's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006.

They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and, hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.



Statement of Disclosure of Information to Auditors

In so far as the trustees are aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the charitable company's auditor is unaware; and the trustees have taken all steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information, and to establish that the auditor is aware of that information.

Pay Policy for Senior Staff

The Trustees consider that the Board of Trustees and senior management team comprise the key management personnel of the charity. All trustees give their time freely and no trustee received remuneration for their services in the year. Details of any related party transactions are disclosed in note 12 and 23 to the accounts.

The pay scales for senior staff are set by the Trustees and are benchmarked against other similar size organisations operating in the area. Pay of individual members of the management team are recommended by the Remuneration Committee.

Related Parties, Partnership Working and Networks

The Charity continues to support and participate in several key and strategic partnerships representing the interests of the VCSE.

VAST's annual report and financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2026 have been prepared by the trustees in accordance with the Charities Act 2011.

The trustees have adopted the provisions of the Statement of Recommended Practice FRS102 in preparing the annual report and financial statements of the charity.

Auditors

BK Plus Audit Limited will be reappointed in accordance with Chapter 2 of Part 16 of the Companies Act 2006.

This trustees report was approved by the board on 16th September 2026 and signed on their behalf by:



Tim Edwards
Chair



INDEPENDENT AUDITORS REPORT TO THE MEMBERS AND TRUSTEES OF VAST SERVICES (1920) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2026 (REGISTRATION NO:1049663)

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of VAST Services (1920) for the year ended 31 March 2026 which comprise the Statement of Financial Activities (including the income and expenditure account), Balance Sheet, Statement of Cash Flows and Notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland" (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charitable company's affairs as at 31 March 2026 and of the charitable company's incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 and the Charities Act 2011.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report.

We are independent of the charity in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the charity's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the trustees with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Other information

The trustees are responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the information included in the Trustee's Report other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with our audit of the financial statements, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated.

If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether there is a material misstatement in the financial statements or a material misstatement of the other information. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinions on other matters prescribed by Companies Act 2006

In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the information given in the Trustees' Report, which includes the directors' report and the strategic report, for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the Trustees' Report, which includes the directors' report and the strategic report has been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the charitable company and their environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the strategic report or the directors' report included within the Trustees' report.

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters where the Companies Act 2006 and the Charities Act 2011 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- adequate and proper accounting records have not been kept by the charitable company, or,
- the charitable company financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or,
- certain disclosures of trustees' remuneration specified by law are not made; or,
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit; or,
- the trustees were not entitled to prepare the financial statements in accordance with the small companies regime.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

We have been appointed as auditor under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 and report in accordance with the Act and relevant regulations made or having effect thereunder.

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion.

Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs(UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud, is detailed below.

As part of our planning process:

- We enquired of management the systems and controls the charity has in place, the areas of the financial statements that are most susceptible to the risk of irregularities and fraud, whether there was any known, suspected or alleged fraud. The charity did not inform us of any known, suspected or alleged fraud.
- We obtained an understanding of the legal and regulatory frameworks applicable to the charity. We determined that the following were most relevant: the Charity SORP. FRS 102, Charities Act 2011. Companies Act 2006.



- We considered the incentives and opportunities that exist in the charity, including the extent of management bias, which present a potential for irregularities and fraud to be perpetuated, and tailored our risk assessment accordingly.
- Using our knowledge of the charity, together with the discussions held with the charity at the planning stage, we formed a conclusion the risk of misstatement due to irregularities including fraud and tailored our procedures according to this risk assessment.

The key procedures we undertook to detect irregularities including fraud during the course of the audit included:

- Identifying and testing journal entries and the overall accounting records, in particular those that were significant and unusual.
- Reviewing the financial statement disclosures and determining whether accounting policies have been appropriately applied.
- Reviewing and challenging the assumptions and judgements used by management in their significant accounting estimates.
- Assessing the extent of compliance, or lack of, with relevant laws and regulations.
- Assessing the validity of the classification of income, expenditure, assets and liabilities between unrestricted and restricted funds.
- Obtaining third party confirmation of material bank balances.
- Documenting and verifying all significant related party balances and transactions.
- Reviewing documentation such as charity board minutes for discussions of irregularities including fraud.

Because of the inherent limitations of an audit, there is a risk that we will not detect all irregularities, including those leading to a material misstatement in the financial statements or non-compliance with regulation. The risk increases the more that compliance with a law or regulation is removed from the events and transactions reflected in the financial statements, as we will be less likely to become aware of instances of non-compliance. The risk is also greater regarding irregularities occurring due to fraud rather than error, as fraud involves intentional concealment, forgery, collusion, omission or misrepresentation.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website at www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of our auditor's report.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charitable company's members, as a body, in accordance with Chapter 3 of Part 16 of the Companies Act 2006 and to the charity's trustees, as a body, in accordance with Chapter 3 or Part 8 of the Charities Act 2011 and regulations made under section 154 of that Act. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charitable company's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose.

To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charitable company and the charitable company's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

B K Plus Audit Limited (Statutory Auditor)

B K Plus Audit Limited is eligible for appointment as auditor of the charity by virtue of its eligibility for appointment as auditor of a company under section 1212 of the Companies Act 2006.

B K Plus Audit Limited, Graphic House, City Rd, Stoke-on-Trent ST4 2PH

Date:

18/9/26





Financial Statements

Year Ended 31st March 2026



VAST Services (1920)

Statement of Financial Activities for the Year Ended 31 March 2026 (Including Income and Expenditure Account and Statement of Total Recognised Gains and Losses)

	Note	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total 2026 £
Income and Endowments from:				
Charitable activities	3	548,407	1,275,209	1,823,616
Other trading activities	4	51,753	-	51,753
Investment income	5	17,569	-	17,569
Total income		<u>617,729</u>	<u>1,275,209</u>	<u>1,892,938</u>
Expenditure on:				
Raising funds	6	(70,210)	-	(70,210)
Charitable activities	7	(430,278)	(1,211,670)	(1,641,948)
Total expenditure		<u>(500,488)</u>	<u>(1,211,670)</u>	<u>(1,712,158)</u>
Net income		<u>117,241</u>	<u>63,539</u>	<u>180,780</u>
Net movement in funds		117,241	63,539	180,780
Reconciliation of funds				
Total funds brought forward		<u>337,507</u>	<u>169,142</u>	<u>506,649</u>
Total funds carried forward	20	<u><u>454,748</u></u>	<u><u>232,681</u></u>	<u><u>687,429</u></u>

The Statement of Financial Activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year.

All of the charity's activities derive from continuing operations during the above period.

The notes on pages 75 to 99 form an integral part of these financial statements.

VAST Services (1920)

Statement of Financial Activities for the Year Ended 31 March 2026 (Including Income and Expenditure Account and Statement of Total Recognised Gains and Losses)

	Note	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total 2025 £
Income and Endowments from:				
Charitable activities	3	495,757	1,158,378	1,654,135
Other trading activities	4	53,145	-	53,145
Investment income	5	20,616	-	20,616
Total income		<u>569,518</u>	<u>1,158,378</u>	<u>1,727,896</u>
Expenditure on:				
Raising funds	6	(63,839)	-	(63,839)
Charitable activities	7	(528,869)	(1,106,101)	(1,634,970)
Total expenditure		<u>(592,708)</u>	<u>(1,106,101)</u>	<u>(1,698,809)</u>
Net (expenditure)/income		(23,190)	52,277	29,087
Transfers between funds		<u>(1,058)</u>	<u>1,058</u>	<u>-</u>
Net movement in funds		(24,248)	53,335	29,087
Reconciliation of funds				
Total funds brought forward		<u>361,755</u>	<u>115,807</u>	<u>477,562</u>
Total funds carried forward	20	<u><u>337,507</u></u>	<u><u>169,142</u></u>	<u><u>506,649</u></u>

The Statement of Financial Activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year.

All of the charity's activities derive from continuing operations during the above period.

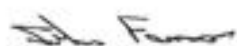
The notes on pages 75 to 99 form an integral part of these financial statements.

VAST Services (1920)
(Registration number: 02000818)
Balance Sheet as at 31 March 2026

	Note	2026 £	2025 £
Fixed assets			
Tangible assets	15	10,362	20,892
Current assets			
Stocks	16	1,171	1,503
Debtors	17	129,707	148,652
Cash at bank and in hand		921,226	610,145
		<u>1,052,104</u>	<u>760,300</u>
Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year	18	<u>(375,037)</u>	<u>(274,543)</u>
Net current assets		<u>677,067</u>	<u>485,757</u>
Net assets		<u>687,429</u>	<u>506,649</u>
Funds of the charity:			
Restricted income funds			
Restricted funds	20	232,681	169,142
Unrestricted income funds			
Unrestricted funds		<u>454,748</u>	<u>337,507</u>
Total funds	20	<u>687,429</u>	<u>506,649</u>

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the Statement of Recommended Practice - Accounting and Reporting by Charities FRS102 and in accordance with the special provisions relating to companies subject to the small companies regime within Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006.

The financial statements on pages 1 to 99 were approved by the board, and authorised for issue on 16/09/2026 and signed on behalf by:



John Farrar
Trustee

VAST Services (1920)

Statement of Cash Flows for the Year Ended 31 March 2026

	Note	2026 £	2025 £
Cash flows from operating activities			
Net cash income		180,780	29,087
Adjustments to cash flows from non-cash items			
Depreciation	6	10,530	10,527
Investment income	5	<u>(17,569)</u>	<u>(20,616)</u>
		173,741	18,998
Working capital adjustments			
Decrease/(increase) in stocks	16	332	(507)
Decrease in debtors	17	18,945	108,692
Increase in creditors	18	67,137	26,878
Decrease in provisions		-	(22,500)
Increase/(decrease) in deferred income		<u>33,357</u>	<u>(108,890)</u>
Net cash flows from operating activities		293,512	22,671
Cash flows from investing activities			
Interest receivable and similar income	5	<u>17,569</u>	<u>20,616</u>
Net increase in cash and cash equivalents		311,081	43,287
Cash and cash equivalents at 1 April		<u>610,145</u>	<u>566,858</u>
Cash and cash equivalents at 31 March		<u><u>921,226</u></u>	<u><u>610,145</u></u>

All of the cash flows are derived from continuing operations during the above two periods.

VAST Services (1920)

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2026

1 Charity status

The charity is limited by guarantee, incorporated in England (registered number 02000818), and consequently does not have share capital. Each of the trustees are liable to contribute an amount not exceeding £1 towards the assets of the charity in the event of liquidation.

The address of its registered office is:

The Dudson Centre
Hope Street
Stoke-on-Trent
ST1 5DD

2 Accounting policies

Summary of significant accounting policies and key accounting estimates

The principal accounting policies applied in the preparation of these financial statements are set out below. These policies have been consistently applied to all the years presented, unless otherwise stated.

Accounting convention

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice (applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102)) (issued in October 2019) – (Charities SORP (FRS 102)), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) and the Companies Act 2006.

The financial statements are prepared in sterling which is the functional currency of the charity. Monetary amounts in these financial statements are rounded to the nearest £.

VAST Services (1920) meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS102. Assets and liabilities are initially recognised at historical cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy note(s).

VAST Services (1920)

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2026

Going concern

The accounts have been prepared on a going concern basis. The trustees have reviewed budgets and cash flow forecasts for the next 12 months and consider that the charity will be able to meet all obligations as they fall due for the foreseeable future. The charity regularly has to tender for grants and contracts. If these tenders are not successful the operations of the organisation could be scaled back to ensure that all expenditure could be met within the level of income available.

Income and endowments

Income is credited to the Statement of Financial Activities in the period in which it is receivable.

Grants receivable

Grants, including grants for the purchase of fixed assets, are recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities when the charity is legally entitled to the income after any performance conditions have been met.

Investment income

Income from investments is included in the year in which it is receivable.

Charitable activities

Income from chargeable services and facilities management are recognised, net of VAT, at the point at which the service is completed.

Other trading activities

Trading income is recognised, net of vat, at the point of sale.

Voluntary assistance

In addition to the income disclosed in the financial statements VAST also receives help and support in the form of voluntary assistance. This help and support is not included in the financial statements. This voluntary assistance is very much appreciated.

Fund structure

Unrestricted funds are donations and other incoming resources receivable or generated for the objects of the charity without further specified purpose and are available as general funds.

VAST Services (1920)

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2026

Designated funds are unrestricted funds earmarked by the trustees for particular purposes.

Restricted funds are to be used for specific purposes as laid down by the donor. Expenditure that meets these criteria is charged to the fund together with a fair allocation of management and support costs.

Stock

Stocks are valued at the lower of cost and net realisable value, after making due allowance for obsolete items.

Expenditure

Expenditure is recognised in the year in which it is incurred.

Charitable activities

Direct charitable expenditure is identified as cost incurred directly as a result of running the various projects, supporting voluntary groups that are members of VAST and delivering our chargeable services.

Raising funds

Costs of raising funds are those incurred in seeking voluntary contributions, and the costs of running the Dudson Centre café. They do not include the costs of disseminating information in support of the charitable activities.

Governance costs

Governance costs are those incurred in connection with administration of the charity and compliance with constitutional and statutory requirements.

Support costs

Expenditure is allocated to the particular activity where the cost relates to the activity. However, management, administration and finance staff costs are apportioned on the basis of time spent on each activity.

Tangible fixed assets

Fixed assets over the value of £1,000 are capitalised with all assets valued at historic cost.

VAST Services (1920)

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2026

Depreciation and amortisation

Depreciation is provided at rates calculated to write off the cost less residual value of each asset over its expected useful life, as follows:

Asset class	Depreciation method and rate
Leasehold improvements	over the term of the lease
Office equipment	25% straight line
Computers	25% straight line
Telephone system	10% straight line

Pensions and other post retirement obligations

The pension costs charged in the financial statements represent the contribution by the charity on behalf of the employees to a Stakeholder Pension Scheme or other designated Personal Pension Scheme payable by the charity during the year.

Deferred income

Amounts held as deferred income refer to funds received in the reporting period but specifically held for use in the following financial year due to either:

- a) Project activity not commencing until the following financial year.
- b) Funds being restricted for use in a future period.
- c) Invoiced amounts for services to be provided in the following financial year.

All amounts held as deferred income in the prior year have been released and are recorded within the total incoming resources figure for the current year.

Deferred income is released to income in the reporting period in which the conditions that limit recognition are met.

Trade debtors

Trade debtors are amounts due from customers for services performed in the ordinary course of business. Trade debtors are recognised initially at the transaction price. A provision for the impairment of trade debtors is established when there is objective evidence that the charity will not be able to collect all amounts due according to the original terms of the receivables.

VAST Services (1920)

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2026

Cash and cash equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents comprise cash on hand and other short term highly liquid investments that are readily convertible to a known amount of cash and are subject to insignificant risk of change in value.

Trade creditors

Trade creditors are obligations to pay for goods and services that have been acquired in the ordinary course of business from suppliers. Accounts payable are classified as current liabilities if the charity does not have an unconditional right, at the end of the reporting period, to defer settlement of the creditor for at least 12 months after the reporting date. If there is an unconditional right to defer settlement for at least 12 months after the reporting date they are presented as non-current liabilities.

Provisions

Provisions for liabilities are recognised when there is an obligation at the reporting date as a result of a past event, it is probable that a transfer of economic benefit will be required in settlement and the settlement amount can be reliably estimated.

Financial Instruments

The charity only has financial assets and financial liabilities of a kind that qualify as basic financial instruments. Basic financial instruments are initially recognised at transaction value and subsequently measured at their settlement value with the exception of bank loans which are subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method.

Termination Benefits

Termination benefits are payable when employment is terminated by the charity before the normal retirement date, or whenever the employee accepts voluntary redundancy in exchange for these benefits. The charity recognises termination benefits in the statement of financial activities when it is demonstrably committed to either

- (i) terminating the employment of current employees according to a detailed formal plan without possibility of withdrawal, or
- (ii) providing termination benefits as a result of an offer made to encourage voluntary redundancy. Benefits falling due more than twelve months after the end of the reporting period are discounted to their present value.

VAST Services (1920)

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2026

3 Income from charitable activities

	Unrestricted funds General £	Restricted funds £	Total 2026 £
Grants & Contracts	-	1,275,209	1,275,209
Bursary	4,385	-	4,385
Facilities Management & Rechargeable Services	544,022	-	544,022
	<u>548,407</u>	<u>1,275,209</u>	<u>1,823,616</u>
	Unrestricted funds General £	Restricted funds £	Total 2025 £
Grants & Contracts	17,250	1,158,378	1,175,628
Bursary	5,360	-	5,360
Facilities Management & Rechargeable Services	473,147	-	473,147
	<u>495,757</u>	<u>1,158,378</u>	<u>1,654,135</u>

VAST Services (1920)

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2026

4 Income from other trading activities

	Unrestricted funds General £	Restricted funds £	Total 2026 £
Trading income;			
Cafe income	51,753	-	51,753
	<u>51,753</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>51,753</u>
	Unrestricted funds General £	Restricted funds £	Total 2025 £
Trading income;			
Cafe income	53,145	-	53,145
	<u>53,145</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>53,145</u>

5 Investment income

	Unrestricted funds General £	Restricted funds £	Total 2026 £
Interest receivable and similar income;			
Interest receivable on bank deposits	17,569	-	17,569
	<u>17,569</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>17,569</u>
	Unrestricted funds General £	Restricted funds £	Total 2025 £
Interest receivable and similar income;			
Interest receivable on bank deposits	20,616	-	20,616
	<u>20,616</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>20,616</u>

VAST Services (1920)

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2026

6 Expenditure on raising funds

a) Costs of trading activities

	Unrestricted funds Cafe £	Restricted funds £	Total 2026 £
Staff Costs	34,732	-	34,732
Cafe supplies	18,538	-	18,538
Office costs	3,394	-	3,394
Premises costs	461	-	461
Legal fees	1,232	-	1,232
Marketing and publicity	50	-	50
Other direct costs	300	-	300
Support Costs (note 8)	11,503	-	11,503
	<u>70,210</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>70,210</u>
	Unrestricted funds Cafe £	Restricted funds £	Total 2025 £
Staff Costs	31,560	-	31,560
Cafe supplies	20,545	-	20,545
Office costs	1,995	-	1,995
Legal fees	1,358	-	1,358
Marketing and publicity	15	-	15
Other direct costs	354	-	354
Support Costs (note 8)	8,012	-	8,012
	<u>63,839</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>63,839</u>

VAST Services (1920)

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2026

7 Expenditure on charitable activities

	Facilities Management £	Rechargeable Services £	Health Projects £	Support & Volunteering £	Other £	Total 2026 £
Staff						
Costs	110,077	133,217	313,157	352,713	29,028	938,192
Staff & Volunteer						
Expenses	233	710	10,019	1,912	500	13,374
Training	1,287	1,115	1,240	1,297	-	4,939
Office						
Costs	16,239	6,294	5,819	4,144	2,985	35,481
Legal & Professional	8,192	24,752	3,487	6,501	-	42,932
Advertising & Publicity	2	-	-	-	1,708	1,710
Premises						
Costs	133,981	-	-	-	-	133,981
Insurance	8,251	776	1,358	1,358	-	11,743
Website/Database	-	-	-	12,635	-	12,635
Sundry	585	24	92	2,438	-	3,139
Depreciation	10,530	-	-	-	-	10,530
Bursary	-	4,385	-	-	-	4,385
Partner						
Payments	1,500	-	112,172	28,587	15,825	158,084
Events	1,712	233	21,417	15,021	12,903	51,286
Grants	-	-	40,000	-	12,750	52,750
Support						
Costs(note8)	23,005	28,756	46,010	57,513	11,503	166,787
	<u>315,594</u>	<u>200,262</u>	<u>554,771</u>	<u>484,119</u>	<u>87,202</u>	<u>1,641,948</u>

VAST Services (1920)

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2026

7 Expenditure on Charitable Activities (continued)

	Facilities Management	Rechargeable Services	Health Projects	Support & Volunteering	Other	Heritage	Total 2025
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Staff Costs	103,996	131,256	102,007	366,471	42,625	18,942	765,297
Staff & Volunteer Expenses	176	271	7,681	3,313	180	884	12,505
Training	-	545	100	1,506	-	-	2,151
Office Costs	17,743	5,938	1,908	44,043	900	1,984	72,516
Legal & Professional	6,169	21,702	723	7,434	1,613	391	38,032
Advertising & Publicity	1,272	-	-	3,553	5,000	-	9,825
Premises Costs	188,210	-	5,218	-	-	1	193,429
Insurance	7,796	610	305	-	-	102	8,813
Sundry	1,227	-	-	832	-	4,445	6,504
Depreciation	164	-	-	-	-	10,363	10,527
Bursary	-	5,360	-	-	-	-	5,360
Partner Payments	-	-	25,250	31,725	20,620	-	77,595
Events	-	170	-	15,864	14,810	1,183	32,027
Grants	-	-	-	250,000	10,350	-	260,350
Support Costs(note8)	16,023	28,042	16,023	48,071	-	4,005	112,164
Reps Allowance	-	-	27,875	-	-	-	27,875
	<u>342,776</u>	<u>193,894</u>	<u>187,090</u>	<u>772,812</u>	<u>96,098</u>	<u>42,300</u>	<u>1,634,970</u>

VAST Services (1920)

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2026

8 Analysis of support costs

Support costs allocated to raising funds

	Cafe	Total 2026
	£	£
Allocated by		
no. of staff:	2	
Staff Costs	3,832	3,832
Staff Training	101	101
Travel	91	91
Premises Costs	900	900
Legal & Professional	786	786
Insurance	105	105
Advertising & Publicity	126	126
Events	322	322
Office Costs	2,465	2,465
Sundry	2,323	2,323
Governance Costs	452	452
	<u>11,503</u>	<u>11,503</u>
	Cafe	Total 2025
	£	£
Allocated by		
no. of staff:	2	
Staff Costs	1,302	1,302
Staff Training	199	199
Travel	18	18
Premises Costs	1,006	1,006
Legal & Professional	386	386
Insurance	75	75
Advertising & Publicity	60	60
Events	326	326
Office Costs	1,651	1,651
Sundry	2,522	2,522
Governance Costs	467	467
	<u>8,012</u>	<u>8,012</u>

VAST Services (1920)

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2026

Support costs allocated to charitable activities

	Facilities Management	Rechargeable Services	Health Projects	Support & Volunteering	Other	Total 2026
Allocated by no. of staff:	£	£	£	£	£	£
	4	5	8	10	2	
Staff Costs	7,663	9,579	15,326	19,158	3,832	55,558
Staff Training	202	252	404	505	101	1,464
Travel Costs	181	227	363	454	91	1,316
Premises Costs	1,800	2,250	3,600	4,500	900	13,050
Legal & Professional	1,572	1,965	3,144	3,930	786	11,397
Insurance	211	264	422	527	105	1,529
Advertising & Publicity	253	316	506	632	126	1,833
Events	644	805	1,289	1,611	322	4,671
Office Costs	4,930	6,162	9,860	12,324	2,465	35,741
Sundry	4,646	5,807	9,290	11,614	2,323	33,680
Governance Costs	903	1,129	1,806	2,258	452	6,548
	<u>23,005</u>	<u>28,756</u>	<u>46,010</u>	<u>57,513</u>	<u>11,503</u>	<u>166,787</u>

VAST Services (1920)

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2026

	Facilities Management	Rechargeable Services	Health projects	Support & Volunteering	Heritage	Total
Allocated by	£	£	£	£	£	2025
no. of staff:	4	7	3	12	1	£
Staff Costs	2,605	4,558	2,605	7,814	651	18,233
Staff Training	398	696	398	1,193	99	2,784
Travel Costs	35	62	35	106	9	247
Premises Costs	2,011	3,520	2,011	6,034	503	14,079
Legal & Professional	772	1,351	772	2,315	193	5,403
Insurance	149	261	149	447	37	1,043
Advertising & Publicity	121	212	121	363	30	847
Events	652	1,141	652	1,956	163	4,564
Office Costs	3,302	5,779	3,302	9,907	826	23,116
Sundry	5,045	8,829	5,045	15,136	1,261	35,316
Partner Payments	-	-	933	2,800	233	3,966
Governance Costs	933	1,633	-	-	-	2,566
	<u>16,023</u>	<u>28,042</u>	<u>16,023</u>	<u>48,071</u>	<u>4,005</u>	<u>112,164</u>

VAST Services (1920)

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2026

9 Grant-making

Analysis of grants

	Grants to institutions	
	2026	2025
	£	£
Analysis		
Community Health Champion Grants	40,000	10,000
VAST Bursary	4,385	5,360
Cadent	12,750	10,350
Community Cohesion	-	240,000
	<u>57,135</u>	<u>265,710</u>

The support costs associated with grant-making are £Nil (31 March 2025 - £Nil).

No individual grants made to institutions during the year were material.

10 Net incoming/outgoing resources

Net incoming/outgoing resources for the year include:

	2026	2025
	£	£
Operating leases - other assets	4,131	7,892
Audit fees	7,000	7,500
Depreciation of fixed assets	<u>10,530</u>	<u>10,527</u>

VAST Services (1920)

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2026

11 Staff costs

The aggregate payroll costs were as follows:

	2026 £	2025 £
Staff costs during the year were:		
Wages and salaries	825,635	683,139
Social security costs	87,670	53,532
Pension costs	70,503	60,918
	<u>983,808</u>	<u>797,589</u>

The monthly average number of persons employed by the charity during the year was as follows:

	2026 No	2025 No
Direct charitable activities	25	19
Generating funds	6	7
Management and administration	4	4
	<u>35</u>	<u>30</u>

During the year, the charity made redundancy and/or termination payments which totalled £17,510 (2025 - £2,611).

Pension costs are split between restricted and unrestricted expenditure in line with the associated staff salary costs.

The number of employees whose emoluments fell within the following bands was:

	2026 No	2025 No
£60,001 - £70,000	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>

The total employee benefits of the key management personnel of the charity were £218,516 (2025 - £203,018).

VAST Services (1920)

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2026

12 Trustee remuneration and expenses

During the year the charity made the following transactions with trustee:

£Nil (2025: £105) of expenses were reimbursed to one trustee during the year.

No trustee, nor any persons connected with them, have received any remuneration from the charity during the year.

13 Pension and other schemes

Defined contribution pension scheme

The charity operates a defined contribution pension scheme. The pension cost charge for the year represents contributions payable by the charity to the scheme and amounted to £70,503 (2025 - £60,918).

VAST Services (1920)

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2026

14 Taxation

The charity is a registered charity and is therefore exempt from taxation.

15 Tangible fixed assets

	Leasehold Improvements £	Furniture and equipment £	Computer equipment £	Telephone System £	Total £
Cost					
At 1 April 2025	<u>294,229</u>	<u>199,891</u>	<u>1,832</u>	<u>96,941</u>	<u>592,893</u>
At 31 March 2026	<u>294,229</u>	<u>199,891</u>	<u>1,832</u>	<u>96,941</u>	<u>592,893</u>
Depreciation					
At 1 April 2025	294,061	179,167	1,832	96,941	572,001
Charge for the year	<u>168</u>	<u>10,362</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>10,530</u>
At 31 March 2026	<u>294,229</u>	<u>189,529</u>	<u>1,832</u>	<u>96,941</u>	<u>582,531</u>
Net book value					
At 31 March 2026	<u>-</u>	<u>10,362</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>10,362</u>
At 31 March 2025	<u>168</u>	<u>20,724</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>20,892</u>

VAST Services (1920)

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2026

16 Stock

	2026	2025
	£	£
Stocks	<u>1,171</u>	<u>1,503</u>

17 Debtors

	2026	2025
	£	£
Trade debtors	64,307	69,668
Prepayments and accrued income	65,400	75,706
VAT recoverable	-	3,278
	<u>129,707</u>	<u>148,652</u>

18 Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	2026	2025
	£	£
Trade creditors	27,991	29,177
Other taxation and social security	29,949	13,811
Other creditors	31,451	27,721
Accruals	130,498	82,043
Deferred income	155,148	121,791
	<u>375,037</u>	<u>274,543</u>
	2026	2025
	£	£
Deferred income at 1 April 2025	121,791	230,681
Resources deferred in the period	155,148	121,791
Amounts released from previous periods	<u>(121,791)</u>	<u>(230,681)</u>
Deferred income at year end	<u>155,148</u>	<u>121,791</u>

VAST Services (1920)

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2026

19 Analysis of net assets between funds

	Unrestricted funds General £	Restricted funds £	Other funds £	Total funds at 31 March 2026 £
Tangible fixed assets	-	10,362	-	10,362
Current assets	674,637	377,461	6	1,052,104
Current liabilities	(219,889)	(155,148)	-	(375,037)
Total net assets	<u>454,748</u>	<u>232,675</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>687,429</u>
	Unrestricted funds General £	Restricted funds £	Other funds £	Total funds at 31 March 2025 £
Tangible fixed assets	168	20,724	-	20,892
Current assets	490,091	270,203	6	760,300
Current liabilities	(152,752)	(121,791)	-	(274,543)
Total net assets	<u>337,507</u>	<u>169,136</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>506,649</u>

VAST Services (1920)

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2026

20 Funds

	Balance at 1 April 2025 £	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Transfers £	Balance at 31 March 2026 £
Unrestricted funds					
<i>General</i>					
General Fund	262,507	617,729	(500,488)	(107,942)	271,806
<i>Designated</i>					
Dudson Centre Occupancy	50,000	-	-	-	50,000
Museum Contingency	25,000	-	-	-	25,000
Dudson Centre Maintenance	-	-	-	27,500	27,500
Totally Stoked	-	-	-	50,000	50,000
Fixed Term Salaries	-	-	-	30,442	30,442
	<u>75,000</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>107,942</u>	<u>182,942</u>
Total unrestricted funds	<u>337,507</u>	<u>617,729</u>	<u>(500,488)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>454,748</u>
Restricted funds					
Health	99,053	435,916	(357,183)	-	177,786
Support & Volunteering	-	207,771	(193,338)	-	14,433
Stoke-on-Trent City Council	581	297,873	(282,765)	-	15,689
Community Health Champions	47,745	100,000	(134,031)	-	13,714
Heritage	20,720	7,500	(17,858)	-	10,362
Other	1,037	226,149	(226,495)	-	691
Capital funds	<u>6</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>6</u>
Total restricted funds	<u>169,142</u>	<u>1,275,209</u>	<u>(1,211,670)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>232,681</u>
Total funds	<u>506,649</u>	<u>1,892,938</u>	<u>(1,712,158)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>687,429</u>

VAST Services (1920)

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2026

	Balance at 1 April 2024 £	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Transfers £	Balance at 31 March 2025 £
Unrestricted funds					
<i>General</i>					
General Fund	286,755	569,518	(533,938)	(59,828)	262,507
<i>Designated</i>					
Dudson Centre					
Occupancy	25,000	-	(25,000)	50,000	50,000
Museum Contingency	50,000	-	(33,770)	8,770	25,000
	<u>75,000</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>(58,770)</u>	<u>58,770</u>	<u>75,000</u>
Total unrestricted funds	<u>361,755</u>	<u>569,518</u>	<u>(592,708)</u>	<u>(1,058)</u>	<u>337,507</u>
Restricted					
Health	23,387	265,160	(189,494)	-	99,053
Support & Volunteering	3,735	175,163	(178,889)	(9)	-
Stoke-on-Trent City					
Council	1,410	462,500	(463,793)	464	581
Community Health					
Champions	55,694	100,000	(107,949)	-	47,745
Heritage	31,445	6,600	(17,925)	600	20,720
Other	130	148,955	(148,051)	3	1,037
Capital funds	<u>6</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>6</u>
Total restricted funds	<u>115,807</u>	<u>1,158,378</u>	<u>(1,106,101)</u>	<u>1,058</u>	<u>169,142</u>
Total funds	<u><u>477,562</u></u>	<u><u>1,727,896</u></u>	<u><u>(1,698,809)</u></u>	<u><u>-</u></u>	<u><u>506,649</u></u>

VAST Services (1920)

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2026

The specific purposes for which the funds are to be applied are as follows:

Purpose of Designated Unrestricted Funds:

The Dudson Centre Occupancy Contingency is to allow for underoccupancy of the Dudson Centre.

The Museum Contingency is to provide funds for the Dudson Museum whilst it becomes re-established and funding is sourced.

The Dudson Centre Maintenance Contingency is to provide for future planned maintenance costs of the Dudson Centre.

The Totally Stoked Designation is to provide funding for a fixed period should there be a gap in funding while additional funding is sought.

The Fixed Term Salaries Designation is to cover fixed term salaries committed beyond the end of the funded project periods.

Purpose of Restricted Funds:

Health related projects are funds from the CCG's PCT to fund the Strategic Development Worker for Health work and funding for the Door 2 Door transport service.

Support & Volunteering Fund is funding from The National Lottery Community Fund for the Totally Stoked Support project.

Stoke-on-Trent City Council is funding for our core development and volunteering work and funding for the Management of the Stoke-on-Trent Community Directory.

Community Health Champions funding is from Stoke-on-Trent City Council to fund the Community Health Champions project.

Heritage funds include funds received from the Heritage Lottery Fund and other small grants and donations for the running of The Dudson Museum.

Other restricted funds relate to various small grants and pilot projects.

VAST Services (1920)

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2026

21 Commitments

Capital commitments

There were no capital commitments at the balance sheet date.

22 Obligations under leases and hire purchase contracts

Operating lease commitments

Total future minimum lease payments under non-cancellable operating leases are as follows:

	2026 £	2025 £
Land and buildings		
Within one year	4,368	4,200
Between one and five years	17,472	12,600
After five years	48,048	50,400
	<u>69,888</u>	<u>67,200</u>
Other		
Within one year	7,892	7,892
Between one and five years	25,364	22,700
	<u>33,256</u>	<u>30,592</u>

23 Related party transactions

There were no related party transactions in the year.

24 Control Relationship

The charity is controlled by the trustees.

VAST Services (1920)

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2026

25 Financial instruments

Categorisation of financial instruments

	2026	2025
	£	£
Financial assets that are debt instruments measured at amortised cost	64,307	69,668
Financial liabilities measured at amortised cost	(27,991)	(29,177)

26 Funds held as agent

During the year funds were held on behalf of the clients in respect of VAST acting as their agent for payroll or other purposes.

At the start of the year the balance of held funds was £85,906 (2025 £92,457). Receipts of £5,691,189 (2025 £5,874,112) were received during the year and payments of £5,630,450 (2025 £5,880,663) were made leaving a year end balance of £146,645 (2025 £85,906).

VAST Services (1920)

Notes to the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2026

27 Government grants

VAST received the following government grants during the year:

National Lottery Community Fund - Totally Stoked & Door2Door £161,536 (2025 - £174,786)
Stoke on Trent City Council - Collaborative Working Agreement £211,356 (2025 - £206,000)
Stoke on Trent City Council - ABS grant £7,500 (2025 - £nil)
Heritage Lottery Fund £nil (2025 - £6,600)
Staffordshire & Stoke on Trent Integrated Care Board - Community Health Champions £100,000 (2025 - £100,000)
Staffordshire & Stoke on Trent Integrated Care Board - VCSE Alliance £123,000 (2025 - £123,000)
DCMS (via the Community Foundation for Staffordshire) £130,556 (2025 - £69,475)
NHS England - Volunteering for Health £73,416 (2025 - £89,160)
Stoke on Trent City Council - Community Cohesion £61,000 (2025 - £240,000)
Locality Improvement Framework - £199,000
InVOLved - £85,845

The amount of grants recognised in the financial statements was £1,153,209 (2025 - £1,009,021).

There were no unfulfilled conditions in respect of these grants at the year end.

No other forms of government assistance have been received by the Charity.