

VASLan Hamilton, Blantyre & Larkhall Locality Strategy 2026–2029

Empowering Communities in Hamilton, Blantyre & Larkhall through Local Networks

Purpose

To empower and enable the third sector in Hamilton, Blantyre, and Larkhall to thrive by supporting local organisations, strengthening partnerships, and amplifying community voices across this diverse urban and semi-urban locality of South Lanarkshire.

Vision

A confident, connected, and collaborative third sector that enables inclusive community growth, strengthens wellbeing, and ensures every voice is heard in Hamilton, Blantyre, and Larkhall.

Local Context

This locality is characterised by vibrant communities, deep-rooted voluntary networks, and diverse social and economic profiles across Hamilton, Blantyre, and Larkhall. Key themes emerging from the development workshops include:

- **Funding pressures:** Persistent short-term funding cycles are undermining staff retention and sustainability.
- **Volunteer challenges:** Recruitment and retention remain difficult, particularly for specialist or long-term roles.
- **Complex referral pathways:** Organisations face increasing demand through statutory referrals, often without attached resources.
- **Partnership potential:** Strong appetite for collaboration, shared learning, and local joint initiatives.
- **Transport and access:** Affordable, reliable transport continues to be a barrier to participation.
- **Distinct local identities:** Each area has unique needs. Hamilton's urban scale, Blantyre's community focus, and Larkhall's localism must all be reflected in delivery.

Pillar 1: Locality Network Strength

Aim: Build and sustain a strong, trusted local platform that connects Hamilton, Blantyre, and Larkhall organisations and amplifies their shared priorities.

Outputs	Outcomes	KPIs
Relaunch the Hamilton, Blantyre & Larkhall Locality Network with quarterly themed meetings.	Increased collaboration, representation, and stronger cross-locality relationships.	Network participation increases by 30% by 2029.
Create a locality engagement plan to strengthen links between Hamilton, Blantyre, and Larkhall.	Distinct local identities recognised within a shared structure.	3 locality-specific outreach sessions per year.
Strengthen formal links between the Locality Network, CPP, and TSCOG structures.	Local priorities reflected in strategic decision-making.	Hamilton/Blantyre/Larkhall representation in all CPP and TSCOG discussions.

Pillar 2: Sector Engagement & Voice

Aim: Strengthen the collective voice of the Hamilton, Blantyre, and Larkhall third sector to influence local and national policy.

Outputs	Outcomes	KPIs
Develop a Third Sector Manifesto to inform upcoming local elections (Thursday 6th May 2027) and advocate for fair funding.	The sector is seen as an influential and proactive partner in local democracy.	Manifesto adopted and referenced by at least 3 local political partners.
Facilitate regular 'Community Voice' sessions to capture lived experience and emerging needs.	Local priorities shaped by community insight and lived experience.	4 engagement sessions per year.
Produce an Annual Locality Impact Report highlighting key achievements and gaps.	Increased visibility of third sector impact and return on investment.	Report shared with all CPP partners annually.

Pillar 3: Collaboration & Impact

Aim: Enable collaboration that improves access, reduces duplication, and delivers better outcomes across the locality.

Outputs	Outcomes	KPIs
Establish a Local Collaboration Forum for joint funding, resource sharing, and thematic projects (e.g. youth mental health, befriending, digital inclusion).	Increased resource efficiency and stronger partnerships.	2 collaborative bids submitted per year.
Develop a Shared Resources Hub (digital noticeboard) for equipment, transport, and training opportunities.	Easier access to shared resources, reduced duplication.	Hub launched and used by 40+ organisations by 2028.
Pilot at least one cross-locality partnership project annually (e.g. volunteer transport, mental wellbeing).	Demonstrated innovation through partnership.	Minimum of 1 pilot project per year.

Pillar 4: Communications & Visibility

Aim: Improve communication, storytelling, and recognition of third sector contributions across the three areas.

Outputs	Outcomes	KPIs
Launch a 'Voices of Hamilton, Blantyre & Larkhall' storytelling campaign to share local impact.	Increased awareness and understanding of third sector value.	25% annual increase in digital engagement.
Provide training in social media, impact reporting, and storytelling for small organisations.	Improved communication capacity and confidence.	20 local groups trained by 2029.
Establish a quarterly Community Newsletter linking local successes, opportunities, and updates.	Stronger cross-community connections and visibility.	4 newsletters per year with growing readership.

Pillar 5: Organisational Capability

Aim: Build local organisational resilience, strengthen VASLan's support infrastructure, and improve sustainability.

Outputs	Outcomes	KPIs
Provide tailored training and shared resources (HR templates, governance, salary benchmarking).	Increased professionalism and confidence across organisations.	3 training sessions per year delivered locally.
Facilitate peer support and knowledge exchange (e.g. funding, fundraising, corporate partnerships).	Stronger inter-organisational learning culture.	Peer network established and active by 2027.
Allocate dedicated locality support officer with visibility across all three communities.	Improved accessibility and trust in VASLan's support.	Officer embedded and engaged weekly in each area.

Local Outcomes Framework

Theme	Desired Outcome	Indicators of Success
Collaboration	Stronger partnership culture and shared	More joint bids and shared projects.

	ownership.	
Capacity	Sustainable organisations with stable funding and staffing.	Growth in multi-year funding agreements.
Visibility	Increased recognition of the sector's contribution.	Presence in media and partnership forums.
Participation	More inclusive, community-led activity across areas.	Increased local engagement in network events.
Impact	Demonstrated improvement in wellbeing and inclusion.	Annual impact report evidencing outcomes.

Additional Focus: Urban Access, Connectivity & Fairer Funding

Hamilton, Blantyre, and Larkhall face urban and semi-urban challenges that are primarily about connectivity, inequality, and funding fairness rather than geography. Across the three workshops, organisations consistently raised issues of transport accessibility, digital exclusion (especially for older people), and unequal funding between ALEOs, national charities, and local organisations. These issues intersect to create barriers for smaller, community-rooted groups that deliver essential local services but often lack the scale or profile to compete for resources.

Focus Area 1: Fairer Funding and Local Equity

VASLan through Hamilton, Blantyre, and Larkhall Locality Network, will advocate for funding mechanisms that prioritise local delivery by community-based organisations, not just larger or national bodies. Challenge the unfair advantage of ALEOs (Arms-Length External Organisations) that benefit from both council backing and charity-level funding access. Promote transparent participatory budgeting processes where local third sector organisations have equal access and decision-making power.

Outputs	Outcomes	KPIs
Establish a Fair Funding Forum within the locality network.	Local organisations have a stronger collective voice in funding design.	Forum established and meeting quarterly.
Produce an annual Local Equity Report highlighting funding flows and gaps.	Greater accountability and awareness of funding disparities.	Report published annually and shared with SLC.

Advocate for participatory budgeting reform.	Improved access to local decision-making for community groups.	Representation achieved on at least 1 local PB panel by 2028.
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Focus Area 2: Transport and Access to Services

Address lack of affordable, flexible local transport, which restricts participation in volunteering, events, and support services. Explore community transport collaborations, such as partnerships with LDVG-style schemes or shared minibuses across organisations. Map access barriers (physical, digital, and social) using Marmot data to inform targeted action.

Outputs	Outcomes	KPIs
Conduct a transport accessibility audit across the locality.	Evidence base for improved community transport planning.	Audit completed by 2027.
Pilot a shared volunteer transport initiative.	Reduced isolation and improved volunteer participation.	1 pilot project established and evaluated by 2028.
Develop a Local Access Action Plan integrating digital inclusion.	Increased participation and connectivity across localities.	Plan adopted by 2029.

Focus Area 3: Early Intervention and Preventative Support

Strengthen the role of the third sector in early intervention, particularly around mental health, family wellbeing, and youth support. Advocate for funding attached to referrals, ensuring sustainability when statutory partners direct individuals to community services. Support collaboration between VASLan, community link workers, and public agencies to align early intervention pathways.

Outputs	Outcomes	KPIs
Develop a local Early Intervention Charter with statutory partners.	Recognition of third sector's preventative role.	Charter agreed and signed by 2028.
Pilot funded referral partnerships (e.g. CAB, SAMH, carers).	Sustainable, equitable referral system.	2 funded referral pilots established.
Promote family wellbeing and mental health collaboration events.	Stronger early intervention networks.	3 events held annually.

Delivery and Review

Local Delivery Plan: Developed annually by the Hamilton, Blantyre & Larkhall Locality Network.

Monitoring: Quarterly KPI and case study reporting to VASLan central team.

Learning Loop: Shared insights across all South Lanarkshire localities to inform regional practice.

Review Points:

- Year 1 (2027): Review engagement and collaborative activity.
- Year 2 (2028): Evaluate funding and partnership outcomes.
- Year 3 (2029): Refresh priorities using community feedback and Marmot data insights.

Summary

The Hamilton, Blantyre & Larkhall Locality Strategy 2026–2029 establishes a clear path toward a connected, visible, and collaborative third sector. By strengthening networks, empowering voices, and improving sustainability, VASLan and its partners will ensure that local communities not only thrive but also shape South Lanarkshire's future through shared leadership and innovation.