

## VAS Infrastructure Grant Impact report 2017-18

### 1) Who we are

Voluntary Action Sheffield supports *voluntary and community action* so that it is sustainable and brings about positive social change. Following a successful funding application to Sheffield City Council in 2017 VAS set up the Development Team, bringing renewed focus to our work supporting small groups and enhancing volunteering in the city. The main purpose of this project is to support small voluntary and community groups to be more sustainable for the future and better able to achieve and demonstrate outcomes.

This report sets out our impact between April 2017 to March 2018, how groups we supported have developed and the progress we have made towards our outcomes.

### 2) What did we set out to achieve?

<b>Outcome 1</b> – Local VCS organisations are able to recruit the volunteers they need...and manage them to best practice standards	<b>Outcome 3</b> – Local VCS organisations have the skills, tools & capacity to develop tools to demonstrate their impact	<b>Outcome 4</b> – Local VCS organisations can manage & respond to external change by adapting their ways of working & embarking on partnerships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Enable organisations to recruit volunteers</li> <li>▪ Define &amp; advertise suitable roles</li> <li>▪ Develop skills to recruit and manage volunteers</li> <li>▪ Adopt best practice standards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Enable organisations to Improve knowledge of needs in communities</li> <li>▪ Evidence need for support</li> <li>▪ Develop impact measures</li> <li>▪ Improve service performance and organisations development</li> <li>▪ Review and adapt activities in response to need</li> <li>▪ Demonstrate improved impact measurement including stronger reporting and communication.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Groups use tools and techniques to assess performance</li> <li>▪ Groups better identify risks</li> <li>▪ Develop leadership and governance</li> <li>▪ Address broader strategic issues</li> </ul>

**Outcome 2** - Local VCS organisations improve their prospects of developing and maintaining a diverse income base in line with the existing and emerging opportunities available to the sector. *Delivered by South Yorkshire Funding Advice Bureau*

### 3) Highlights of the year

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 3700 people engaged through volunteer outreach</li> <li>▪ 1292 volunteer roles (656 unique) advertised from 245 organisations</li> <li>▪ 97% of respondents rated our service excellent or very good</li> <li>▪ All roles quality assured and advertising organisations supported to ensure that roles are well-designed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Worked with 146 groups</li> <li>▪ Successfully targeted groups in hard to reach cohorts or geographical areas</li> <li>▪ Moved groups on most around governance, volunteers and risk management</li> <li>▪ Improved groups confidence and ability to measure impact</li> <li>▪ Local area partnerships developed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Connections made through events in community and The Circle to bring people together</li> <li>▪ Delivered 8 Space to Think sessions giving people the framework to debate wider strategic issues.</li> </ul>
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#### 4) Our main activities

Much of our work impacts across more than one outcome, as groups need support and development in a number of areas. Often groups present with an issue, and the diagnostic conversations bring clarity and show their primary need to be something else. Our flexible approach focuses on enabling groups to be sustainable long-term and empowered to achieve and demonstrate their outcomes.

Volunteering	Demonstrate impact	Respond to change
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 1:1 support (individuals &amp; groups)</li> <li>▪ Advertise and quality check volunteer roles</li> <li>▪ Attend groups, events and training to promote volunteering</li> <li>▪ Facilitate networking and peer support through the Volunteer Forum</li> <li>▪ Help create quality volunteer roles</li> <li>▪ Run Volunteer Fairs</li> <li>▪ Develop partnerships e.g. SHU</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 1-1 support with groups</li> <li>▪ Develop diagnostic tool</li> <li>▪ Group development sessions</li> <li>▪ Network events</li> <li>▪ Outreach in hard to reach communities</li> <li>▪ Build relationships</li> <li>▪ Use diagnostic tool to identify where development needed</li> <li>▪ Signpost to other support</li> <li>▪ Improved skills and knowledge in all aspects of managing community groups including governance, impact and performance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 1:1 support for groups through periods of change</li> <li>▪ Broker and support emerging partnerships in most deprived areas e.g. Birley, Burngreave</li> <li>▪ Create framework for reflection and development - Space to Think.</li> <li>▪ Help groups identify risk areas i.e. governance, finance and develop plans to manage the risk.</li> </ul>

#### 5) The difference we've made

##### Volunteering

*“Volunteering can make a significant contribution to individual and community health and wellbeing...but in general those who could benefit most from volunteering are the least likely to be able to take part in it... **without addressing access issues, calls to increase volunteering and social action could actually increase inequalities.**”*

Volunteers engaged	2017-18	2016-17	Increase
Total people engaged	3794	3192	19%
Online registrations	1422	1386	3%
Face to face advice & support	976	898	9%
Volunteer Fairs	748	589	27%
Outreach events	652	319	104%

We enabled people to find volunteering opportunities, right across the city:

- We enabled organisations to find volunteers, with 450 roles available at any time
- We advertised 1292 volunteer roles for 245 organisations.
- 430 People started volunteering (44% of people registered at the drop in start within three months)

## Excellent engagement:

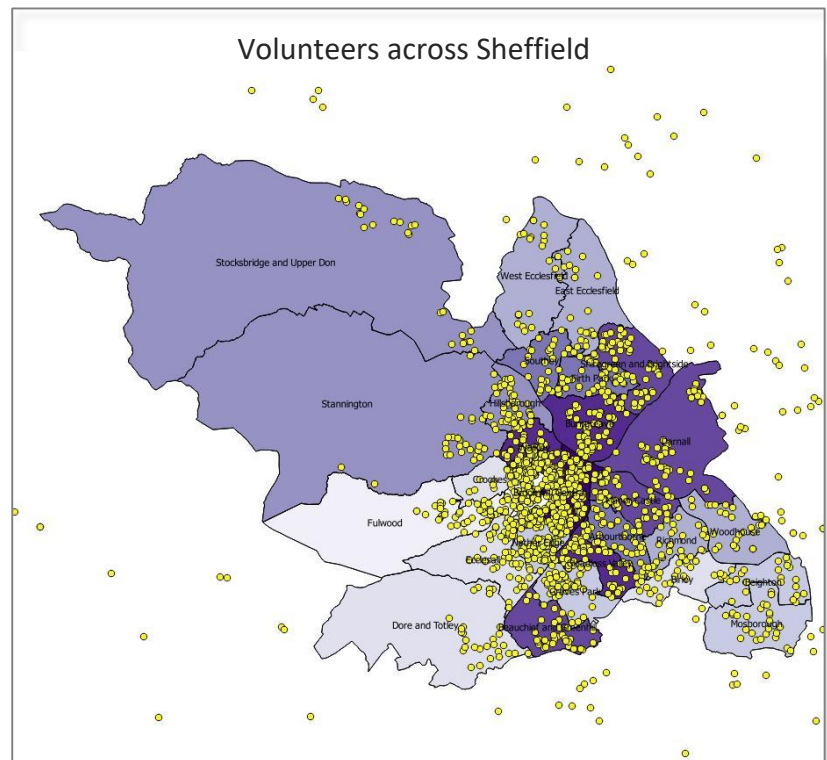
We engaged a diverse group of people across Sheffield, including areas of deprivation. Based on national research 15% fewer people volunteer in areas of high deprivation. Conversely our registrations show higher levels of engagement in the more deprived areas than in some of the most affluent areas of the city.

## Diverse – people we support:

- 32% are BAME (19% for Sheffield)
- 51% of the people we support are unemployed or unable to work (5% for Sheffield)
- 19% self-report a medical condition, mental or physical disability

## Organisation engagement:

- 656 unique roles advertised across the whole year
- 245 organisations advertised roles
- 97.5% of customers rated the volunteer Centre service as excellent or good;
- 66.6% rate the volunteer coordinators forum good and 16.6% excellent
- 41.5% organisations accessing the advertising service also got support to develop roles and best practice
- One organisation achieved the Sheffield Volunteer Standard and over 20 have been given information and material to help inform their approach to involving volunteers.



Yellow dots represent volunteer registrations  
Colours indicate level of deprivation

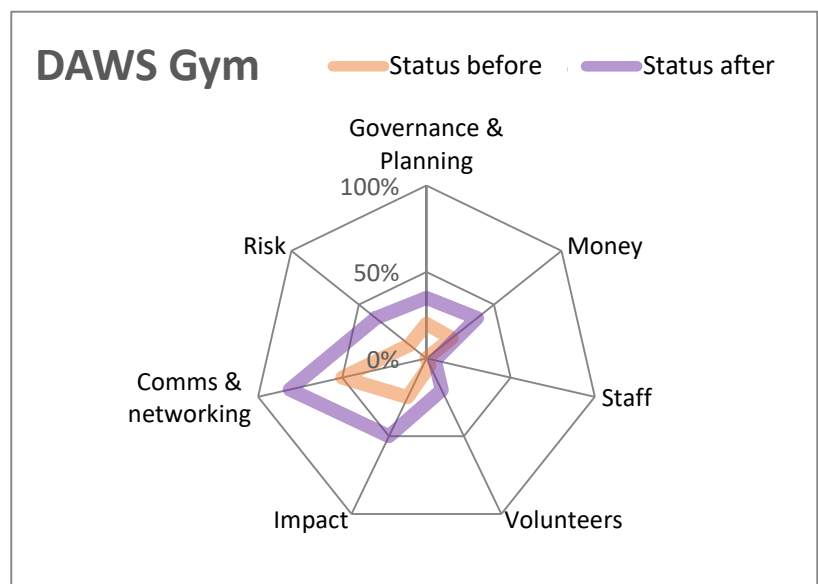
## We helped organisations take a more strategic approach to volunteering:

### The Problem:

DAWS gym aims to change perceptions of disability and exercise, to enable people to be more active. A lack of strategic approach held back their effectiveness and development.

**Action:** We reviewed DAWS' plans and policies for involving volunteers; the information they collected; and how they demonstrate impact, for example using well-being measures.

**Impact:** Our input enabled DAWS to develop attractive volunteer roles and plan ahead for expansion with staff and volunteers. They've gone from 18 gym members to 31, with 2-3 new



members joining weekly; extended their work to Stocksbridge and been awarded £10K by Sport England subject to minor changes to constitution.

## We connected volunteers and organisations:

**The Problem:** Blend rely on volunteers with a range of skills to provide the services, community projects and employment programmes they offer using cuisine and hospitality to enhance lives.

**Action:** In partnership with SHU we run volunteer fairs that showcase volunteer roles and enable organisations to recruit volunteers. Our October event attracted 500 visitors and 90 organisations. Blend came to these events to meet new people, explain their work and the ways people can volunteer.

**Impact:** Laura met Blend at the fair. Volunteering with Blend built her confidence, improved her wellbeing and helped her recover from illness. It helped her build contacts to start her own business, pursuing her passion for marketing and design. Laura said:

*“attending the volunteer fair changed my life. I had left my job due to health issues and was devastated. Volunteering enabled me to start to use my skills again, build confidence and see the impact of what I could do. Starting my own business would not have been possible without the volunteering opportunity provided by VAS, and the support, direction and enthusiasm of Blend staff”.*

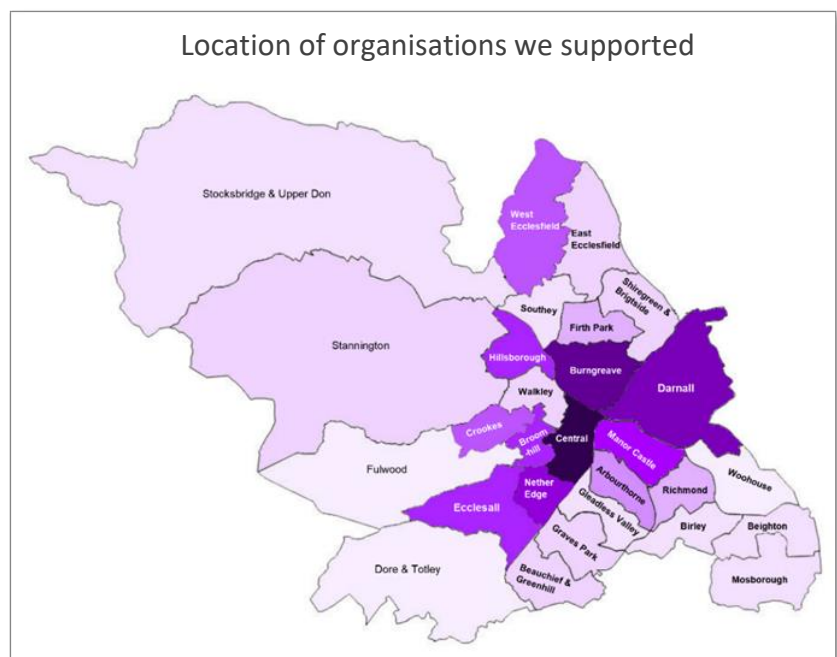
## Demonstrate impact and adapt to change:

We have brought the two indicators together, for in practice we work with groups to improve resilience, which calls for the ability to manage and respond to change, as well as demonstrate impact. Without those two areas being developed groups cannot move on. Evidence is drawn from diagnostic tool assessments before and after support; customer feedback survey; case studies; and other feedback from groups.

*“the support from VAS has been invaluable as it provided the stepping stones to help us get to where we are now. We wouldn’t have done it without your support”*

We worked with 146 groups on 355 individual pieces of work, successfully targeting under-represented, lower income groups and those working in deprived areas:

- 22% BAME groups (19% for Sheffield)
- 7.5% refugees & asylum seekers (2.3% for Sheffield)
- 39% with income below £10,000, of which two-thirds had an income of less than £1,000
- 30% have an income between £10 - £100K
- 19% from the most deprived areas of Sheffield
- 28% from Central ward (with a 46% BME population).



Key:

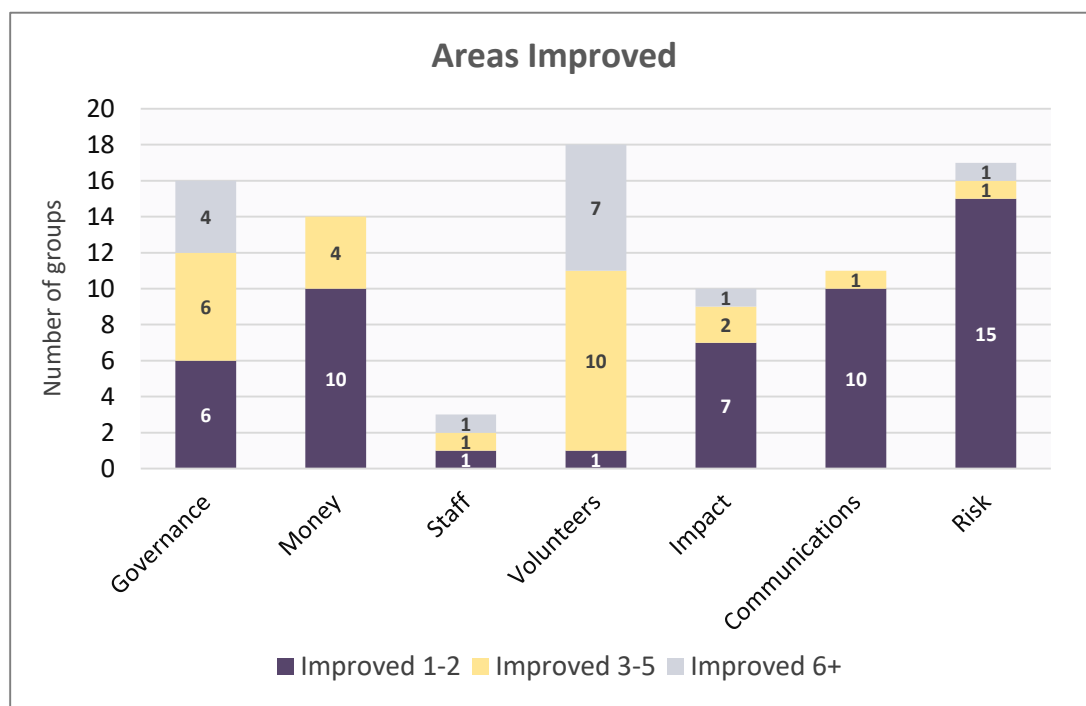


Over half the groups we supported are doing things differently as a result of our input and a third have plans to do so. The *customer feedback survey* shows the majority accessing the service had already begun to set-up a group or were well established.

The interventions support groups to be empowered and the majority of respondents state that working with us helps increase knowledge and confidence; develops new skills and strengthens connections. 96.5% feel the amount of information and support provided was about right.

When a group contacts us for support, where appropriate, we undertake a simple diagnostic exercise to identify needs. This process enables us to pinpoint the areas a group most needs to work on, and to measure progress made/impact. They can then access a range of support and be signposted elsewhere. At the conclusion we can re-assess against the key markers.

Areas where improvement has been noted are set out in the graph below, showing by how many points a group has improved. Until groups have stable governance and finances they are not in a position (and it would indeed be damaging) to address impact and partnership issues.



Support closely matched groups' needs: 86% of respondents said their needs were met "very well" and the support helped them to grow; 96% reported that support exceeded or met their expectations; 86% are very likely to recommend the service to other groups. Outreach work ensured we reached people in the most disadvantaged communities. 82% attending our Burngreave event planned to use the team's information to consider their group's development needs; 88% made useful contacts and connections.

### **We developed partnerships that benefit the community**

Through our outreach work we have established positive working relationships engaging with partners. SCC Community Services Officers describe the project as a valuable tool that has dovetailed perfectly with the work they carry out. They regard our role within communities as vital in supporting the smaller and medium sized community groups, and in the development of effective local networks that can respond collectively to the new challenges facing communities across the city. Our partnership approach offering advice to Burngreave groups to support them become sustainable organisations is described overleaf. Local housing services identified that a thriving VCF network in Burngreave helps offer tenants the support they need to assist them achieve a sustainable tenancy.

## We made connections in Burngreave:

The problem: Communities living side by side didn't have awareness of other groups and the support available from external organisations

Action: We worked with local housing and community managers to look at opportunities for joint working; then worked with community organisations to support them to map community groups. This engaged groups (e.g. TARA's) who had previously worked in isolation, and unleashed latent unmet demand for support which enabled communities to take action.

Result: Increased awareness and take up of support from small groups locally – including volunteering, filling volunteer roles, and support to become a functioning group e.g. with finances.

*“Thank you for such an informative event.... amazing that support actually is available”*

## We helped groups listen to their communities and be sustainable:

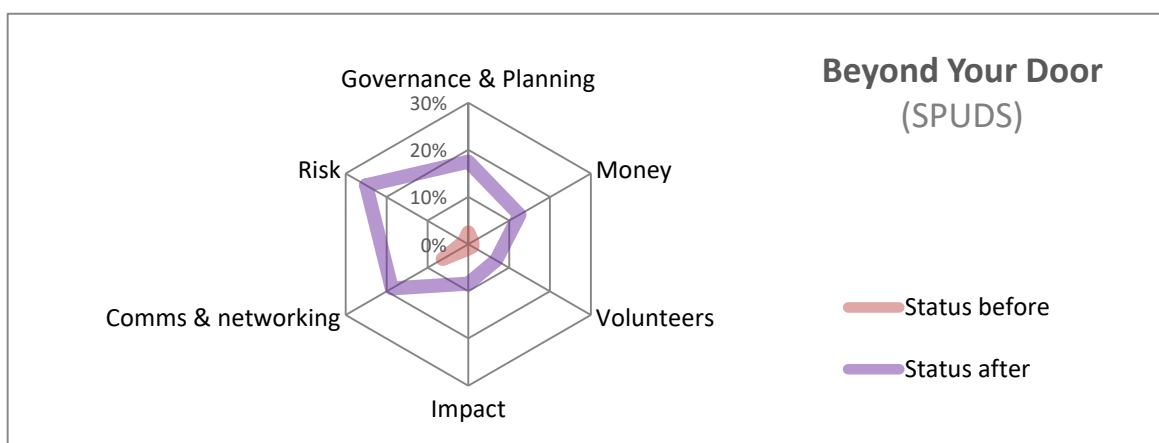
The problem: SPUDs was being run single-handedly by Jean, but the group had lost funding and direction, and was near to closing.

Action: We worked to establish a committee with appropriate decision-making processes, engaging the community in what SPUDs would do. The focus of the group switched to be on members' needs, and the responsibilities shared between key individuals.

Result: The radar chart below shows the improvements made across a range of areas. The group has optimism and direction, with clear roles to manage its activities. They are funding ready with a bank account, a constitution and a committee. They have been referred on to SYFAB for help with funding applications.

Result: The group better understands the needs of their community and has optimism and direction as they deliver services to reduce isolation. They have been able to attract student volunteers to help at events and are looking to improve their engagement with service users in the year ahead.

SPUDS (now Beyond Your Door) are in a much-strengthened position to reduce social isolation among older people in Arbourthorne.



## We have reached the most isolated in Birley:

The problem: Local community groups didn't know about each other's work, weren't collaborating, and people couldn't easily access what was available

Action: Working with local councillors and the Community Services Officer we brought groups together to focus on communication and promoting activities, particularly to engage the most isolated people locally. We facilitated a focus group engaging members of the community, to widen thinking about audience, information communication method and frequency.

We enabled the groups to think more widely and critically, and to solve the communication and reach problem.

**Result:** Groups collaborated, produced a plan and secured funding for a bi-monthly newsletter to engage socially isolated older people. The network has become an ongoing commitment providing further opportunities for collaboration.

*“Your breadth of expertise has been invaluable...you brought a professional element to meetings and setting realistic targets. We will test and make changes over the year to see what works best. You gave the group confidence that they can achieve”*

### **We helped groups get started:**

**The problem:** Ursula was setting up a group for black women with mental health problems. She wanted the group to be sustainable from the outset, and had ideas of a social enterprise focussed on hair and beauty. Her low self-esteem and history of mental health issues were preventing her getting the project started.

**Action:** We helped Ursula understand processes to set up different legal structures; to consider and develop a long term vision; and to establish a constitution.

**Result:** A committee came together, agreed a structure and governance and opened a bank account. Adira have now hosted an event about mental health in the black community to coincide with International Women’s Day and have regular coffee mornings. The three coffee mornings so far have each been attended by up to 10 women. The group are collecting feedback from members and collaborating with other organisation to shape future events.

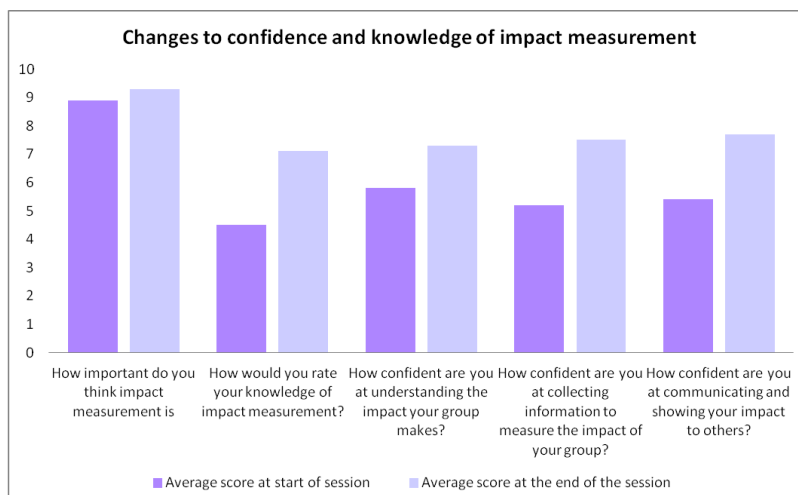
*“Thank you for listening to me, it really, really helped to clarify things in my head and I feel much more focused and organised and under less pressure now. [Saima and Elaine] always make me feel genuinely listened to, which can make a world of difference to my mental health.”*

### **We brought groups together to explore impact measurement**

**The problem:** Groups felt overwhelmed by impact measurement. Some of the challenges faced included understanding the language used and knowing what information to collect and how.

**Action:** We facilitated a workshop attended by eight different groups. In the workshop we explored tools and approaches to support impact measurement.

**Result:** Through collaborative problem solving the attendees were supported to begin a logic model for their projects. The graph below shows the changes to confidence and knowledge of impact measurement, before and after the session.



*“The workshop has been fantastic! It has opened our eyes about how to measure the impact of our latest project.”*

## We helped groups demonstrate their impact

The problem: Ben's Centre was struggling to measure and demonstrate the impact of its services, with an impact on their sustainability. On the face of it this should be straightforward, as an organisation which provides warmth, food and shelter to street drinkers.

Action: We worked staff through a logical framework, mapping beneficiary needs and characteristics, activities and outcomes. By collating this information, we provided an overview of the short, medium and long-term outcomes that contribute to the project achieving its goal - identifying the impact of the service on changing lives for people who access the service, and benefits to the city more widely. The group decided on a few outcomes to focus on, and we worked together to identify indicators and plan a methodology to gather evidence to demonstrate these outcomes.

Result: Staff focussed on activities they deliver and the outcomes generated, which are presented in a clear, systematic, consistent way. Shared responsibility for data collection has improved its quality.

## Space to Think

'Space to Think' events offer Chief Executives and senior managers the opportunities to reflect together about the bigger issues, share ideas and look towards the horizon to anticipate change.

This year we ran eight events with 90 attendees on key topics including commissioning, the fallout of Brexit on the third sector and managing ever-present change within organisations. These events give a rare space to engage with strategic issues with peers within the sector.

## Conclusion

The work carried out as part of the Infrastructure Grant Fund provided support on *four* key transitional phases of development, as seen in the diagram above: Getting organised - starting up; Scale and sustain - doing more, doing it well; Focus - meeting greater need and demonstrating it; Partnership/ Civic role - leading and influencing.

This funding enables VAS to provide development that is ongoing - a long-term investment in communities and the VCS groups that serve them. We reach groups in need and engage volunteers from the most deprived areas of Sheffield. Our approach of developing and empowering people gives groups the knowledge and tools to work more independently.

Many groups come to us for urgent support on an aspect of their activity, often they are under pressure, sometimes at risk of disbanding and ending the support they provide for people in their communities. Our support enables them to gain a new lease-of-life and to continue with renewed vision.

We empower groups to become more independent and sustainable so that we can then direct our support to the next cohort of groups that are emerging or at risk. This is both a sustainable approach to addressing the need within the resources we have, and a recognition that to have thriving community groups, development support is an ongoing, long-term investment.

