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NORFOLK**

**Annual Report  
2023-2024**

# Contents

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<b>Chair’s introduction: John Archibald</b> .....	3
<b>Trustees’ report</b> .....	5
<b>Organisational objectives</b> .....	5
<b>Activities and achievements</b> .....	6
<b>Highlights during 2023-24</b> .....	7
<b>Glossary</b> .....	8
<b>Building a thriving VCSE sector</b> .....	9
<b>Leading new initiatives that enable communities to thrive</b> .....	16
<b>Supporting people when they need help the most</b> .....	18
<b>Getting people into work</b> .....	27
<b>Strengthening communities and improving lives through volunteering</b> .....	29
<b>CBR Business Solutions</b> .....	36
<b>Financial review</b> .....	38
<b>Structure, governance and management</b> .....	39
<b>Progress against plans and future plans</b> .....	41
<b>Reference and administrative details</b> .....	45

# Chair's introduction: John Archibald

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It is my privilege to introduce this annual report, highlighting the tangible difference our organisation makes to the lives of individuals and communities across Norfolk, thanks to the hard work of our staff, the dedication of our volunteers, and the breadth of our partnerships.

2023-24 was very much defined by the economic and social issues facing the country, from which Norfolk and its communities were not immune. The 'cost-of-living crisis' had a major impact on the people we work with, often exacerbating social factors such as loneliness, social isolation and the pressures associated with the caring responsibilities of unpaid carers. Our services have continued to deliver great work supporting people when they need help the most: those struggling with social isolation and loneliness through our Better Together Norfolk team; the many unpaid carers of all ages across Norfolk; and those needing assistance on nights out in Norwich through our SOS Bus service. We were particularly pleased to be able to pilot a service for parent carers, and to win a new contract to support young carers and families shaped by feedback from young carers. Unfortunately, in common with many across the country, there was an end to EU funding for our established and successful employment and skills team getting people back into training or work. Although our delivery capacity has reduced in this area, we retain considerable knowledge and expertise and expect to rebuild our employment and skills support offer going forward as funding comes available.

Our volunteering offer continued to evolve and our volunteers have been instrumental in strengthening their communities, in particular by supporting clinical staff in healthcare settings and helping prevent hospital admissions in the first place – something made even more important by the well-publicised challenges



John Archibald  
**Chair of Trustees**

facing the NHS in the last year. We were proud to launch the Norfolk and Waveney Community Support Service in partnership with Age UK Norwich and British Red Cross. This provides short-term practical support to people leaving hospital and in the community and is an evolution of the Covid response service we established in 2020 during the pandemic.

The year was also challenging for the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector with the cost-of-living crisis leading to a 'cost-of-giving crisis' and NCVO reporting 25% of VCSE groups struggling to meet the increased demands on their services, and 20% set to struggle to continue to operate in the winter of 2023-2024. We remain committed to ensuring Norfolk has a thriving VCSE sector by helping recruit and train volunteers for other voluntary groups and by providing them with the tools, resources and small grants they require. A highlight of the year was the development of a Vision for Volunteering for Norfolk and the continued growth of our Get InVOLved Norfolk volunteering portal. Our Freshly Greated team have continued to lead new artistic and cultural initiatives in Great Yarmouth that enable communities to thrive. They have put on hundreds of exciting events over the year attracting tens of thousands of people from some of the most deprived areas of the town. Our trading arm – CBR Business Solutions – has continued to provide high quality and trusted professional support to organisations and bring in unrestricted income to support Voluntary Norfolk's work.

During this financial year, Alan Hopley, the long-serving CEO of Voluntary Norfolk, announced he would retire at the end of May 2024. He has headed the organisation for the last nine years. Serving as a Chief Executive of a voluntary organisation is a tough job at the best of times. In recent years, Alan navigated Voluntary Norfolk through the Covid epidemic, huge extra demand on services, and a cost-of-living crisis. His legacy is an organisation that is well placed to meet the challenges of the future. Voluntary Norfolk says farewell to a first-class chief executive. The voluntary sector says farewell to a very able ambassador, with a wealth of knowledge, who has championed the role and importance of the VCSE sector in Norfolk. Trustees started a recruitment process for a new CEO and appointed Michael Kitching to start in July 2024.

Looking back on our last financial year, we are very proud of the positive difference Voluntary Norfolk has made helping individuals and serving communities across the county and beyond. It has been a challenging year financially but, despite the challenges, this year's strong performance in so many areas of our work gives us the confidence to achieve even more in the years ahead, continuing to improve lives and strengthen communities across Norfolk.

# Trustees' report

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The Trustees present their annual report together with the audited financial statements of the company for the year 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. The annual report serves the purposes of both a Trustees' report and a Directors' report under company law. The Trustees confirm that the annual report and financial statements of the charitable company comply with the current statutory requirements, the requirements of the charitable company's governing document and the provisions of the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable

in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS102) (effective 1 January 2019).

Since the company qualifies as small under section 382 of the Companies Act 2006, the Strategic report required of medium and large companies under the Companies Act 2006 (Strategic Report and Directors' Report) Regulations 2013 has been omitted.

The Trustees confirm that they have had due regard to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit when reviewing the charity's aims and objectives. The activities in respect of furthering the charity purpose are described in our Objectives and Activities section below.

## Organisational objectives

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The vision, mission and aims for Voluntary Norfolk have been defined as follows:

### Our vision

Connected, resilient and compassionate communities where people work together to improve lives.

### Our mission

- To enable local people and communities to thrive and reach their potential.
- To deliver innovative solutions through effective partnerships.
- To ensure the voices of volunteers and voluntary organisations are represented.

### Our aims

- Inspire and enable people to volunteer, take social action and make a difference.
- Deliver innovative and integrated services in partnership with voluntary, public and private sectors.
- Support the development and voice of community groups, charities and social enterprises.
- Achieve sustainable growth.

The leadership team has regular discussions to prioritise organisational objectives to ensure they meet the needs of those we work with, namely the people and communities of Norfolk and beyond.

# Activities and achievements

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Over the last financial year Voluntary Norfolk has continued to deliver a variety of projects and services in support of our purposes and aims. The following section details the projects and services that were operational during 2023-24 and fall within one of five key areas of work for Voluntary Norfolk:

1. *Building a thriving voluntary, community and social enterprise sector*
2. *Leading new initiatives that enable communities to thrive*
3. *Supporting people when they need help the most*
4. *Getting people into work*
5. *Strengthening communities and improving lives through volunteering*

# Highlights during 2023-24

We successfully supported **59% of our clients** in our employment and skills service into work, job searching or training



**Over 35,000 people** attended our Freshly Greated events in Great Yarmouth

Our Better Together Life Connectors offered **5,642 hours** of peer support to those struggling with loneliness



We supported the Men's Shed network grow in Norfolk: There are now **29 Men's Sheds** in Norfolk (with further 4 in development) - more than in London



Our Christmas hamper campaign saw **150 hampers** go to people struggling with the cost-of-living crisis in the Great Yarmouth area



Our Carers Matter Team completed supported **89 Carers Breaks referrals**, which provided much needed respite for unpaid carers

Our SOS Bus service helped **2,919 people** on nights out in Norwich and was named 'Team / Community Group of the Year' at the EDP's Stars of Norfolk and Waveney Awards



Our volunteers dedicated c. **14,000 hours** of their time to strengthening our communities



Our non-emergency patient transport volunteers clocked up **430,642 miles** taking people to medical appointments - almost the distance to the moon and back



**Over 4,800 volunteers** are now registered on our volunteering platform - Get InVOLved Norfolk (over twice as many as last year)



We developed and launched the '**Vision for Volunteering**', with a focus on making volunteering more inclusive, effective and sustainable

# Glossary

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**BTN** – Better Together Norfolk, Voluntary Norfolk’s loneliness and social isolation service supporting those in Broadland, Great Yarmouth, Norwich and South Norfolk.

**CAN** – Community Action Norfolk is an organisation which engages with the VCSE sector in Norfolk. Voluntary Norfolk works with them as part of the Empowering Communities Partnership.

**CMN** – Carers Matter Norfolk is the service that supports adult carers in Norfolk, which Voluntary Norfolk is one of partners in.

**CBR Business Solutions** – Voluntary Norfolk’s trading arm that provides DBS, Payroll and HR services to organisations and companies around the country.

**EECH** – East Coast Community Healthcare is a social enterprise providing NHS community health and social care services across Norfolk and Suffolk, largely in the Waveney area around Lowestoft and Beccles.

**ECP** – The Empowering Communities Partnership. A partnership of Voluntary Norfolk Community Action Norfolk, the Norfolk Community Fund, Norfolk Community Advice Network and FUSE Norwich which provides support to the wider VCSE sector in Norfolk.

**ESF** – The European Social Fund is a European Union funded scheme that helps millions of Europeans improve their lives by learning new skills and finding better jobs.

**FUSE** – FUSE supports social enterprises in Norwich. Voluntary Norfolk works with them as part of the Empowering Community Partnership.

**NCAN** – Norfolk Community Advice Network is a Norfolk-wide partnership of advice and community experts. Voluntary Norfolk works with them as part of the Empowering Communities Partnership.

**NCF** – Norfolk Community Foundation is a charity dedicated to building stronger communities and improving the lives of people in Norfolk. Voluntary Norfolk works alongside them as part of the Empowering Communities Partnership.

**NCH&C** – Norfolk Community Health and Care provides community health and care services across Norfolk.

**NCVO** – A membership community for charities, voluntary organisations and community groups in England, which Voluntary Norfolk is part of.

**VCSE** – Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprises (formerly known as the Third Sector and can sometimes be referred to as VCFSE to include faith-based groups or organisations).

**YCM** – Young Carers Matter, a partnership of organisations led by Voluntary Norfolk to identify and support young carers around Norfolk.





## Building a thriving VCSE sector

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A core aspect of Voluntary Norfolk's work is supporting and enabling the wider VCSE sector in Norfolk to thrive. This work is carried out by our VCSE Support Team. They have three key purposes:

- Providing and facilitating support to VCSE groups and organisations in Norfolk
- Advocating for and supporting the diversity of VCSE voices across the sector and enabling them to be heard by key audiences and stakeholders
- Promoting and enabling volunteering

Within the VCSE Support Team there are a number of different work strands:

### Empowering Communities

Voluntary Norfolk continues to lead the Empowering Communities Partnership (ECP). The partnership covers the whole of Norfolk and through its members represents a rich body of contacts, experience, local and specialist knowledge. Given the ongoing challenges that VCSE organisations are facing, from rising costs to increasing demand for many services, and difficulties in recruiting volunteers and paid staff, this integrated and joined-up approach provides effective and easy-to-access support.

# Voluntary Norfolk Network

Voluntary Norfolk has recognised that inclusive and responsive networks, that harness expertise from across this diverse sector, are the most effective way of helping organisations thrive. Regular newsletters and frequently-updated Padlets (online notice boards) enable networkers to access a wide range of information, training opportunities, webinars, and resources.

The popularity of this approach is demonstrated by the 25% increase in the Voluntary Norfolk Network membership over the year (from 290 to 362 members). As members have become used to the Padlets their usage of this has increased dramatically. Views in the most recent quarter increased by 132% (1,911) compared to the first quarter (825 views).

One member commented *“how fantastic this resource is, it is genuinely really helpful for someone managing a charity like me to have all of these opportunities presented like this.”*

## Norfolk VCSE Leadership Network

This Network supports those in leadership roles within Norfolk’s VCSE sector by creating a space for relationships to develop and experiences to be shared, providing peer support which informs and strengthens collective influencing.

In Autumn 2023 the network was relaunched to reflect these views and since then we have held two ‘hybrid’ sessions on the themes of Inclusive Leadership and Collective Influencing. These events have been attended by a total of 50 people. The Leadership Network has grown from 50 to 89 members, an increase of 78%.



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**Membership of VN Network  
increased by 25%  
over the last year**

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**“** Thank you for providing the opportunity to come together with other leaders and share ideas, celebrating the impact of the VCSE sector. **”**

# Workshops and Networking Events

Central to our support offer for VCSEs are networking events and workshops which take place online and face-to-face around Norfolk. This year, Voluntary Norfolk put on 16 such events which were attended by 301 people. Our networking events are designed to bring together local VCSE stakeholders to collaborate, share challenges and solutions, and make connections in an informal setting. Topics have included: engaging young people in volunteering; developing your volunteering strategy; workplace wellbeing for VCSEs, and cost of living crisis impact on VCSEs.

Many attendees have provided positive feedback:

“ The trainers were extremely knowledgeable and offered differing perspectives and ideas to bring into the workplace. ”

“ Thanks for organising a great event. Valuable time spent away from the day to day to discuss with other voluntary sector organisations the challenges facing North Norfolk and to be able to network. ”



Over 70 guests attended our Vision for Volunteering event

## Vision for Volunteering

Since the impact of the pandemic in 2020 there have been many changes to the volunteering landscape in Norfolk, and across the UK. To understand the nature of these changes, the implications for volunteer involving organisations, and how Voluntary Norfolk and the Empowering Communities Partnership can provide the necessary support to the sector, the VCSE Support team led on the development of a Norfolk Vision for Volunteering. A countywide research project involved almost 500 people through online surveys, discussion groups and one-to-one interviews, as well as detailed desk research. The Norfolk Vision for Volunteering was approved by the Public Sector Leaders Board and launched at an event in Norwich in November 2023. Over 70 guests from the public, private and third sectors discussed the importance of volunteering for the wellbeing of the county and made pledges to support the Vision within their organisation and more widely.

Following the launch there has been a programme of workshops to support organisations to review and develop their own volunteering strategy to be more inclusive and accessible. Alongside this Voluntary Norfolk has established a strategic steering group and a working group of representatives from VCSE organisations and statutory bodies to take forward the Norfolk Vision for Volunteering. An action plan will ensure that a collaborative approach, shared resources and expertise, and more joined-up initiatives will lead to real change over the coming years.

## Get InVOLved Norfolk

Voluntary Norfolk has continued to support organisations in recruiting volunteers through an active and popular outreach programme. In the last year the VCSE Support Team also responded to 485 individual enquiries relating to volunteering.

Launched in July 2022 our volunteering portal, Get InVOLved Norfolk, is almost two years old and has proved very popular with organisations seeking volunteers, and with new and returning volunteers who are able to find a huge range of volunteering opportunities.

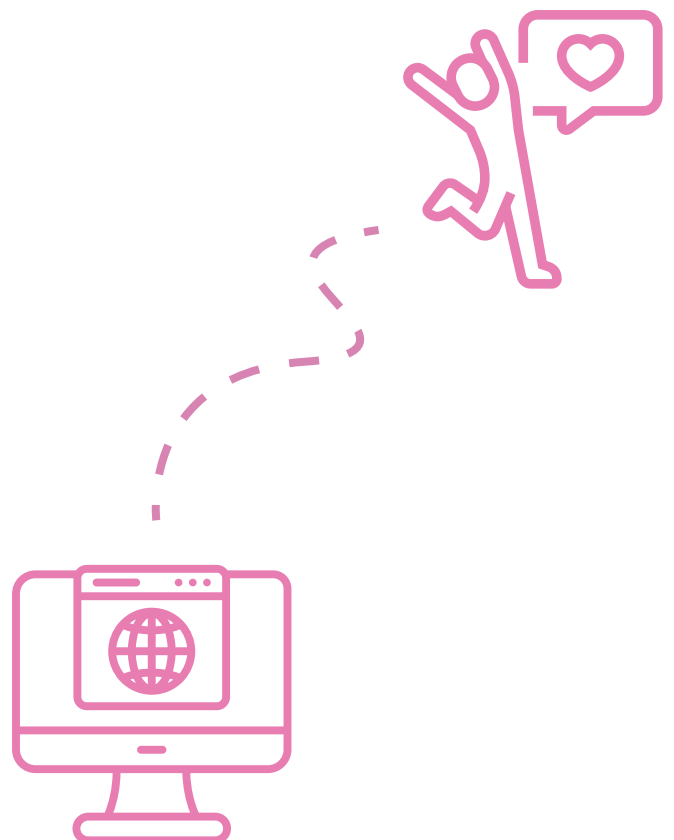
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Get InVOLved Norfolk has  
**94% more**  
applications per year  
than comparable portals

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- Almost 110,000 unique visitors have used the site (up from 49,600 last year) since its launch, an average of 5,000 visits per month.
- The number of registered volunteers has increased by 2,927 to bring total potential and existing volunteers to 4,853 – an increase of 57% over the year.
- Not for profit organisations registered on the platform and currently seeking volunteers has risen by 166 to 363.
- There have been 1,414 volunteer opportunities posted on the site to date, and the total applications to volunteering opportunities are 5,279.

To put these figures into context, the number of volunteers registered on the previous volunteer platform was 825 in March 2022. The portal also continues to outperform similar platforms elsewhere in the UK. Get InVOLved Norfolk has 94% more applications per year than on comparable volunteering portals.



# Employer-supported volunteering

Employer-supported volunteering enquiries have steadily risen, and the corporate Volunteering page has had 1,858 views since its creation and 10 businesses and corporates have joined the platform to source their regular corporate volunteering opportunities.

Recently, Kier and Norwich City Football Club supported Break with outdoors tasks at their children's homes.



“ I just wanted to say a big thank you for allowing us to volunteer with Break. We all had a wonderful time, and we hope that you are now enjoying the changes to the garden. ”

**Norwich City Football Club**

“ We had a very productive meeting with Kier yesterday about how we can support each other going forward, so I really appreciate you linking us initially. ”

**Break**

## Norfolk Volunteer Passport

The Norfolk Volunteer Passport is a short course delivered for Voluntary Norfolk by Adult Learning that provides volunteers with an introduction to volunteering and the knowledge to help them find new roles more quickly. 27 learners completed the course over the year, either online or face-to-face for Wells Community Hospital in North Norfolk and Out There Arts in Great Yarmouth, bringing the total to 92 learners. They have been supported by Adult Learning and the VCSE Support team to progress their volunteering journey to volunteering roles, further training and employment.

“ I learned a lot and the course was most informative and covered many areas. ”

“ Good course to take. ”  
**Learners at Great Yarmouth**

## Support for Sanctuary Seekers

In 2023 Voluntary Norfolk secured funding from NAVCA to develop infrastructure support for local organisations that support and help refugees and asylum seekers. This funding supported Norwich City of Sanctuary to extend its role in the city and also to work with local groups to develop three pilot Towns of Sanctuary in Norfolk. Following research and local discussions the market towns of Diss, Watton and Dereham were identified as the most suitable locations. Local people came together in Diss and Dereham to establish steering groups to start to take this forward.

In addition, the Voluntary Norfolk team worked in partnership with New Routes Integration to set up a pilot project to support sanctuary seekers in Norwich into volunteering. Organisations were invited to identify roles that would be suitable for sanctuary seekers, where they would receive appropriate support and would not need to have DBS checks. A dedicated members' only webpage on Get Involved Norfolk features these volunteering roles.

## Momentum

Through the Momentum team, Voluntary Norfolk is continuing to provide specialist support to voluntary and community organisations working with children and young people to help them build resilience.

Over the last two years, Momentum's Youth Work Network have restarted in person meetings. These have attracted a total of 63 youth work professionals from over 30 organisations. Topics discussed that were put forward by the network included; mental health & wellbeing, youth isolation and loneliness, and social media and internet awareness. Momentum also ran a number of workshops and training events which attracted attendees from 47 different organisations across Norfolk. There are approximately 800 people signed up to the Momentum Youth Work Network Mailing list from over 300 different organisations.



Momentum's small grants programme continued in 2023-24 thanks to funding of £15,000 from Norfolk Children's Services to support youth work in Norfolk. A hugely successful element of the Momentum grants and funding process is that all grant applications are assessed by Young Commissioners from the Youth Advisory Boards operating in each district area. They have a good understanding of what is needed in their area. A total of £4,651.90 was spent over the 11 successful grant applications and Momentum training this year. One of the beneficiaries this year was Musical Keys in Norwich, which used their grant of £500 towards new brainwave music controller! The group said that *"This has been a hugely exciting project for us so far and we can't wait to see what happens when our focus group start making music!"*

Over the year we took the decision to move the administration of our small grants programme to our local grant experts at Norfolk Community Foundation. Moving the fund to the Foundation, means that Momentum can focus on what it is best at, and groups can get more support from dedicated grants officers.



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**A total of**  
**£4,651.90**  
**was spent over 11 successful**  
**Momentum grants applications**

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The Voluntary Sector Forum (Children, Young People and Families) has continued to meet on a quarterly basis with members hearing important updates from Statutory colleagues. Information is shared with approximately 90 members who are registered as Voluntary Sector Forum members.





## Leading new initiatives that enable communities to thrive

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Voluntary Norfolk is the lead partner in the Freshly Greated project, which seeks to build and improve the community arts offer in Great Yarmouth to enable communities to come together and thrive in new and engaging ways through the medium of arts and culture. Voluntary Norfolk has a strong tradition of building and supporting communities across Norfolk since we started as an organisation over 50 years ago.

The Freshly Greated team continues to work in three of the most deprived neighbourhoods of the borough: Cobholm and Southtown (Great Yarmouth), Nelson Ward and the Barrack Estate (Great Yarmouth) and the Magdalen Estate (Gorleston). The aim remains that, when the funding for this project ends, it will have a lasting impact because of the work it has

done getting the community engaged and local volunteers involved.

We made some significant changes to our approach in 2023-24, guided by evaluation findings, working even harder to ensure we reach the widest range of different audiences and maintain the community voice and local relevance in all activities we produce. This ranged from working with some specific target groups such as a Men's Mental Health group, integrating the older generations, and setting up a new producer group aimed specifically at those with English as a second language. Based on feedback and developments from previous years, we have also created a model for some community producers to be able to plan and produce their own events to give them greater ownership whilst supporting development of



skills in leading creative activities in the future. As a result, each of these neighbourhoods have volunteers that have come forward to work with the team on the project. We also have a “young producer” group for fourteen to eighteen-year-olds across the area.

Some of the highlights in the last twelve months have been the:

- 9 Community Festivals and Events
- 16 “producer meetings”
- 33 music gigs and workshops for 14-18 year olds
- 34 community maker sessions
- 164 community producers who came forward
- 1760 hours given up by volunteers (valued at £18,480)
- 35,202 people attending our events

The project continues to go from strength to strength with successful funding bids continuing to ensure its pioneering nature and benefits to the wider community. New projects have also started. From January 2024, “Our Space” was launched running creative sessions twice a week at Peggotty Road Community Centre in Great Yarmouth for 14-18 year olds. In the first 3 months we have recruited 20 new members to join this group from the Nelson Ward area (a deprived part of the town). Not only have we had great numbers attend, but the change in these young people already has been remarkable. Several have volunteered at Freshly Greated events, running activities and helping to set up and evaluate events and a few are now registered with Volunteer It Yourself (an organisation that challenges people to learn trade and employability skills by helping to fix local community spaces and places in need of essential repairs) and helping the team there to modernise the kitchen at the community centre.

## A community producer’s story

Shirelle has become a community producer for Freshly Greated, helping get put on events in Great Yarmouth that enable the community there to thrive. She explains what motivated her to get involved and what she has got out of it:

“ I think it was at first the skateboarding workshops. I didn’t think it was a volunteering thing. I’d never heard of it. So coming to those workshops then realising that we can help do things like this... It just seemed fun... You always feel equal. Just because you’re volunteers it doesn’t make you feel any less than anyone that gets paid for a job... We get involved a lot more in different community activity. ”

She continued how she had made “lots of friends from all different communities.”





## Supporting people when they need help the most

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Voluntary Norfolk continues to lead and deliver services that ensure that people across Norfolk get support when they need help the most – everything from assisting carers, young carers and their families to offering help to those struggling with loneliness and social isolation.

### Better Together Norfolk

Our Better Together Norfolk service is an integral part of helping to alleviate loneliness and social isolation across our commissioned area of delivery (Norwich, South Norfolk, Broadland, and Great Yarmouth). The service aims to reduce barriers that cause loneliness, offer opportunities for social

interaction through groups and volunteering and, where needed, provide one-to-one support for individuals, helping them decide on a person-centred plan that is tailored to their needs.

The importance of this service is demonstrated in the high number of referrals that we have received for 2023-24. This has again increased from previous years. Over the last year Better Together Norfolk has accepted into the

service 710 new referrals (up from 511 last year). Typically, the length of time that a Life Connector is engaged with clients is around 6 months on a one-to-one basis, although this can vary depending on the level of interventions needed.

In addition to our one-to-one work, the Better Together Norfolk service delivers peer support, helping clients to shape and deliver groups across our commissioned area. Over the last year this has amounted to 5,642 hours of peer support, supporting over 1,000 more individuals. Through BTN we also support the Men's Shed Network in Norfolk. There are currently 29 Men's Sheds in Norfolk with another 4 in development (and a further 5 in early stages of discussion) - more than the whole of greater London - which makes it the most advanced shed network in the UK.

We had a couple of initiatives during the year, one of which was the slow cooker appeal and we managed to raise £2,000 through our just giving page to fund slow cookers for clients. We also ran our Christmas hamper campaign, which saw 150 hampers go to people within the Great Yarmouth area. This was a huge success and within one week of our go live date we had allocated all our hampers, which highlights the impact that the cost-of-living crisis has had and how many people it has affected.



## Our clients' stories

“ It's a brilliant service. It was of huge value to me, and I would recommend it to anyone. It has helped me with my outlook on life. ”

“ The group has saved my life. Until I joined, I always felt alone and misunderstood about my bipolar. I love the group so much and consider a lot of the others (attendees) friends who don't judge me and understand what I'm going through. ”

“ My Life Connector was a great support to me over the year that I had with (them). (They've) helped me get to a good place mentally by encouraging and pushing me towards activities and signposting me to other agencies with the correct support I needed, which then turned into goals for my future. ”

# Carers Matter Norfolk

This year, Voluntary Norfolk launched a pilot Parent Carers Matter service, alongside our existing Young Carers Matter Service and delivery role in the adult Carers Matter services. This means that Voluntary Norfolk now provides a source of specialist information and support for all unpaid carers across Norfolk, whether as adults carers, parent carers or young people.

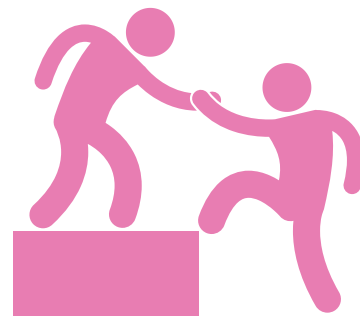
## Carers Matter Norfolk adult service

Voluntary Norfolk is a delivery partner in the Carers Matter Norfolk adult service, delivering statutory Carers Assessments and support to adults throughout Norfolk on behalf of Norfolk County Council. Our role is to support carers to maintain their caring role, through providing support to access health and wellbeing grants, counselling services and carers breaks, as well as meeting their needs in other ways (such as signposting to external agencies or other Voluntary Norfolk services) and attending appointments. This is a vital role to unpaid carers, who often feel lonely and isolated.

In 2023-24 we received a total of 339 referrals to the Community Team from the Advice Line. Of these new referrals we completed 318 Assessments, which looked at the individual carer needs focusing on health, wellbeing, finance, employment, and from this we were able to create a personalised action plan for support, which was shared with each carer. This year we have had a particular focus on strength-based work, and ensuring that we provide our carers with all the information that they need in order to sustain the role in the longer term.

Support included:

- 204 Health and Wellbeing referrals
  - 78 of those referrals were for providing goods, such as hoovers, fridges, beds, mattresses, and microwaves.
  - 95 Holistic Remedies, counselling services and massages.
  - 31 Gift vouchers purchased for use in health clubs, nail and hair salons and relaxation services.
- We also completed a total of 89 Carers Breaks referrals which provided much needed respite for the person in the caring role.





## A Carers' Story

(anonymised to maintain confidentiality)

Client S is the primary caregiver for her husband, who has been diagnosed with dementia. Their living situation, in a privately rented accommodation, proved unsuitable for her husband's needs, particularly due to his mobility issues, which posed difficulties in navigating stairs and using bathroom facilities. While client S received support for her caregiving responsibilities three times a week, she recognised the need for additional daily assistance, especially with tasks such as bathing and dressing her husband.

Client S came to us through the advice line. After the initial assessment was completed, it was clear that they need additional community support to enable them to not only sustain their caring role but ensuring that they were aware of all the help available and that their own needs were met along the way.

After recognizing the challenges faced by Client S and her husband, Voluntary Norfolk's Carers Matter staff took proactive steps to address their needs comprehensively. We helped them access services that ensured they were placed on a priority list for housing, and they are now actively bidding for a more suitable property. We also helped Client S's husband have his care

package increased to facilitate an additional 45 minutes in the morning. This is really important because it gives Client S the space to address her own care needs in the morning.

Understanding the importance of financial stability, we referred Client S to the Citizen's Advice for benefits check and assistance in accessing financial support. This included addressing issues related to backdated payments and applying for a reduced council tax rate. Through our support and advocacy, Client S successfully received her backdated payments and has applied for a reduced council tax rate, with expectations of approval. Recognising the toll of stress on Client S's well-being, we facilitated access to counselling services through MIND. This provided her with invaluable support in navigating her challenging living environment. Additionally, we utilised our health and wellbeing fund to enable Client S to access massages, further contributing to her overall well-being as a caregiver.

Through these collaborative efforts and interventions, we have worked to alleviate the burdens faced by Client S and her husband, providing them with practical solutions and emotional support to navigate their caregiving journey with greater ease and confidence.

There's now a noticeable shift in Client S's outlook towards the future. She expresses a sense of optimism and certainty regarding the next steps in her journey, particularly regarding her accommodation. Through our collaborative efforts, she has gained a new-found resilience, equipping her to navigate the inevitable changes that accompany her husband's dementia diagnosis. Expressing gratitude for the support provided during this significant transitional period, Client S acknowledges the pivotal role Voluntary Norfolk's adult carers team has played in her life.

## Young Carers Matter

This year, the Young Carers & Families team continued to make a positive difference in the lives of young people who take on caring responsibilities for loved ones. We do this by lightening the load, helping young shoulders carry less and giving them more time to simply be children. Overall, we believe in a holistic approach to remove and reduce inappropriate and excessive caring from the young person. Working with our delivery partners around the county we created spaces for them to enjoy their childhood, build positive relationships, and feel less isolated.

In 2023-24 our reach grew significantly. We directly and indirectly supported over 1,416 young carers, those they care for, and family members. This includes identifying 718 new young carers, with one third (264) in the crucial focus age for early identification (5-9 age group) of young carers. These figures were similar to last year. However, families' needs are evolving, especially amidst the ongoing cost-of-living crisis. Consequently, we adapted our services to address these changes, focusing more on how we can put money back into the pockets of families through grant applications, support to access debt management and benefits.

A third of families we support involve a young person caring for someone with a physical disability, often parents needing assistance. Additionally, a quarter of young carers we see support siblings with learning difficulties. These young carers often provide more emotional support, especially if they share a living space.

Mental health needs are also rising among both young people and families. This is shown by the high number seeking our services for mental health support. Notably, many of the young carers themselves struggle with mental health. Due to this, we increased the 1:1 support for young people while connecting them with child and adolescent mental health services.

Over 678 young carers in Norfolk have thrived thanks to one-on-one support, engaging group activities, and the chance to connect with peers through our dedicated delivery partners across the county. A recognised wellbeing assessment (PANOC) showed that 75% of these young people felt the service significantly improved their overall wellbeing.

Voluntary Norfolk's team of Family Support Workers worked directly with over 150 families to co-create action plans that built resilience within the family, reduced the caring role for the young person and strengthened the wider support network. Recognising the importance of social networks, we partnered with Voluntary Norfolk's Better Together Norfolk service to help adults who were isolated or lonely to reconnect with their communities and build self-esteem. We also worked alongside the adult Carers Matter Norfolk service to enable adult carers within the family to find support for their own caring role and to build stronger support networks, enabling them to take a greater caring role and reducing the burden on the young person.

### A Young Carer and their Family's Success Story

In Autumn 2023 we worked with a family of three where there was a history of domestic abuse, the single parent (Mum) struggled with her mobility due to several conditions and had very poor mental health. The family lived in unsuitable housing which did not meet Mum's physical needs and had increased her sense of isolation as she could not leave the home easily to meet others.

The eldest of two children is the young carer and she supported with general household duties on a regular basis and providing emotional support to Mum, as well as supporting her younger brother with suspected ADHD, who struggled with emotional outbursts.

Recognising the strain on the family at initial triage, the family were referred to the Voluntary Norfolk Family Support team. The worker sat down with the family, including the young carer and together they identified opportunities to help - support for the young carer to join groups, professional guidance for the young carer at school, being able to go away as a family and support to increase everyone's emotional resilience. Mum also identified that she would like the chance to connect socially, access domestic abuse services, and address her own care needs.

A grant application secured a fun family trip to Legoland, creating new memories and a break from the daily routine. Referrals were made to assess both Mum's and the family's needs: care support for Mum was arranged, behaviour support for the younger brother, and emotional resilience coaching. The team worked with Better Together Norfolk to enable Mum to access their service where she was connected with social opportunities, joining groups and even leading sessions, boosting her confidence. The support didn't stop there. Our Family Support Worker arranged for The Salvation Army to provide Christmas gifts, easing their financial pressure. Mum, empowered by regained confidence, started therapy and connected with domestic abuse support specialists.

The impact was clear. Mum received the care she needed, facilitating a move to a more accessible home. The young carer received emotional support, both at home and school, making their role easier to manage. Mum found a network of friends, lessening the feeling of isolation. The family dynamic shifted, becoming stronger and more resilient.

With new-found support systems in place, the family is well-equipped to face challenges and embrace a brighter future.

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**Our team supported**  
**1,416 young carers**  
**and members of their families**

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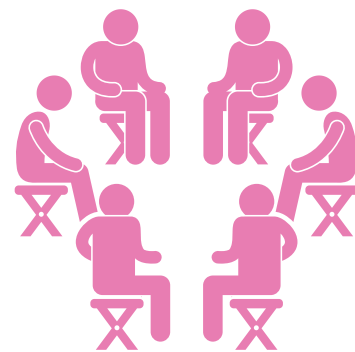
## Parent Carers Matter

Voluntary Norfolk, in collaboration with Norfolk County Council (NCC), launched a pilot Parent Carer service this year. Recognising the vital role parents play in supporting children with additional needs or disabilities, this service offers a lifeline of information, advice, and connection. Working with Family Voice Norfolk and NCC, we revamped the Parent Carer Needs Assessment process. This improved system has allowed us to conduct essential assessments for parents across the county, enabling them to access the support they deserve. NCC has also adopted this new process for their own teams supporting parents of disabled children. Whether facing financial challenges, navigating education complexities, or simply seeking a break and peer support, parents can find a listening ear and practical assistance with our dedicated team. The support workers tailor their expertise to each parent's unique needs through one-on-one support. The team provide:

- **Connecting the Dots:** Bridging the gap by helping families understand available services and connect them with the most relevant resources.
- **Practical Assistance:** Alleviating burdens by offering help with tasks like letters, reports, or forms.
- **Benefits and Resources:** Connecting parents with specialists who can assist with benefit applications. Additionally, our support workers can access grants and explore flexible work options with employment advisors.
- **Education and School Decisions:** Empowering parents to make informed decisions about their child's future, offering support from easing communication with schools to tackling educational challenges.
- **Connecting with Professionals:** Acting as a bridge, facilitating connections with the professionals families might need.
- **Advocacy and Empowerment:** Equipping families with the knowledge and confidence to advocate for themselves and their children.

- **Simply Being There:** Sometimes the most valuable support is a listening ear and a sense of understanding.

The service's impact goes beyond individual support. Since its launch in September 2023, we facilitated eight thriving parent carer support groups across the county, with more (including online options) on the horizon. These groups foster a sense of community, allowing families to share experiences, exchange tips, and build a network of support and understanding. The Parent Carer service has also already connected with and supported over 190 parents. This project marks a significant step forward in supporting Norfolk's families. Voluntary Norfolk is committed to ensuring that parent carers have the resources and connections they need to thrive.





# SOS Bus

Voluntary Norfolk has continued to run the SOS Bus service which looks after the safety, health and well-being of people visiting Norwich's city centre on Friday and Saturday nights. The service aims to reduce unnecessary Accident and Emergency visits, ambulance call outs and to free up police officer time, by offering a safe space with medical cover for anyone in emotional or physical distress. It also provides other help, such as free phone charging, bottled water, flip flops, advice and mental health support.

In 2023-2024 the service had 38 volunteers. There are three core volunteer roles on shift: One Shift Coordinator, three Shift Support and a Support Vehicle Driver alongside contracted paramedic, emergency first responder and security. Over the course of the year volunteers gave 2,820 hours of their time for shifts and 125 hours to clean and maintain the vehicle. A total of 94 shifts were run. 2,476 people were helped through the provision of bottled water, phone charging, flip flops, condoms, etc. and a further 443 individuals were cared for on the bus.

Voluntary Norfolk took the SOS Bus service on from Open Trust in 2019 in order to avoid its closure and is committed to trying to maintain this service for the city of Norwich. We were advised in August 2023 that the funding from the Norfolk & Waveney Integrated Care Board would not be renewed in April 2024, meaning a loss of over 75% of our funding for the service. Along with a committed group of staff and volunteers, we are working towards making the SOS Bus service an independent, financially viable, volunteer-led charity. To this end, the volunteers have been actively fundraising and grant applications have been made.



## A SOS Bus user's story

A 46 year old male presented himself at the bus after having difficulty breathing. He had a history of asthma and a recent chest infection. He had not brought his inhaler with him. His breathing was very laboured and difficult. Paramedic assessed and gave medication through a nebuliser. This eased the symptoms and the client went home in a taxi with a friend. Without the SOS Bus, the client would have needed to go to hospital for this treatment, and probably via ambulance, as the client was extremely breathless.

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## SOS Bus volunteers helped

**2,476 people**  
over the last year

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The importance of the service and impact that it had supporting the emergency services is demonstrated by the fact that 51 Accident and Emergency visits and 170 ambulance callouts were prevented. It is estimated that the service saved over £121,000 for the ambulance service and NHS. Furthermore, the team spent over 144 hours looking after clients brought to the service by the police, who would otherwise have had to stay with, thus freeing up operational capacity for the Norfolk Constabulary at some of their busiest times. The SOS Bus service helped over 2919 people.

In December 2023, the SOS Bus was named 'Team/Community Group of the Year' at the EDP's Stars of Norfolk and Waveney Awards. The importance of the SOS Bus was revealed by some of our clients and partners who were asked what would have happened, had the Bus not been operating. Here are their words:



SOS Bus volunteers on a shift

“ Sat at A&E for hours with patient in truck ”

**Ambulance crew dropping off a client under the influence**

“ Called an ambulance. ”

**Friend of intoxicated client**

“ You are lifesavers. I don't know what I would have done. ”

**Mental health crisis client**

“ I don't know what I would have done, I needed help with my insulin pump. ”

**Client with Type 1 diabetes**



sector – healthcare. He said that ideally he would like to work as an emergency call handler, but would like to find any role in Healthcare to build his experience.

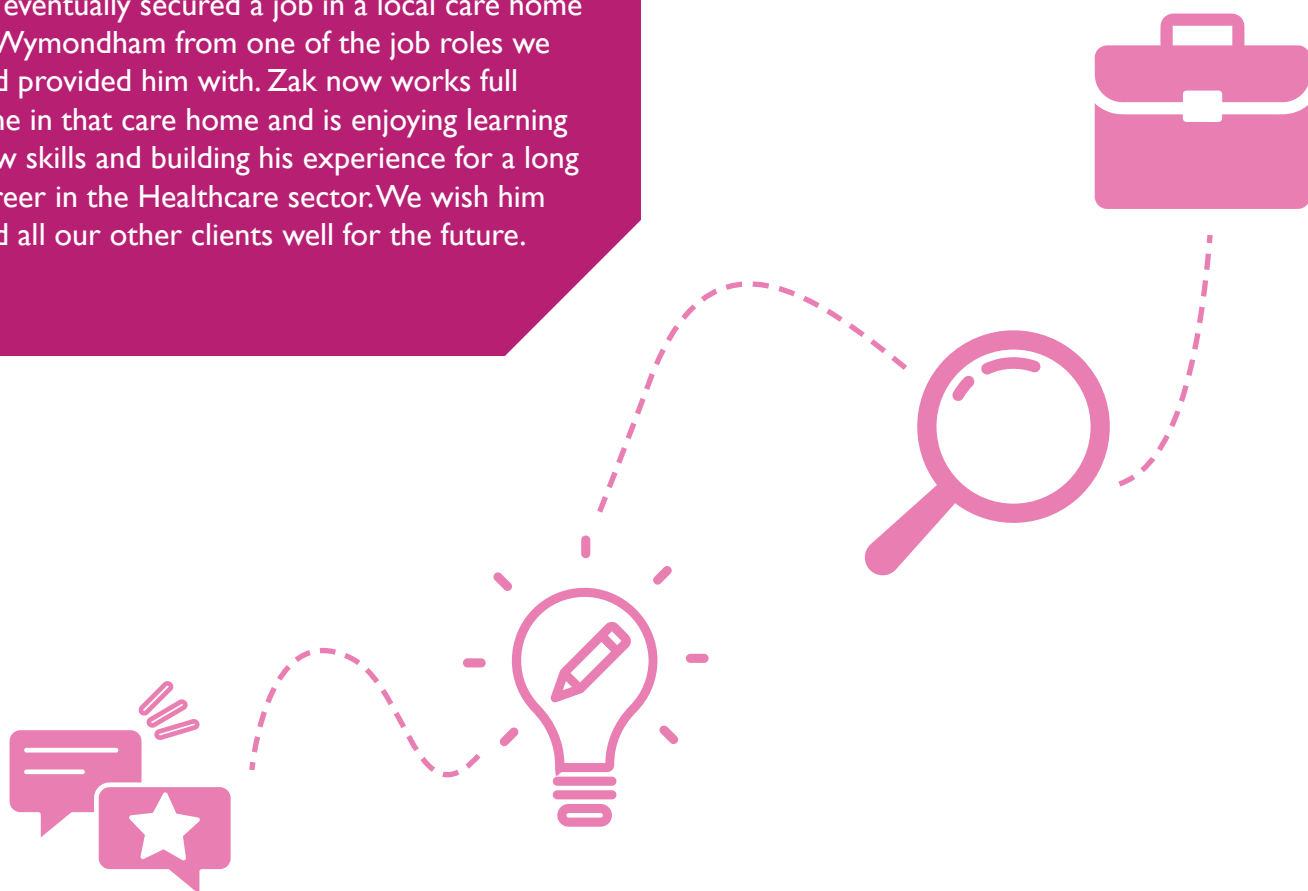
Voluntary Norfolk’s Employment and Skills team helped Zak redevelop his CV and formulated a template covering letter that he could use when applying for roles. We assisted him with job searching, getting him set up on employment websites with a suitable profile to attract employers.

We also sent him regular updates and jobs of interest to aid him in his search. Zak commented that he felt like “he had his own private investigator” helping him find suitable roles in his preferred career path and thanked his Voluntary Norfolk Skills Connector for helping him.

Zak applied for a range of jobs he found and that were sent to him by our Skills Connector. He became more confident job searching and he eventually secured a job in a local care home in Wymondham from one of the job roles we had provided him with. Zak now works full time in that care home and is enjoying learning new skills and building his experience for a long career in the Healthcare sector. We wish him and all our other clients well for the future.

Throughout this year we have worked with 225 clients, and of these we got 49 into work and a further 54 into job search. We also assisted 30 participants into further training to aid their employment prospects.

Although our delivery capacity was greatly reduced in this area, organisationally we retain a considerable amount of knowledge and expertise in this area. We are pursuing new funding streams as they become available and integrating employment and skills expertise as an offer to clients in other services where appropriate (see future plans section). Specifically, we continue to run the employability networks in both Great Yarmouth and Norwich which facilitate partnerships and opportunities for collaboration and development, share good practice and enable 30-40 organisations each month to showcase innovation and opportunities.





# Strengthening communities and improving lives through volunteering

Over the past ten years, apart from a short-lived peak in response to the COVID pandemic, there has been a steady decline in volunteering year on year, with the sharpest decline in the last year which saw a 7% drop. Research for our Vision for Volunteering strategy found that in terms of formal volunteering this translated into a reduction of £31 million a year for Norfolk. In addition, there is recent evidence that the average number of hours being given by volunteers has reduced significantly. In this context the work of Voluntary Norfolk's volunteers proved invaluable in continuing to strengthen communities and improve lives.

## Norfolk and Waveney Community Support Service (NWCSS)

As a result of changes in ICB structures and requirements, this new service was commissioned in April 2024, replacing our previous Health & Wellbeing service and Community Response service. The staff, volunteers and experience from these services were integrated into the new service.

Norfolk and Waveney Community Support Service is a multi-agency model led by Voluntary Norfolk. Working in partnership with British

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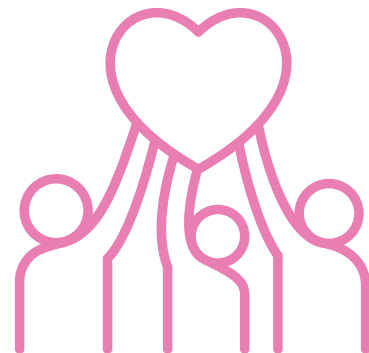
**We received**  
**over 1,000 referrals**  
**in the first 6 months of the**  
**service**

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Red Cross and Age UK Norwich we use a staff and volunteer model to react to and meet service demand. The service focuses on providing short-term, practical support for people to help with temporary issues and avoid escalation and potential hospital admittance. Referrals come in for a variety of reasons ranging from people needing emergency food parcels, to needing support to attend appointments or community support groups. We work to link people with local networks and groups wherever possible to ensure they can remain independent for as long as possible.

The service covers all of Norfolk and Waveney with strong links developing with the acute hospitals that serve our area as well as strong links with community services such as adult social care, social prescribers, physio teams and many more.

This is the first model of its kind to be adopted in Norfolk and the staff teams are working hard to make it work - being solution-focused and striving to meet needs wherever they can. Over the first 6 months of the service, we have received over 1,000 referrals which have been met through volunteer and staff support. We continue to recruit volunteers and look forward to the service increasing its capacity over the coming year.



### A client's story

TM was referred in from Papworth Hospital with a request to support him with food. He was due to be discharged home and the referrer was concerned that TM would not be able to do his shopping and make sure he had food in. Voluntary Norfolk staff contacted TM and although he was reluctant at first, agreed that he would benefit from some support getting set up online with Morrisons. He wasn't sure if he trusted the online system, but was happy to try with help from us.

The volunteer did an initial shop to make sure that he had food in the house to aid with his recovery. Staff then visited TM at home and supported him to set up an online Morrisons account and do his first shop. Staff contacted him once the shop had been delivered and TM said that it was great! He was really pleased with the process and happy to do his next shop independently. TM is now able to manage his food shopping needs independently from the comfort of his own home. We are delighted that he is now managing independently.



# East Coast Community Healthcare CIC

2023-24 marked the fifth year of Voluntary Norfolk's partnership with East Coast Community Healthcare (ECCH). We saw great progress in the service, reflected in an increase in volunteering hours, as well as excellent feedback from patients and staff.

Volunteers have assisted in a variety of roles across the organisation, ranging from supporting short term projects and one-off events, to providing ongoing regular assistance to staff and patients at a range of ECCH sites across Norfolk and Waveney, as well as to patients at home in the community. Across the various roles, 56 volunteers provided 1,353 hours of support, an increase from the 830 hours provided in 2022-23.

Some of the activities that ECCH volunteers assisted with included:

- Providing company and conversation to inpatients at Beccles Community Hospital
- Taking clients' carbon monoxide readings at drop in sessions and reporting these to the ECCH Smokefree team to support a pilot scheme aimed at reducing smoking in pregnant clients in Gorleston and Great Yarmouth
- Assisting staff at the Leg Ulcer Clinics at five different ECCH sites by collecting patients from waiting areas, fetching stock, assisting with cleaning tasks and running errands
- Making calls to patients to gather feedback on ECCH's services. Volunteers made 187 calls to patients, and completed over 80 feedback surveys
- Accompanying patients out on walks, helping them access their local area and providing companionship and conversation to build their confidence following a stroke
- Giving feedback on the design and content of new ECCH leaflets to ensure ease of understanding.
- Helping with administrative tasks such as putting together packs for patients and taking inventory of stock

Alongside volunteers supporting in hospitals and clinics we received 22 referrals from ECCH staff for support for patients in the community. Volunteers were able to support clients with aspects of their health such as building confidence with outdoor mobility, accessing their local community and opportunities to practice speech and conversation following a stroke. Volunteers also provided practical short-term support with tasks such as collecting shopping.



Volunteer Coordinator Elissa at an event

## Our volunteers' impact:

Dawn, an ECCH patient who needed help from a volunteer collecting shopping whilst she was recovering from surgery, told us:

*“ I was humbled by the genuine kindness received by this lovely, friendly young man who also gave me moral support, over and above his obligations. I can't thank this service enough and the wonderful help from the team who arranged it for me. ”*



Our volunteers for ECCH at Carlton Marshes social

The impact that volunteers are having on the teams they work with has been clear through the feedback that we have received from ECCH staff. Clinic nurses have reported being able to see more patients per session because of the time saved by the volunteer support, and staff have told us how the presence of a volunteer can be reassuring to a lot of patients.

*“ The volunteer makes a big difference to us all by coming to help, offering assistance with keeping the room clean and tidy, helping us with our stock, allowing us more time to do clinical work , easing the pressure and work load from us. ”*

**ECCH staff member at Kirkley Mill Health Centre**

*“ The patients love the volunteers, because they're more like them and they can talk about everyday life and worries or anything that they want to. The patients take an interest in the volunteers and the volunteers take an interest in the patient as a person ”*

**ECCH staff member at Northgate Hospital**

We are delighted to continue to work with ECCH in 2024-25 to create new roles for volunteers which both help the organisation and provide volunteers with fulfilling ways to support their local communities and build their experience in healthcare.



# ERS Medical - Non-emergency Patient Transport

The ERS Medical volunteer drivers, supported by Voluntary Norfolk, continued to provide a professional, high-quality transport service to patients registered with Norfolk GP surgeries. Our volunteer drivers use their own cars to provide door-to-door transport to essential, non-emergency medical appointments across East Anglia and occasionally beyond. This reduces the cost to the health service, as otherwise these patients would have to travel by ambulance or even by taxi. At the end of the 2023-24 financial year, Voluntary Norfolk had 49 active volunteer drivers. This compared to 43 active drivers at the end of the previous financial year.

Throughout the year, 430,642 miles were driven (down from 454,248 miles the previous year), completing a total of 12,536 journeys (compared to 11,867 journeys in 2022-23), ensuring that people who needed to travel to and from a hospital or other medical venue were able to do so. The number of miles covered this year was down in part because this financial year our volunteers were able to transport more than one patient at a time in their cars, following the removal of Covid restrictions, which came in during 2020. The number of journeys (i.e. individual patient movements) continued to rise, reflecting the return to multiple passengers and shorter more frequent journeys.



Volunteer Driver Roger

## Roger's Story

Asked what he enjoyed about volunteering as a non-emergency patient driver, Roger said he was pleased about:

*"Meeting people from all walks of life ... There are a lot of people that have led fascinating lives and lived all over the world. Volunteering also gets you to go to places you would never ordinarily visit as they are not on your usual 'A to B' routes... and you discover many different routes to various places, many of which are hidden gems."*

*"There was an elderly lady I drove a couple of times for radiotherapy, and it turned out that she had lived about 3 miles from where I grew up... and at the same time, she even knew some of the parents of some of my friends at the time! It just goes to show what a small world we live in. It was really nice to talk about familiar places from years ago."*

*"It certainly helps the patients because many of them are elderly and live on their own, if we didn't have interaction with them their life would be very isolated. It is good to try and help put them at ease by listening to them when they talk about what they are going through with the treatment... and some really do like to talk!! It is always nice when you get them to the hospital or return them home and they say that us volunteers do a wonderful job... let's face it we all like a bit of praise now and again!"*

# Norfolk Community Health and Care NHS Trust

The NCH&C Volunteer Service, delivered by Voluntary Norfolk, employs a team of staff who recruit, train and manage volunteers to provide support in clinical and administrative settings in community hospitals and clinics across Norfolk.

At the end of the 2023-24 financial year, our service had 128 registered volunteers with a further 64 in various stages of recruitment and on-boarding. Over the course of the year, volunteers contributed a significantly increased amount of their time (approximately 16% more hours vs. the previous year) across a wider range of roles logging a total of 7,373 hours across 58 different volunteer roles.

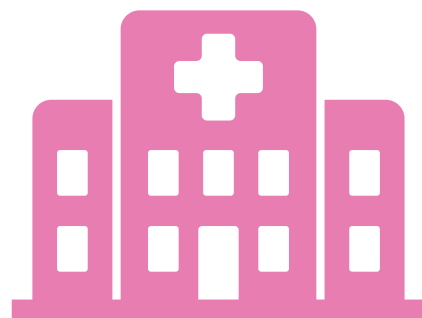
The roles our NCH&C volunteers undertook included:

- Providing companionship to inpatients
- Supporting patients in activity and therapy groups
- Supporting with simple, practical tasks on wards, such as lunch menus, cleaning touch points, stocking up everyday items
- Assisting patients at mealtimes, following successful completion of the appropriate training
- Using their own lived experience of receiving care to deliver talks to patients with the aim of inspiring and encouraging (see Les's Story)
- Meeting and greeting patients arriving for clinics and giving directions
- Assisting with basic administrative tasks such as the collation of patient packs
- Telephoning patients to collect vital feedback on their experiences
- Helping to tidy gardens on NCH&C sites, through basic gardening tasks
- Supporting reception teams with check-in and welcome processes
- Tidying stockrooms, and putting new stock away
- Supporting Musculoskeletal Clinicians by machine-sewing splints together from pre-cut patterns.

The apparently straightforward nature of many of our volunteer roles belies their positive impact. Our Activity Support are prime example of the very real difference our volunteers can make – simply by engaging patients in meaningful activities, motivating them and getting them physically up and about plays a vital role in their recovery and rehabilitation as well as making their stay in hospital that little bit more enjoyable.

Mary, who is a Technical Instructor with Foxley Therapy Team at Dereham Hospital says: “Volunteers are amazing! it’s a long boring day for the patients with no stimulation. Our Activity Support volunteer checks in on everyone and gives them a bit of company.”

The NCH&C Volunteer Service team look forward to another year of enabling our fantastic volunteers to make a vital contribution to the NHS in their communities.



## Les' Story

Les joined our team of Volunteers at Beech Stroke Rehabilitation Ward at Norwich Community Hospital in the exciting new role of the Life After Stroke (LAS) Volunteer. The aim of the LAS Volunteer's role is to engage with patients on the ward, sharing personal experiences of recovery from stroke with the aim of reassuring, encouraging and motivating patients.

Les said *"I first heard about volunteering with the Trust when I myself was a patient at Beech Ward. I contacted the team to enquire as I wanted to help others understand their recovery journey, especially the positives."* During his talks with patients, Les will talk through his own journey, including his treatment and rehabilitation, discharge and care packages, support in the home and his ongoing progress. Les said *"So far feedback for my presentations has been for a number of patients an inspiration towards themselves moving forward."*



NCH&C Volunteer Les

*“ Les' Life After Stroke presentations have been received really well- patients have praised Les' approach and mentioned how this presentation has allowed them to see a possible path going forward. ”*

**Joseph Marsden, Assistant Psychologist at Beech Ward**

*“ I would definitely recommend volunteering with NCH&C to others. My role brings the enrichment of satisfaction of helping others back to a normality of life after having a stroke. ”*

**Les**



# CBR Business Solutions: Professional Support Services for Charities, Social Enterprises and Businesses

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CBR Business Solutions is the trading arm of Voluntary Norfolk, with operating profits providing an important source of unrestricted income.

We provide essential HR support, DBS checks, Payroll and Auto Enrolment services to around 500 organisations across England and Wales. Our clients range from small local charities to large SMEs, and we are proud to deliver high-quality services through our experienced and knowledgeable team.

## DBS Checks

We offer safe and secure online DBS applications. Our paper-based checks are now only for sensitive applications and the fingerprinting service. We also provide digital ID, Post Office verification, right to work and overseas checks, which are new online services for clients. We continue to offer free DBS training workshops in partnership with the Disclosure and Barring Service to any organisation with responsibility for DBS checks. These cover eligibility, safeguarding and barring.

## Payroll Service

We take care of the payroll needs of our clients, who choose to outsource this function due to capacity, lack of in-house skills or relevant software. Every month, we pay the salaries to 900 payees in 75 discreet customer payrolls, taking into account individual pension requirements, adjustments, statutory payments, tax codes, deductions, tax and National Insurance. We also process and send relevant documentation for clients such as payslips, pension letters, P45s and P60s, returns to HRMC and schedules for pension providers.

## HR Consultancy

Our Chartered MCIPD HR Consultants provide a flexible, professional HR service on all aspects of HR management. Whether clients need help with on-boarding, contracts of employment, policies and procedures, training and coaching, performance management, restructures, ill health and capability, disciplinary and grievance processes, consultations or redundancies, our qualified consultants can assist. We also act as Investigating Officers in case of complex disciplinary and grievance investigations. During the last year we have expanded our offer to include workplace Mediation and Coaching via our HR consultants.

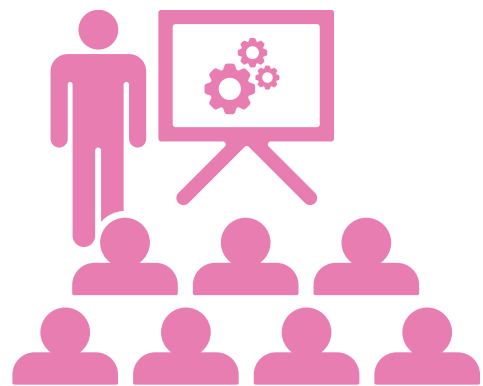
## Jobs Board

We support the VCSE sector in Norfolk to find the right candidates, by advertising job vacancies on the Jobs Board and offering preferential rates for the online job search portal, Jobs24. This helps organisations reach a wider pool of potential candidates interested in working in the charity sector.

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We provided services to  
**around 500**  
organisations  
through our trading arm  
CBR Business Solutions

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# Financial review

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The financial performance of the organisation was significantly better than budgeted in 23-24, despite some one-off costs, due to careful cost management and new income.

The statement of Financial Activities for the year is set out on Page XX. During the year, the charity's incoming resources changed from £4,889,562 (2022-23) to £4,463,978 (2023-24) (8.7% decrease). The vast majority of total income derived from charitable activities. Principally, these are agreements to provide specified services to improve the lives and wellbeing of people living in Norfolk. Legacies and donations accounted for £6,400 of total income.

A contribution to the charity's net income for use on its charitable purposes comes from CBR Business Solutions as described on pages 36-7 above. The gross income from this source stood at £478,221 in 2023-24 (£521,058 in 22-23) with net income of £6,727 (£15,340 in 22-23).

Expenditure on charitable activity decreased slightly to £4,744,006 (£4,791,116 in 22-23) and naturally continues to be the vast majority of the charity's costs.

Taking total income and expenditure into account, the net negative movement of funds during the year was £280,028, decreasing unrestricted reserves by £42,075 and restricted reserves by £237,953. The decrease in restricted reserves was planned for and as per budget. This resulted from services spending reserves held for delivery of charitable activities. The decrease in unrestricted reserves was also planned as a result of agreed investments in systems and training. Due to savings identified, this result was significantly better than budgeted, despite some additional one-off costs.

The principal financial risk which continually faces the charity is the ending of fixed term service agreements and its ability to secure new agreements. The pattern of expiry dates and potential for new agreements or extensions of existing agreements are kept under close review by the executive and the Board as a whole. As stated in the Accounting Policies at 1.12, the charity has no risk arising from pension contributions as it operates a defined contribution scheme.

At the end the year, the charity held total reserves of £909,793 (£1,189,821 in 22-23). These include restricted funds of £470,317. This relatively large sum, absolutely and proportionately, derives principally from money held for the purposes of delivery of service agreements. The more relevant figure is unrestricted reserves which stood at the year-end at £439,476.

Included in the unrestricted reserves are fixed assets of £10,320 (22-23: £15,938) The remaining sum is held in liquid form.

Trustees review the charity's reserves policy every year. Their current policy is to aim to hold free reserves which amount to three months' 'essential running costs'. This requirement was met and exceeded by 1.95 months at 31 March 2024. Trustees plan to use this to invest in resources to support the services provided. Trustees consider this position to be prudent in the light of significant pressures on public sector budgets, the importance of the services provided to individuals and communities and a coincidence in 2024 of the expiry of a number of significant service agreements. The Board intends to keep the position under close review.

# Structure, governance and management

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## Constitution

Voluntary Norfolk is both a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity. The year of formation of the original organisation was 1969. The company limited by guarantee and registered in England and Wales was formed 4 November 2005. Charitable registration was achieved on 11 November 2005.

Our governing document is a memorandum and articles of association. The charity's objective is to promote any charitable purposes for or including the benefit of the community in the United Kingdom and in particular Norfolk and Waveney, the East of England and its neighbourhood and, in particular the advancement of education, community and social services, the protection of health and the relief of poverty, distress and sickness. In addition, it promotes and organises co-operation in the achievement of the above purposes and to that end to bring together in council representatives of the voluntary organisations and statutory authorities within the area of benefit.

## Trustees

The Board of Trustees are the charity's trustees and the legal directors of the company. They are elected or co-opted under the terms of the Articles of Association. A formal process of induction is given to all trustees as well as training as appropriate. The trustees meet six times a year and are the key personnel in terms of directing and controlling the charity. There is a finance sub-committee. All the trustees give of their time freely and no trustee received remuneration within the year.

For this reporting period there were six Trustees who bring a collective wealth of knowledge and experience of voluntary sector delivery, management and governance. It is anticipated in 2024-25 additional trustees will be sought to complement the skills of the existing team.

## Management

Day-to-day responsibility for running the organisation is delegated by the Trustees to the CEO. The CEO is supported in the running and development of the organisation by a management team of Directors overseeing Voluntary Sector Infrastructure, Operations, Finance and Development. During the year it was announced the current CEO Alan Hopley would stand down at the end of May 2024, after nine years of service in that role. Trustees ran a thorough recruitment process involving external and internal stakeholders and appointed a new CEO, Michael Kitching, to start 16th July 2024.

The pay of the senior management is reviewed annually and normally in accordance with NJC guidelines. The CEO's salary is reviewed utilising recruitment consultants and external benchmarking to attract the appropriate calibre of candidate.

The trustees, CEO and management team in 2023-24 were assisted by a Policy Officer to develop, review and update policies and procedures to ensure we meet the highest quality standards.

# Risk management

A risk management register is in place to assist in identifying vulnerable areas of the organisation. During the year, the trustees undertook the annual programme of review of the register established to encompass financial, personnel, insurance, funding and expenditure areas, ensuring identified risks are properly managed and are satisfied that systems and procedures are in place to mitigate the organisation's exposure to the major risks.

# Cooperation with other charities in pursuit of charitable objectives

We are strong advocates for working with other charities and organisations. In our infrastructure provision we work in partnership with Community Action Norfolk and the Norfolk Community Foundation as well as FUSE and NCAN. In our delivery of services we had a range of partners in 2023-24 including Shoebox Community Hub, Out There Arts, Creative Collisions, Great Yarmouth Young Carers, West Norfolk Carers, Benjamin Foundation, Caring Together, MTM, Holt Youth Project, Age UK Norwich and British Red Cross. We also work closely with Norfolk County Council, local authorities, the Integrated Care Board and other NHS organisations to develop and improve services that benefit our clients and help us achieve our charitable objectives.

# Fundraising requirement

The charity does not use professional fundraisers for the year to March 2024. We do

not work with any commercial or professional fundraisers. Any complaints about any aspect of fundraising are dealt with using the charity complaints policy. As we do not use professional fundraisers there is no risk arising from the protection of the public, including vulnerable people, from unreasonably intrusive or persistent fundraising approaches, and undue pressure to donate.

# Recruitment of trustees

Charity SORP 1.25:

- Trustees are recruited as and when the current board identifies a need to bring in new skills and experiences. Trustees are appointed following an interview with at least two board members and following attendance at least one board meeting. They are then appointed by the board. There is no term limits attached to trusteeship at Voluntary Norfolk, but trustees stand down and are reappointed by rotation at Annual General Meetings.

# Disclosure of key risks

Charity SORP 1.46:

- The trustees delegate day to day risk management to the executive team and require reporting back on a regular basis, highlighting and managing any key strategic risks. The key risks for the organisation are a dependency on statutory contract income which tend to be on renewable one-year contracts. These risks are mitigated by regular risk profiling and through communication with statutory partners. Other risks are around IT and facilities with action plans in place in the event of systems or premises failure.



# Progress against plans and future plans

In this section we report back against the plans we presented last year and lay out our plans for the coming year.

A significant proportion of our work is ongoing services or projects, as presented in this report. We will continue to deliver these services, looking for opportunities to improve and develop them and working closely with partners and commissioners to ensure the best possible outcomes. Here we focus on plans that are new or additional to delivery of our existing work.

The tables below present an update on progress against our plans for 2023-24 and further plans agreed for the coming year.

## Reporting back against 2023-24 plans

Area of work / Context	Stated aims for 2023-24	Update at end 23-24
Infrastructure	Further development of the Empowering Communities Partnership.	A strong partnership programme of practical support, involving events, seminars, networking, and forums has enabled capacity and skills development and opportunities for collaboration and strategic influence.
	Development and embedding of the Vision for Volunteering across the VCSE and statutory sector.	The Norfolk Vision was launched at a high-profile event, following strategic stakeholder endorsement.  A collaborative programme of work taking shape to drive forward ambitious improvements in support for volunteering.
	Development of our sector support for the refugee support sector.	Relationships with refugee organisations have been strengthened.  Norwich City of Sanctuary funded to support the development of Towns of Sanctuary in Norfolk.  Project to engage sanctuary seekers in volunteering within the wider VCSE in place.

Area of work / Context	Stated aims for 2023-24	Update at end 23-24
<b>Services</b>	Pursue accreditation for Services.	Reviewing suitable accreditation providers to ensure there is a good fit given the breadth of services we offer.
<b>Development and sustainability</b>	Engage with recommissioning on existing contracts, developing our offer and partnership.	Existing contracts and services retained, with the exception of ESF-funded employment and skills projects when ESF funding came to an end and was not replaced by other funding streams. New partnership delivery model developed for Norfolk and Waveney Community Support Service.
	Explore options for closer partnership working with other VCSE organisations	Partnership working remains important for delivering Services and Infrastructure work and is part of most services and projects. This year existing partnerships were continued and new partnerships formed. Some formal delivery partnerships ceased due to changes in funding availability.
	Review options for investing in CBR Business Solutions to enable growth.	New HR services of coaching and mediation developed. Additional employment check services offered by current DBS provider are being investigated.
<b>Internal development</b>	Implement HR system	We are progressing the implementation of the Cezanne HR system to support our HR processes.
	Data & IT	Ongoing developments to our IT provision, and continued focus on our IG and data security.
	Continue to develop training and support for staff with a particular focus on client facing staff and the pressures they face	Developed a training matrix for staff which is tailored to each individual team. Further development of in-house training and courses will be ongoing to ensure that training remains current and relevant.

# Future plans for 2024-25

Area of work / Context	Aims for 2024-25	What does success look like?
<p><b>Infrastructure</b></p>	<p>Sustain and evolve Empowering Communities partnership to meet new sector needs and commissioning intentions.</p>	<p>An innovative and creative partnership-based VCSE sector support programme, able to support and stretch the sector to build capacity and able to respond to changing needs.</p>
	<p>Embed Vision for Volunteering collaborative work plan across Norfolk stakeholders, further extending reach into health and care.</p>	<p>A system wide approach to working with and supporting volunteers, which is based on good practice and is effectively resourced, based on collective system ambitions.</p>
	<p>Build the Momentum Children and Young People's support programme, to strength youth voice and sector collaboration.</p>	<p>A vibrant programme of sector support initiatives that support children and young people in Norfolk to flourish through a resilient youth sector.</p>
<p><b>Services</b></p>	<p>Strengthen our unpaid Carers provision for all ages.</p>	<p>Successful evaluation of the Parent Carers pilot service, evidencing the need for future commissioning. Successful transitioning into our new Young Carers service building on co-production and ensuring the voice of Young Carers is heard.</p>
	<p>Rebuild our Employability provision.</p>	<p>Gaining employability contracts following the cessation of European Social Fund to ensure we offer holistic services to people, supporting them back into employment.</p>
	<p>Secure the future of the SOS Bus as an independent service following cessation of ICB funding for the service</p>	<p>SOS Bus service transitions to an independent volunteer-led CIO, continuing to support those needing assistance on nights out in Norwich</p>

Area of work / Context	Aims for 2024-25	What does success look like?
<b>Development and sustainability</b>	Retain and develop services and projects that will be recommissioned in 24-25	Established services and projects that demonstrate value and effectiveness continue to operate, whilst adapting to changing needs where relevant.
	Diversify funding sources, particularly increasing grant funding income where it can enhance provision.	Grant funding enables us to build on and enhance existing offerings to clients / VCSE organisations, and to innovate to better meet the needs of communities.
	Explore partnerships and new ways of working that will deliver value to clients and the VCSE sector.	Opportunities explored – and where appropriate taken forward - to enhance our delivery working with other organisations in the VCSE sector and wider system.
<b>Internal development</b>	Move main (Norwich) office to another location	A move to better quality offices that meet changed, hybrid working needs, and make cost savings.
	Embed new HR system and build usage of different elements	HR system bring efficiencies and improvements to internal processes

# Reference and administrative details

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**Trustees** John Archibald, Chair  
David Walker, Vice Chair  
Robert Hetherington  
Vivienne Clifford-Jackson  
Josephine Smithson  
Mark Hitchcock

**Company registered number** 05616120

**Charity registered number** 1112017

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**Chief executive officer** Alan Hopley (retired May 31<sup>st</sup> 2024)

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