Annual Review 2025-26

HERE FOR HASTINGS



WELCOME!

HVA
Hastings Voluntary Action

We support local people, volunteers and community groups to take action together and make life better in Hastings

About us

At the heart of everything we do is a simple ambition: to help build a stronger, fairer and more connected town.

At Hastings Voluntary Action (HVA), we work alongside charities, community groups, social enterprises and volunteers, offering practical advice, training, funding support and opportunities to connect. We help organisations start, strengthen and grow, while bringing people together around the issues that matter locally.

We also champion the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector, making sure local organisations have a voice and can play their part in shaping the future of our communities.

Above all, we believe that local people know their communities best, and that good things happen when people and organisations have the support, connections and confidence to turn ideas into action.







Chair's report



It's been another busy and impactful year for HVA, and one that has shown both the challenges facing our local VCSE sector and its remarkable strength. As highlighted in our State of the Sector report, carried out with the VCSE Alliance in December 2025, local organisations are operating in increasingly difficult circumstances, yet commitment, creativity and resilience remain the backbone of the sector.

Supporting and strengthening the sector remains at the heart of our work. In 2025/26, we provided tailored support to more than 300 organisations, helping them strengthen governance, secure funding, recruit volunteers and develop their services. Together, this work helped local voluntary organisations secure over £1 million in investment. We also supported more than 80 people into volunteering and created opportunities for organisations to connect, share ideas and learn from one another through networks, events and peer learning.

In this year's Annual Review we're also highlighting the impact our community projects make. The Links Project supports around 80 refugees, asylum seekers and migrants each week, while the Isabel Blackman Centre supported more than 2,400 people during the year. Our work with older people, our award-winning Men's Health programme and our partnership with Macmillan Cancer Support all help to tackle health inequalities, reduce isolation and connect people with the support they need.

None of this happens without strong partnerships and the dedication of our team, trustees, volunteers, members, funders and local organisations. My thanks go to everyone who has played a part in HVA's work this year. There are certainly challenges ahead, but I remain optimistic about what we can achieve together. HVA is proud to stand alongside our communities and the VCSE sector, helping to build a healthier, stronger and more connected Hastings.

Mary Carter,
Chair of Trustees

The year in numbers



Age Friendly

365 Coffee morning attendees
6 Age Friendly Ambassadors recruited

Food Network

115 Cookery workshop attendees
22 Projects received support



Baton of Hope Hastings Tour

43 Baton Bearers
450 residents involved in the project

Links Project Drop-ins

100 drop in sessions delivered
supporting c. 80 people each week

Broomgrove Community Development

160 participants attended Broomgrove Bright Lights – a community-led light-up festive celebration
140 children attended creative free workshops lead by Radiator Arts



Macmillan Cancer Champions Project

350 people signposted to services
14 Champions recruited
30 events organised

Volunteering

102 individuals received support to begin volunteering
80 VSCE sector volunteer opportunities promoted

Training

28 training sessions delivered
258 participants

Finance

41 Independent Examinations completed
26 organisations accessed our Payroll Services

Through our partnership with Clore Social we offered **Leadership training to 25 emerging leaders** to a value of over £75,000



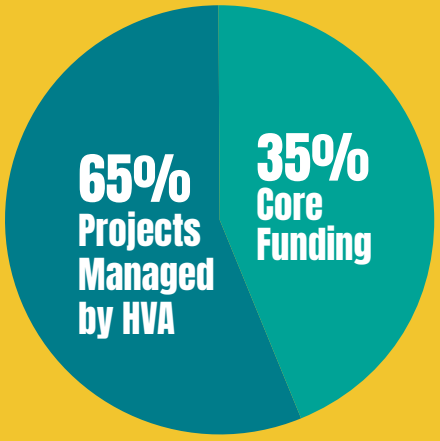
With partners we worked on the plan to unlock £20m of investment to the Town through the Pride of Place initiative and serve on its programme board.

HVA made available £26,000 in grants to organisations developing or enhancing Green Spaces in the Borough

We committed to create a permanent space to commemorate the Baton of Hope initiative and raised £18,000 to open a Garden of Hope in Alexandra Park.

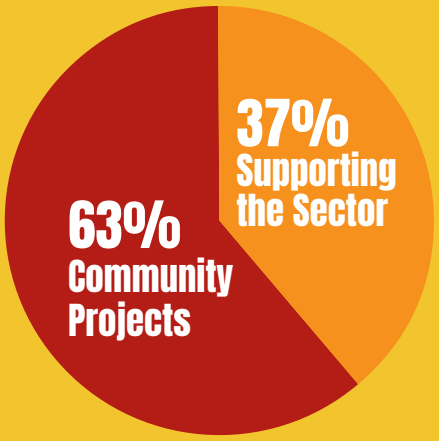
Income: 2025-26

Total: £962,613



Expenditure: 2025/26

Total: £1,055,939



HVA's full accounts can be found on the Charity Commission website: **tinyurl.com/HVA25to26**

What people say

"Everywhere I went to ask for help, I was told there was nothing they could do. At Links they said, yes, we'll do the best we can and that was enough to make me feel heard."

Links Project participant

"We all need hope and a place to reflect and remember loved ones – Thank you for making this become a realisation."

Baton of Hope participant

''I found the Food Project networking event incredibly useful, it was a really valuable afternoon. Thank you for the lovely cakes too!''

Food Network participant

"There was a strong sense of community and mutual welcome, making it feel like a genuine collaboration."

Broomgrove Bright Lights participant

"I feel that all of our Champions can give hope that there definitely is life after cancer."

Macmillan Cancer Support Champion











Our community projects

The Links Project is multi-agency partnership that provides access to support and advice for asylum seekers, refugees and migrants living across East Sussex. We run our own weekly drop-in in Hastings on Wednesdays and we are part of Sanctuary Café in Eastbourne on Friday morning.

The Hastings & Rother Food Network priorities are food and health, food and connections, food and education, and our work contributes to the Public Health Healthy Weight Partnership Strategy. We are a national partner of Feeding Britain and also part of the Good Food East Sussex collective.

The Hastings Ageing Network is a forum for organisations working with older people and representatives from local older people's groups to come together and discuss issues related to ageing whilst also working collaboratively on event and activities supporting people to age well in Hastings.

The Hastings Macmillan Cancer Support Champions Project is a borough-wide programme with a particular focus on underserved areas of Hastings, in partnership with Macmillan. We recruit volunteer cancer champions to encourage the uptake of cancer support among those with the greatest risk of a diagnosis and those who are living with and beyond cancer.

Men's Health and Wellbeing Project - East Sussex is a project that builds on existing strengths, skills and resources. The project aims to strengthen community relationships and enable men to join the conversation on what matters for them and support lasting improvements for men's health and wellbeing.

We work alongside the Broomgrove Social Supermarket run by Oasis Community Project at Broomgrove Community Centre. Using an asset-based approach to encourage residents to share their stories, talents and aspirations, we develop a collaborative programme of work, tailored to the needs and wishes of local people.

The Place Expansion Project – Community Building in Hastings – By listening to local residents we are helping to develop inclusive physical activity opportunities in the town.

hastingsvoluntaryaction.org.uk/about-us/our-projects/

Our services

Starting and running a group
Helping you develop your group's constitution, consider your policies and financial management.

Training
We run regular training sessions on subjects to meet the needs of voluntary groups. These include First Aid and Child Protection training.

Volunteering
Linking volunteers and non-profit organisations that need help.

Funding Advice Service
We can help groups to improve the effectiveness of their fundraising.

Community Accounting
Supporting voluntary organisations to look after their money correctly, with advice, independent examinations and payroll calculations.

Representation
Working with groups to develop a stronger voice for the voluntary sector within Hastings and across East Sussex.

Room hire
Our offices, located in Hastings town centre, have a range of spaces specifically designed to accommodate meetings, training and interviews.

HVA
Hastings Voluntary Action

hastingsvoluntaryaction.org.uk
Tel: 01424 444010

Registered Charity 802632

Registered Company 2409902