



**VOLUNTARY
NORFOLK**

**Annual Report
2024-2025**

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Chair's introduction: David Walker

As Acting Chair, I am pleased to present this annual report which seeks to showcase the impact that Voluntary Norfolk has had over the last twelve months in improving the lives of people and strengthening communities across Norfolk and beyond. I would like to start by thanking staff, volunteers and partners for their hard work in helping us achieve the successes we have had in the last year.

We knew the current financial year would throw up its fair share of challenges. In October 2023, the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) had warned that the cost-of-living crisis had sparked a “cost of giving crisis” for charities that could see 1 in 5 cease operating. Fortunately, thanks to the resilience of our organisation and prudent planning, Voluntary Norfolk were never likely to suffer this fate. However, that is not to say we did not have to overcome significant challenges over the last year. Most notable among these has been the ongoing financial uncertainty for the organisation, given that several of our contracts, notably our Better Together service, our volunteer services for ECCH, NCH&C, ERS and our Community Support Service, the Empowering Communities partnership, our Brighter Futures employment team, and our Parent Carers Service were all up for renewal over the last year or were set to end at the end of the financial year. As you will see from our Balance Sheet, we ended the year in a strong financial position. The other major challenge was ensuring that we could hand over the running of the SOS Bus and help set it up as its own charity following the decision by the ICB to cease funding the service last year. I am pleased to report that throughout the year all our services continued to operate while the SOS bus is now firmly established as a separate charity that continues to provide support to people in Norwich's late night economy zone at weekends.



David Walker
Chair of Trustees

As you will see in this report, Voluntary Norfolk has continued to make a genuinely positive impact to so many people and communities. Particular highlights, for me as acting chair, have been the first ever Volunteer Extravaganza which our VCSE Sector Support Team organised to promote volunteering in Norfolk. We know that nationally volunteering numbers, especially formal volunteering have declined in the last decade and so activities that encourage people to support voluntary organisations, charities, community groups and social enterprises are certainly to be encouraged and promoted. I was delighted to hear such positive feedback about this event with so many groups urging us to repeat it next year.

Similarly, the ongoing efforts of our Freshly Created team to bring community cohesion to some of the most deprived and marginalised areas of Great Yarmouth are to be welcomed. At a time when society seems more polarised than ever this initiative deserves special note. The showcase events the team put on, of course, made the headlines, but for me it was less conspicuous work done on a daily basis to empower people and give them the skills and resources to put on the kind of activities that they wanted to see, which was the most positive. This epitomises the purpose of this project; namely to ensure the efforts of the staff there will have an ongoing legacy going forward. This year's strong performance, here and in so many other areas of our work, gives me the confidence that as an organisation, we will achieve even more in the years ahead.

Internally the last twelve months have seen a number of changes for the organisation with a new Chief Executive coming in, the majority of our staff moving to a new office in Norwich and significant changes amongst the Board of trustees, not least our long-standing chair, John Archibald, standing down after 15 years on our Board. The VCSE sector in Norfolk generally owes John a debt of gratitude and the ongoing success of Voluntary Norfolk was in no small part down to his excellent leadership in recent years. Jo Smithson also stepped down this year leaving very big shoes to fill especially regarding financial matters. We were, however, fortunate to have been offered the services of three new Board members. Ian Morrison, Stephen Wright and Tessa Haskey all joined in 2024/25. Latterly, Mark Trenavin-Body has also joined the Board, as a very experienced finance professional. At the Board's June 2025 meeting, Tessa Haskey was elected Chair. I am delighted that we have succeeded in finding a Chair with an impressive track record of successful leadership who is committed to seeing the voluntary sector and Voluntary Norfolk thrive in our remarkable County. I look forward to working with Tessa and all my colleagues as we put together our vision for where we want Voluntary Norfolk to go. As a Board, we were also delighted to have been able to welcome our new CEO Michael Kitching to Voluntary Norfolk. He brings with him a wealth of experience from the world of charity and politics in Norfolk. I am convinced with these changes Voluntary Norfolk will be able to continue to work with people to improve lives and strengthen communities over the coming months and years.

CEO's introduction: Michael Kitching

This year has been one of significant transformation and renewed ambition for Voluntary Norfolk. At a time when the communities we serve are facing increasing challenges — from financial pressures to changes in public service delivery — we have restructured and refocused ourselves as an organisation to ensure we remain fit for purpose, resilient, and responsive to Norfolk's evolving needs.

One of the most important internal changes this year has been the recalibration of our leadership structure. We moved from a directorate model of four separate areas — Development, Operations, VCSE Sector Support, and Finance — to a more streamlined and strategic model led by two directors: a Director of Partnerships and Influencing, and a Chief Operating Officer. This change is more than structural. It reflects a new clarity of purpose. It allows us to better align our operational delivery with our ambition to influence systems, policy, and the long-term wellbeing of communities across Norfolk.

With this reorganisation in place, we will look to make a bold and necessary pivot in how we fund our work. Historically, Voluntary Norfolk has relied heavily on funding from local authorities and statutory organisations. While these partnerships remain crucial, the shifting landscape of public sector finances has made it essential that we diversify our income and this is something we press ahead with in the next financial year.

Despite these internal changes, our core purpose remains unchanged: **working with people to strengthen communities and improve lives**. Over the past year, we've continued to make a tangible difference in this regard across Norfolk. From helping people into volunteering opportunities that



Michael Kitching
Chief Executive Officer

build confidence, skills and connection, to strengthening the VCSE sector through advice, networks, and advocacy — we have enabled communities to thrive. Our services for adult and young carers have provided crucial lifelines for those navigating complex caring responsibilities, while our employment support programmes have helped people (particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds in Norwich) move (back) towards work, training, or education. Meanwhile, our Better Together service continues to reduce loneliness and isolation, and our Freshly Created team is breaking new ground in community-building through creative arts. Each of these programmes is served by passionate staff, dedicated volunteers, and a shared commitment to improving lives.

Looking ahead, our focus will be on building on this strong foundation; diversifying our income, deepening our partnerships, and enhancing the role of co-production in everything we do. We believe that the most sustainable solutions are those created with, not for, communities. That's why we'll be working closely with local people to understand their challenges, listen to their priorities, and co-design services that genuinely meet their needs. This is especially important as we all adapt to a rapidly changing environment for local government and health services, where the VCSE sector will play an ever-greater role. I am incredibly proud of what we've achieved together this year and deeply grateful to our staff, volunteers, trustees, partners and funders. Thank you for your continued support as we shape a more connected, compassionate and community-powered Norfolk.

Trustees' report

The Trustees present their annual report together with the audited financial statements of the company for the year 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025. 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

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

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 2024-25 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*

Glossary

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.

DBS checks – (Disclosure and Barring Service) is a criminal record check that employers request to determine if a job candidate / volunteer is suitable for a position, particularly one involving working with children or vulnerable adults.

ECCH – 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.

EDI – Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

EHAP – Early Help Assessment and Plan

EHCP – Education, Health and Care Plan

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

ICB - Norfolk & Waveney Integrated Care Board

MAP – Mancroft Advice Project is a Norwich-based charity aiming to ‘ensure young people have the access to quality information, advice, counselling and support they need for their holistic development’

MHST – Mental Health Support Team

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.

NEET – ‘not in employment, education or training’

NWCSS – Norfolk and Waveney Community Support Service

PCNA – Parent Carer Needs Assessment

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).

Highlights during 2024-25

8,195 potential volunteers have registered on our Get InVOlved Norfolk volunteering platform with 1,419 accepted applications



439 not for profit organisations have registered on our Get InVOlved Norfolk volunteering platform to recruit volunteers

Our Community Support Service volunteers have accrued in excess of **2,300 hours** helping people in their own homes with basic household tasks



73 volunteers provided **2,895 hours** of support for East Coast Community Healthcare

Our 134 Norfolk Community Health and Care NHS Trust volunteers contributed **7,832 hours** of their time improving patient experiences.



Our non-emergency patient drivers completed **11,470 journeys**, clocking up **433,068 miles**



Our Better Together team gave out **150 hampers** to those in need of an extra Christmas cheer this December



Our Brighter Futures team have supported **145 people** (who are amongst the furthest away from getting work in Norwich), to remove the structural barriers into employment and skills



A network of 180 volunteer Community Producers have helped put on dozens of events for Freshly Created which have been attended by **over 28,000 people**

Our Voluntary Norfolk Network supports **327 different VCSE organisations** across the county and beyond



These Community Producers have volunteered **1,630 hours** of their time to ensure these events have been a success

The Better Together team supported another **400 people** to help them overcome loneliness and social isolation

Our Young Carers Team supported over **700 young people** to remove some of their caring responsibilities or lessen the burden



Our Carers Matter Team have supported **369 adult carers** across Norfolk to ensure they do not get overwhelmed with their caring responsibilities

Our Young Carers Team helped launch 17 new young carer groups and enhanced 13 existing ones, with a combined total of **135 group sessions** across the county



We continued to support the Men's Shed Network in Norfolk – which now has approximately **as many sheds as the whole of London** (with a population over seven times as large as that of Norfolk)



Building a thriving VCSE sector

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 Sector Support Team. They have five key purposes:

1. That VCSE organisations are more resilient and better equipped to carry out their mission by having increased capabilities, capacity and sustainability
2. That the sector works more collaboratively to support each other and influence policy and decision-making that impacts on service delivery

3. That the benefits and increased wellbeing of volunteering are available to everyone at every stage of their lives
4. That the VN VCSE Sector Support Team is recognised as a trusted, responsive, innovative and reliable support body
5. That the team identifies and develops plans for the long-term, appropriately resourced, sustainable growth of sector support services as a key part of VN's offer.

Within the VCSE Support Team there are a number of different work strands, which will be covered individually.



Empowering Communities

Voluntary Norfolk leads the Empowering Communities Partnership (ECP), serving Norfolk VCSEs with a wealth of connections, expertise, and both local and specialist knowledge. As VCSE organisations navigate ongoing challenges—including rising costs, growing service demands, and recruitment struggles for both volunteers and staff—this collaborative, integrated approach ensures accessible and effective support.

The Voluntary Norfolk Network grew by 11% in the last year

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.

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.”

Network membership has increased to 402 individuals; this is an 11% increase from last year. These individuals represent 327 different organisations, an increase of 10% from the previous year.

A fortnightly email update is sent to Network members including relevant sector updates and news, information about upcoming events and new additions to the Voluntary Norfolk Network Padlet and VCSE Funding Padlet. There has been an increase in the average open rate of these newsletters from the previous year, from 44% to 46%.

The Voluntary Norfolk Network Padlet had 788 new posts added and a 7% increase in views from the previous year.

The VCSE Funding Padlet has had 385 new posts added and an increase in views of 20% and an increase in visitors of 31%.

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.

The VCSE Leadership Network has grown from 89 members to 165, an increase of 85%. Organisations represented has increased from 77 to 134, a 74% rise.

There were three in person Leadership Network Meetings this year, with a total of 98 attendees, an increase of 96% from attendance in the previous year. These meetings included a session with the Economic Development Team at Norfolk County Council to help shape the new Norfolk Economic Strategy. One explored the current challenges, priorities and aspirations of local VCSEs alongside the immediate needs presenting in local communities. Another provided more informal networking to enable attendees to make connections and share challenges to build collective strength and influence.

VCSE Leadership Network meetings create a space for leaders to build relationships and share experiences.



When asked what they most valued about attending these meetings attendees said:

- “Opportunity to talk to other voluntary sector professionals”
- “Connection and listening to smart and invested colleagues!”
- “Connecting with other VCSE leaders”
- “Good to hear multiple agencies and backgrounds are on the same page with a recognition of the work that needs to be done”
- “The importance of all working collaboratively”

**The VCSE Leadership Network
has grown by 85%
since last year**

In June 2024 a Volunteering Extravaganza event was held at The Forum, this was more than just a typical volunteering fair with organisations attending providing engaging activities for potential volunteers to “give it a go”. Over 50 organisations attended and approximately 1,200 members of the public. 97% of organisations who took part said they would be keen to attend a similar event in future.

Comments included:

- “I felt there was a great atmosphere with community at the heart. Many people looked round the stalls and seemed to be engaging with lots of organisations.”
- “Good event to be part of and appreciate the opportunity to be involved. Great to have a big event to promote volunteering in Norfolk.”
- “Lots of interest, volunteers got to enjoy a day meeting other volunteers, networking, raising awareness of our charity. A feel good factor for all the other organisations across the county who work along side us or in a totally different field. Recognising the power of volunteering and the gap they fill.”

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 the VSCE Sector Support Team held 14 events, these were a mixture of face-to-face and online events and included workshops, networking and good practice events. These had an overall attendance of 348 people, an increase of 16% from the previous year. These individuals represented 186 different organisations. Overall average feedback across events was 4.5 out of 5.

**Our events received an
overall rating of 4.5 / 5
from attendees**

As a result of sector feedback which highlighted funding as a high priority, a day long event was held in January called *Funding the Future: Diversifying Income for Charities & Social Enterprises*. The day included several workshops and talks with expert guest speakers and opportunities for VCSEs to share their knowledge and experiences. There were 57 individuals attendees from 42 Norfolk VCSEs. 75% said they would be interested in attending a similar event again if the format were repeated annually.

Comments included:

- “The speakers [...] had an excellent understanding of the funding environment we are working in and, although it is a bleak picture, it still felt positive. Met some old faces and new ones, so a great networking opportunity too.”
- “I gained insight into alternative funding streams and met key individuals”
- “Good conversations with other fundraisers, lots of notes and ideas from the talks”
- “It was a good kick start for us to think about our Fundraising Strategy and the potential ways we could diversify our income”
- “I learnt about crowdfunding and felt very well supported by the organisers for offering such an event for the sector to come together and discuss challenges and ideas.”

A series of workshops were held exploring Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) to help VCSE organisations in their work to empower, support and create a sense of belonging to enable individuals and communities to thrive. The three workshops were Courageous Conversations About Diversity, Curious about the Subtleties: Exploring Neurodiversity and Understanding Allyship.

Across the workshops there was a total attendance of 49 from 27 different organisations. Overall feedback was 4.3 out of 5.

Comments included:

- “Really interesting and informative and gave me lots to think about and reflect on”
- “So pertinent to our organisation at present”
- “Really good to hear first hand experience of someone with neurodiversity. Will help me understand people more and what to be aware of.”
- “I really enjoy interactive workshops that have some space for everyone to share ideas and engage with each other and the session leader. We were spaced around a table and this felt as though we were exploring the subject of the workshop together as a group”
- “[I gained] A better understanding, and reinforcement in the ideas and views I’m trying to pass on to not only my team but the people we work with.”
- “Excellent visual aids which illustrated the subject matter really well, very thought provoking”

Vision for Volunteering

Since the impact of the pandemic there have been many changes to the volunteering landscape in Norfolk, and across the UK. To provide support to the sector, Voluntary Norfolk has led on the development of a collaborative approach to identifying and addressing the key issues.

Following the launch of the Norfolk Vision for Volunteering 2023-2026 we delivered a programme of workshops and events for local organisations to develop their own volunteering strategies to become more inclusive and accessible. We have also brought together senior representatives from VCSE organisations and statutory bodies to identify and action the key aspects of the Vision for Volunteering.

During the year these representatives met to share their experience and knowledge of the sector, to build cross-sector relationships and to develop a toolkit for local volunteer-involving organisations. This will be published and disseminated in Autumn 2025.

As a result of this closer cross-sector working a successful funding bid was made by a partnership, led by the Integrated Care Board and Voluntary Norfolk. Our Volunteering for Health proposal was selected as one of 15 local partnership projects to be part of a national programme exploring how volunteering can address health inequalities across Norfolk and Waveney.

Volunteering for Health

In July 2024 a new 3-year collaborative project, led by Norfolk & Waveney Integrated Care Board (ICB) and Voluntary Norfolk received a grant of £540,000 from the national Volunteering for Health programme. This project is exploring new ways to bring the benefits of volunteering to everyone, especially those who might not usually take part. The project aims to:

- Encourage new volunteers
- Value existing volunteers and volunteer managers
- Help more health and social care organisations get involved

To address health inequalities and the imbalance of volunteering, local organisations will be supported through a new Get InVOLved Innovation Fund to explore ways to make volunteering more inclusive, particularly for those from the following groups:

- Adults who have learning disabilities
- Autistic or neurodivergent adults
- Looked-after children / young people leaving care

In March 2025 a Volunteering Innovation Manager was recruited to develop and manage this part of the project.

Another aspect of the project is an extension of Voluntary Norfolk's successful volunteer recruitment platform Get InVOLved Norfolk. Development work began on Get InVOLved Skills, which aims to provide both volunteers and volunteer managers in Norfolk and Waveney with easy access to training and development opportunities. The new platform is due to be released in July 2025.

Get InVOLved Norfolk

Voluntary Norfolk has continued to support organisations in recruiting volunteers through an active and popular outreach programme.

Get InVOLved Norfolk continues to develop its reach and help local organisations recruit new volunteers. The feedback from users is very positive and this is backed up by the key headlines for this period:

- At the end of March 2025 there were **439** not for profit organisations registered on the platform, an increase of **21%**.
- The number of registered volunteers increased over the year to **8,195**, an increase of **82%**.
- There were **767** new volunteering opportunities added to the site bringing the total to **2,061**, a **59%** increase. There were **1,419** accepted applications to these volunteering opportunities.
- The site had a total of **183,516** visitors, an increase of **36%**, and **777,813** total views, an increase of **14%**.

During this period the Volunteer Team have also attended over 30 events to promote Get InVOLved Norfolk and to encourage participation in volunteering. These included The Royal Norfolk Show, a UEA Volunteer Fair, Great Yarmouth, King's Lynn and Norwich Job Centres and the Sandringham Flower show.

In addition, the team also responded to 223 enquiries from individuals interested in volunteering, and 376 from organisations with queries relating to topics such as volunteer recruitment, volunteer management and best practice.

The Volunteering Newsletter is distributed monthly to over 7,000 individuals across Norfolk. It highlights new volunteer opportunities available on the Get InVOLved Norfolk platform and explores a dedicated theme each month. It has an average open rate of 50%.

Norfolk Adult Learning continues to deliver on our behalf the Norfolk Volunteer Passport, a short course that provides an introduction to volunteering and the knowledge to help the learners find suitable volunteer roles. There have been three Volunteer Passport courses in this period, with 16 successful participants, which brings the total number of passported learners to 104.

Corporate (or Employer-supported) volunteering

Over the year the Corporate Volunteering page on Get InVOLved Norfolk had 4,758 views and the Volunteer Team helped over 25 businesses to find one-off opportunities by matching them with local VCSE organisations.

To further promote and raise awareness of Corporate Volunteering an event was held in Marble Hall at Aviva where speakers from both businesses and VCSEs talked about best practices, why volunteering is important to their organisations and more ways to facilitate this. There were also opportunities for networking in order to foster new connections. There were 45 attendees and when asked how useful the session would be their work the average response was 4.3 out of 5.

Comments included:

- *“I found it very interesting to hear of the experiences of other businesses and charities in setting up volunteering schemes and the successes and challenges.”*
- *“The venue was perfect and the speakers were varied and engaging.”*

Our networking event in the Marble Hall at Aviva attracted both local businesses and VCSE organisations.



- *“I got so much value from the event, both from being able to share our experience and hopefully inspire others, and also learning what charities need which provoked a lot of thought around how we implement a policy which works for staff and charities in a useful way.”*
- *“Lots of ideas on how we can use our new corporate volunteering allowance! As well as ‘traditional’ volunteering I will also be looking at how me and my colleagues can use our skills and experience to add long term value from our volunteering.”*
- *“Great to bring various parties together, in person, and for charities to compare ideas of what has worked and not in the past.”*
- *“Made me more confident about what may be achieved through corporate volunteering.”*

Momentum

In 2024–25, Momentum continued to strengthen the youth sector in Norfolk, providing vital support, resources, and funding to organisations working with children and young people. Despite a period of transition, with the team only reaching full staffing by December 2024, Momentum has made significant strides across multiple areas.

Momentum's Youth Work Network Meetings brought together 40 participants from 30 organisations across two events, fostering collaboration and shared learning. Four specialist workshops and webinars were also delivered, covering key topics including EHCPS, safeguarding young volunteers, gambling addiction, and alternative provision. These sessions attracted 90 attendees from 59 different organisations.

A lot of the support the team offers has been online. In September 2024, the Momentum Newsletter was successfully relaunched. Additionally, Momentum has seen rapid growth in the use of its Padlets – online information-sharing platforms – which recorded 420 new posts, 842 visits, and over 2,000 views, representing significant year-on-year increases.

The Momentum Youth Fund provided grants to 23 organisations, awarding a total of £11,659 and directly benefiting 880 young people. Funded projects included creative and educational opportunities, such as a t-shirt printing initiative at Sunbeams Play for young people with SEND, new activity resources at OUTPOST Horsford Youth Club, a homework club at On Your Side in Great Yarmouth, and outdoor learning support through Wheatfen Forest School CIC.

Case study: On Your Side

£500 was awarded to set up a Youth Group and Homework Club to run twice a week for the hours in Great Yarmouth.

“

Seventeen young people benefited from these groups, many coming from low-income families or have parents with language barriers who cannot help them with their schoolwork and often have no room to study due to living in overcrowded houses. Thanks to the group, young people's grades and English language are improving, which is also helping them to make friends and feel more included.

”

A major new development in 2024 was the launch of the FLOURISH Youth Award for Volunteering and Participation in June. The award encourages young people to complete at least five hours of volunteering or participation while working toward personalised goals linked to the eight FLOURISH themes. By year-end, 42 organisations had signed up, and 32 young people had completed an award. Notable examples include Beth at ESKA, who demonstrated leadership and teaching skills; Dotty at Mundesley Library, who gained confidence and resilience; and Keely from the South Norfolk Youth Advisory Board, who developed practical skills through supporting an intergenerational event.

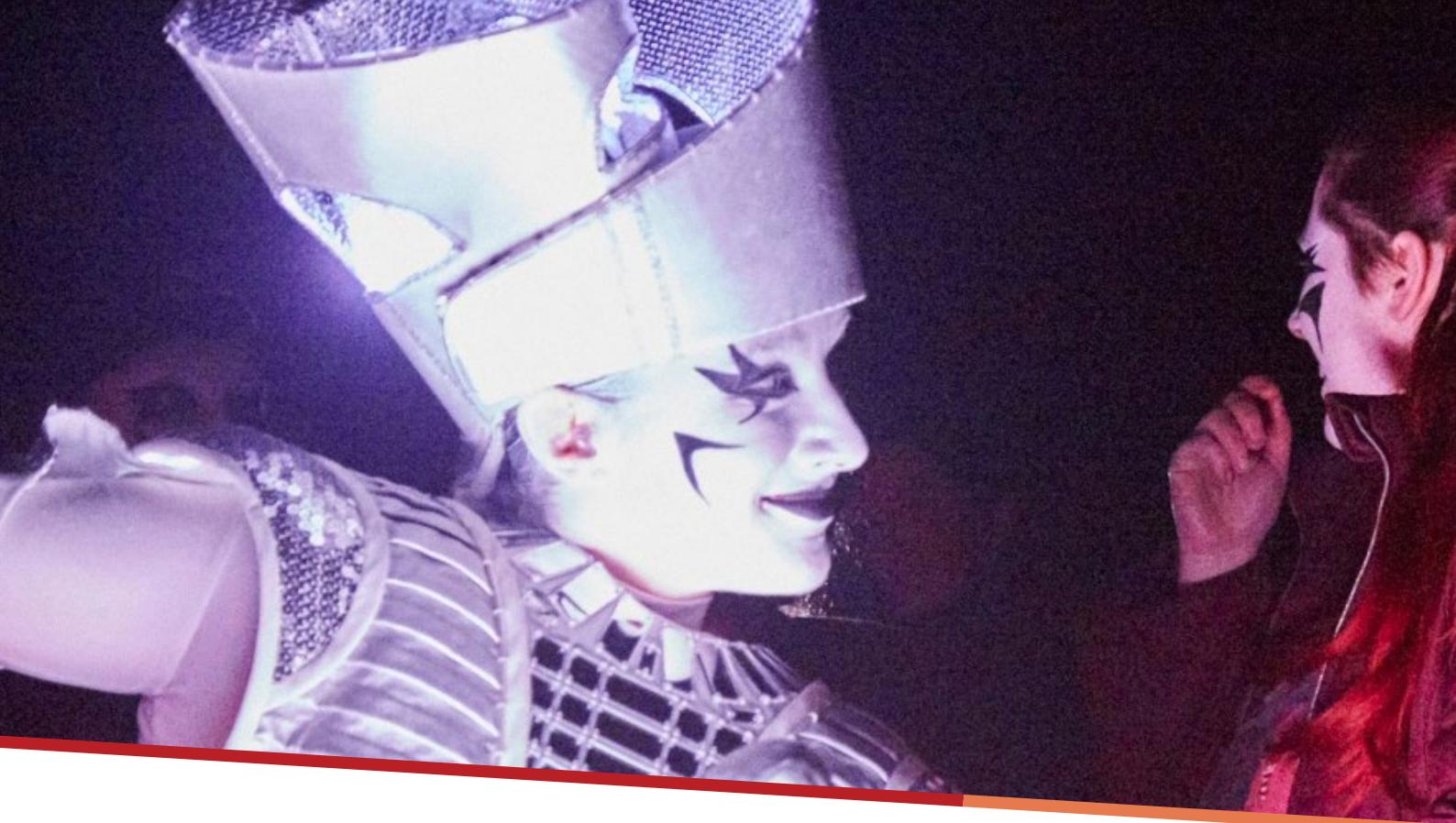
Momentum continues to coordinate the Voluntary Sector Forum for Children, Young People and Families, holding four meetings over the year and welcoming new co-Chairs and members. These meetings enabled VCSE voices to be heard by decision-makers and featured contributions from key statutory partners.

Other highlights include recording a youth-led podcast promoting FLOURISH and volunteering, and Momentum's appearance on Poppyland Radio. Momentum also represents the VCSE youth sector on numerous strategic boards and working groups, such as the Children and Young People's Strategic Alliance and Norfolk Safeguarding Children Partnership.

**The Momentum Youth Fund
awarded
over £11,000
to 23 organisations**

Momentum team Beth and Helen promoting the Momentum Network at an event.





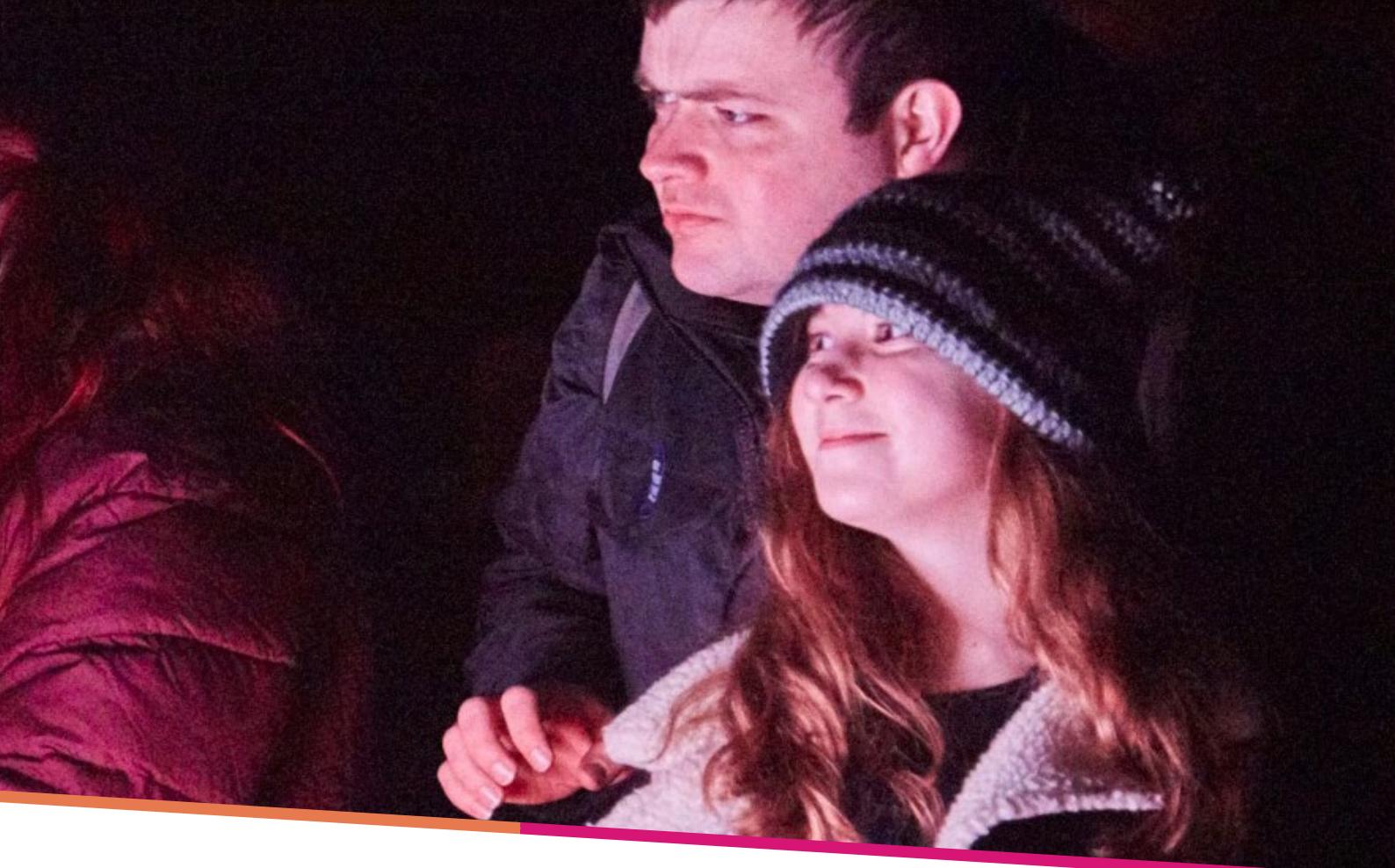
Leading new initiatives that enable communities to thrive

Voluntary Norfolk has a strong tradition of building and supporting communities across Norfolk since we started as an organisation over 50 years ago. Today, this work is primarily being delivered by our Freshly Created team.

Freshly Created

Voluntary Norfolk is the lead partner of the Arts Council funded Creative People and Places programme, Freshly Created, in Great Yarmouth. Freshly Created enables people to come together and thrive through new and engaging cultural opportunities in their local neighbourhoods. Volunteer Community Producers programme events and activities year-round, with support from an expert delivery team.

**Over 25,000 people
took part in our Freshly
Created events**



Freshly Created operates in three of the most deprived neighbourhoods of the Great Yarmouth borough: Cobholm and Southtown (Great Yarmouth), Nelson Ward and the Barrack Estate (Great Yarmouth) and the Magdalen Estate (Gorleston).

Freshly Created is an action research programme and, as such, places evaluation at the heart of the work. We've learnt that providing excellent opportunities for young people is a gateway to intergenerational community engagement and we're very proud of our now firmly established youth provision. Our Space offers twice weekly creative sessions for young people in NR30 leading to skills development, community programming and volunteering opportunities. Play Produce Promote is a programme for young people to develop their skills for participation in the musical industry, from performance to production.

Highlights of the last year included Play Produce Promote's collaboration with the BBC Concert Orchestra, providing a unique opportunity to work with world-class musicians in an event broadcast on BBC Radio 3, connecting our local community to a national audience. We hosted the National Gallery's Art Road Trip for two weeks of community workshops in the run up to our winter lights festival, Glow Your Own Way, and an expansion of our programming calendar included hugely popular family events in partnership with seafront favourite's Joyland to celebrate Halloween. Such neighbourhood stirrings are designed to challenge, excite and inspire engagement, building participation in our large community events and high profile local Norfolk and Norwich and Out There Festivals.

In the last twelve months our impact has been demonstrated in the:

- Building a network of 180 volunteer Community Producers, 30 of whom regularly participate
- 1,630 hours invested by volunteer Community Producers (valued at £19,902.30 when calculated against the National Minimum Wage of £12.21 per hour)
- 28,031 people participating in and attending our events
- 94% of Community Producers reporting that Freshly Created has strengthened the feeling of community in Great Yarmouth. 91% believe it has made Great Yarmouth a better place to live.

“

Having the opportunity to be a producer gives me a chance to share ideas. There are no ‘bad ideas’. To have the chance to be around other like-minded people, Freshly Created isn’t just community-led arts – they’re family.

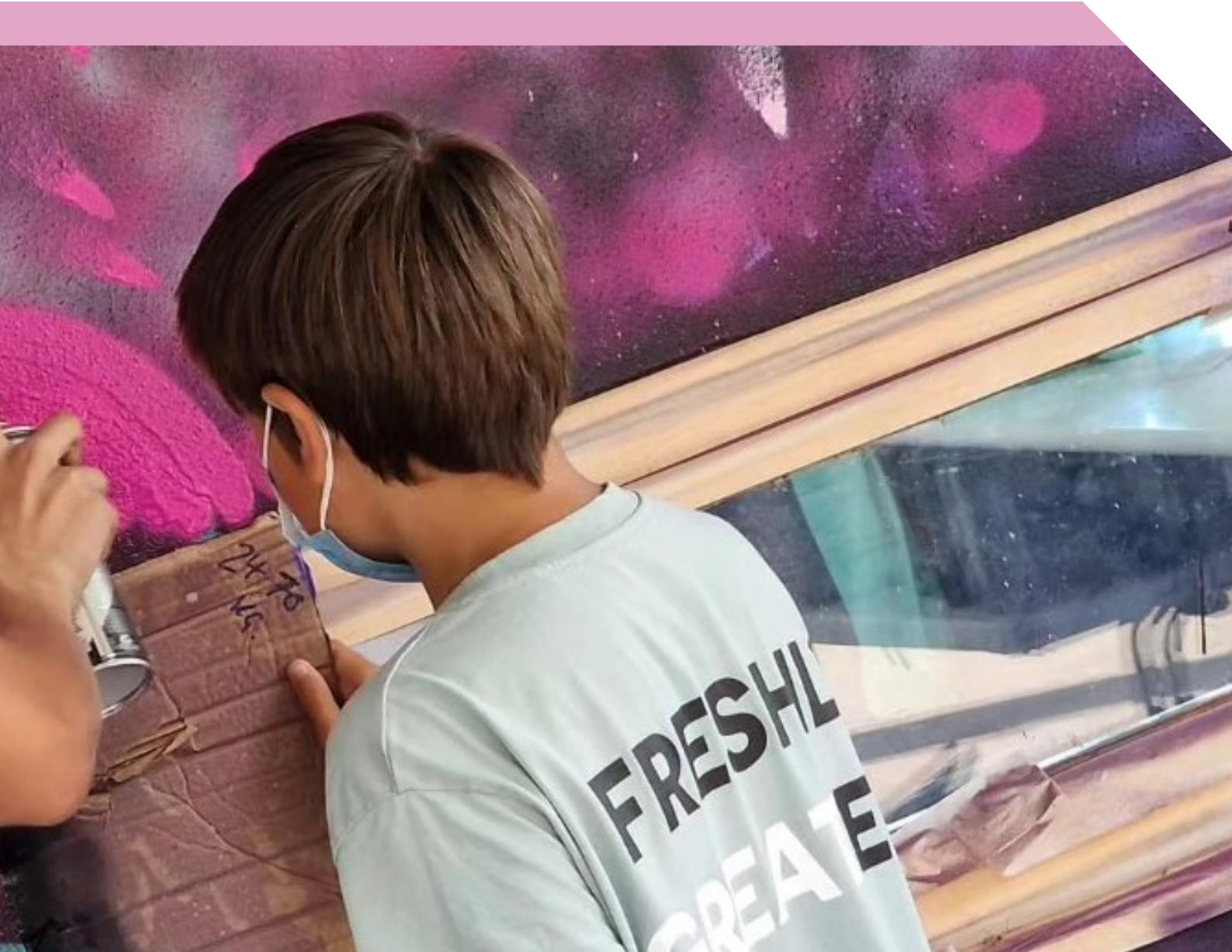
Tracie

”



**Our Community Producers
volunteered
over 1,600 hours
last year**

This year, we've significantly expanded the Consortium which oversees the programme and are delighted that the University of East Anglia and the Norfolk and Suffolk Music Hub are now core members. The Consortium managed the development of a bid to Arts Council for a further three years of funding, from 2026-29. This would support our work to recruit Community Producers from diverse cultural backgrounds to produce events with and relevant to migrant communities. Over the year to come, we'll continue to develop the skills and aspirations of all our volunteers as part of our commitment to leave a legacy of cultural leaders independently coordinating activities in the Great Yarmouth borough and bringing people together to experience the joy of live arts.





Supporting people when they need help the most

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

Better Together Norfolk

The Better Together service has been an integral part of Voluntary Norfolk's efforts to reduce loneliness and social isolation across the commissioned areas of Norfolk: Norwich, South Norfolk, Broadland and Great Yarmouth for several years. The service is staffed by 'life connectors' who in each district help users overcome barriers that have led to loneliness, e.g. through 'walk and talk' groups, soft introductions to groups, training and volunteering.

Where needed, our life connectors have spent time working with people on a more one-to-one basis, addressing the areas of greatest distress. These are often issues with housing and benefit queries, which are not directly linked to loneliness or social isolation. However, it is essential that these concerns are resolved before the life connectors start working to tackle the client's loneliness. For that reason, we have continued to also provide support in managing household budgets.



Once financial and accommodation concerns are resolved we work with them to feel confident when accessing the local community. This is perhaps the best example of how the Better Together Norfolk service has adapted to help support many individuals over time, often filling the gaps where other services have not been able to meet the demand.

The service has seen a high number of referrals over the six years that it has been running. This demonstrates the importance of having a service dedicated to providing support for adults and vulnerable people across Norfolk, that are trying to manage their social isolation and loneliness.

The referrals for this year have declined to 431 (which is down from 710 last year). This is due to the service coming to an end in June 2025. This figure would have almost certainly been higher, but we were unable to accept new referrals from January of this year. However, the number does show that the need for the service is still in demand.

Our Better Together service supported more than 400 new clients

As part of the service, Voluntary Norfolk have provided support to the Men's Shed network in Norfolk through a coordinator that has been instrumental in helping them set up new sheds and apply for charity status among many other activities. The Men's Sheds network is growing at a fast rate, and Norfolk is still the most advanced men's shed network in the UK. This is something that we are extremely proud of.

We also continued to run our slow cooker appeal to help those struggling with the cost of living by buying and distributing free slow cookers. Along with this, we again organised our Christmas hamper appeal, focusing on the Great Yarmouth area. This was another successful year with us giving out 150 hampers to those in need.

MD's Story: Tackling Isolation and Building Confidence

MD lives with her daughter in the South Norfolk village of Tacolneston. Following the recent loss of her stepfather—whom she had cared for—MD found herself with more time but facing increased social isolation. Struggling with anxiety and newly diagnosed ADHD, she turned to the Better Together Norfolk (BTN) service for support.

Initially unsure about where to begin, MD was visited by one of our Life Connectors, Ike, who helped build trust and introduce her to local opportunities. Together, they attended the Rest Hub, a supportive social group that MD now joins independently. Plans are also in place for her to attend the “All About You” group in Wymondham.

MD says the support has made her feel “seen and valued,” and has given her new hope for the future. She is gradually growing in confidence, forging new friendships, and exploring her identity in safe and supportive spaces.

Her journey is still unfolding, but the positive changes are already clear. With continued support, MD is on a path toward lasting social connection and improved wellbeing. Without BTN, MD says these opportunities for growth and belonging simply wouldn’t have existed. We of course wish her all the best in the future.

Parent Carers Matter

Parent Carers began as a pilot service last year, delivered by Voluntary Norfolk on behalf of Norfolk County Council (NCC). The purpose of the pilot was to recognise the vital role parents play in supporting children with additional needs or disabilities, and to provide them with much-needed guidance and support in navigating what can be a very complex system for their children.

We worked closely with Family Voice to ensure the service met parents' needs and redesigned the Parent Carer Needs Assessment (PCNA) process. This improved system has enabled us to carry out essential assessments for parents across the county, helping them access the support they are entitled to. Although the number of referrals for this service was not expected to be substantial, we received 137 referrals for potential PCNAs. From these, we completed 58 assessments – exceeding the council's initial expectations.

Over the year, we also established peer support and information groups in Norwich, Drayton and Taverham, King's Lynn, Great Yarmouth, Dereham, and Thetford. Attendance varied across locations, with Norwich and Drayton and Taverham attracting the largest numbers. In more rural areas, attendance was much lower, despite our efforts to provide transport. We also trialled weekly online groups to reach these carers, but unfortunately uptake was limited.

The main reasons for referral were:

- Help accessing services such as EHAPs and EHCPs.
- Emotional support and wellbeing.

Feedback from parent carers has been very positive. Of those who engaged with the service, 55% highlighted that the advice, guidance, and listening ear we provided were invaluable. Parents told us this support made navigating the system easier and left them feeling more supported and empowered.

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 goal is to help carers maintain their caring role, by supporting them access health and wellbeing grants, counselling services, and carers breaks. We also help meet their needs in other ways. This could be through signposting to external agencies along with internal Voluntary Norfolk services. This is a vital role to unpaid carers, who often feel lonely and isolated.

The year 2024-25 has been a year of growth. We have welcomed seven new staff members into the team. We have also continued to implement changes on how we work. We have done this through feedback from both the staff and our carers, which has not only given us a better understanding of the carer journey, but also allows us to share that journey in a more formal way with our carers at every check point along the way, making their journey with us a clearer one. We have also been taking part in a trial, funded by the ARF (Accelerating

Reform Fund), which allows us to complete care needs assessments on behalf of Norfolk County Council. We have offered a considerable amount of additional training for the team, which has yielded positive results and has enabled us to reduce the time that vulnerable people are waiting for assessments through Norfolk County Council.

Over the last year, we received a total of 369 referrals into the community team via the advice line. Of those new referrals, we completed a total of 249 Carer Initial Assessments, a further 232 Assessment Review 1s, which are completed when the carer is six months into their journey with us, and a further 175 Assessment Review 2s, which occur at the end of their journey. This totalled an amazing 5,934.70 hours' worth of work by the team.

Additional supported has included:

- 135 Health and wellbeing referrals. Although this was lower than last year, this was due to fewer staff in the first part of the year and we're expecting this to increase in 2025-26.
- 41 referrals have been able to acquire goods such as fridges, TVs and earphones.
- 65 referrals were signposted towards organisations providing counselling sessions
- 24 referrals were given gift vouchers for spa days, or to go towards craft activities
- 5 referrals were issued with train tickets and wheelchairs for days out.

We also made 39 referrals to carers breaks to provide some short-term respite for our carers.

Our Clients' Stories

Some of the lovely feedback that we have had from carers is below:

- *"I was put at ease, everything was explained so easy, as a carer you ignore yourself and was told to look after myself."*
- *"D Has gone above and beyond with help and support for my husband and myself. Sending us emails containing relevant information that can help us with our disability needs among other things. Thank you."*
- *"Thank you...your support has been wonderful and the break was amazing. We couldn't have managed it without you."*

**Our team provided almost
6,000 hours
of support to adult carers**

Young Carers Matter

Young Carers Matter was recommissioned this year and saw changes so that unlike in previous years where it was a partnership between several smaller organisations, it is now a partnership between Voluntary Norfolk and the Benjamin Foundation.

Over the past year, the Young Carers service has undergone significant and positive changes, strengthening our approach and enhancing the quality of support provided to young carers and their families. These improvements have enabled us to maintain a high standard of delivery while creating more effective and sustainable ways of working.

Our core mission is to minimise the negative impact of caring responsibilities, ensuring young carers can balance their role with personal development. Through a holistic approach, we work collaboratively with young people and their families to reduce inappropriate or excessive responsibilities, empowering them with the resources and support they need.

We maintain strong partnerships with Family Hubs across the county and with the Young Carer Forum, facilitated by Caring Together, to ensure consistent and joined-up support.

In 2024–25, we received 706 new referrals, with nearly a quarter involving children aged just 5–7. This highlights a concerning trend of younger children taking on caring roles.

Our support is tailored to individual needs—ranging from information and advice to one-to-one assistance. For families needing more intensive intervention, we work closely with Early Help Hubs to build resilience, confidence, and practical skills.

Education and community

The Education and Community Team at Young Carers Matter Norfolk has built strong foundations this year, creating sustainable opportunities for young carers to feel seen, valued, and supported.

We helped launch 17 new young carer groups and enhanced 13 existing ones, delivering 135 group sessions in total. These safe spaces enable young carers to build friendships, grow in confidence, and share experiences. In addition, we ran 22 sessions in partnership with 10 community venues, such as libraries and Family Hubs, offering lighter-touch engagement for those new to support.

To strengthen awareness and early identification, we trained professionals across MHST, MAP and NHS teams. We also supported three schools to achieve the Young Carers in Schools Award, with more working towards accreditation—helping embed long-term change in education.

Our activity days provided vital respite during school holidays, when caring responsibilities often increase. We delivered 19 events across Norfolk, including museum visits, themed workshops, and a highlight trip to Pensthorpe, which welcomed 65 young carers. One participant summed it up: *“It was just what I needed today; best day of my life.”*

Employment and skills

This year we successfully embedded our Employability and Transitions offer, designed to support young carers at risk of becoming NEET. Thanks to strong promotion and outreach, referrals steadily increased through schools, partners, and community networks.

We supported 50 young carers—meeting 100% of our target—and held 103 focused sessions on CVs, applications, and local opportunities. Much of this support focused on preparing younger carers for college, including hands-on help with applications and open day visits to reduce anxiety and build confidence.

As our older caseload grew, we saw a rise in employment-focused support, and we anticipate further job readiness work in the year ahead. We also began forging links with local services to improve referrals, particularly in rural areas such as North and West Norfolk, where need is often higher.

Our work continues to evolve, but our goal remains clear: ensuring every young carer has the support they need to thrive—now and in the future.

**Our employment support for
young carers
met 100%
of our target**

A young carer's and their family's success story

BW, a young carer, supports both parents with long-term mental health challenges, which has affected her learning, speech, and emotional wellbeing. Once confident and outgoing, she struggled with low self-esteem, anxiety, and school attendance, carrying the emotional burden of her parents' wellbeing alongside past trauma.

Referred through school, BW received dedicated, child-led support from Voluntary Norfolk's Young Carers Matter service. Sessions focused on active listening, building self-esteem, and creating a safe space for her to explore her interests, aspirations, and worries. We also encouraged positive relationships with peers, trusted adults, and family.

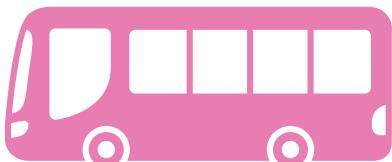
The impact was immediate. BW engaged openly, expressing enthusiasm and confidence rarely seen at home or school. Her parents reported noticing a positive change, and we have since been invited to contribute to school transition planning, supporting both BW and her sibling.

Through this tailored, empathetic approach, BW has begun to feel supported, heard, and empowered in her caring role.

SOS Bus

The SOS Bus 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.

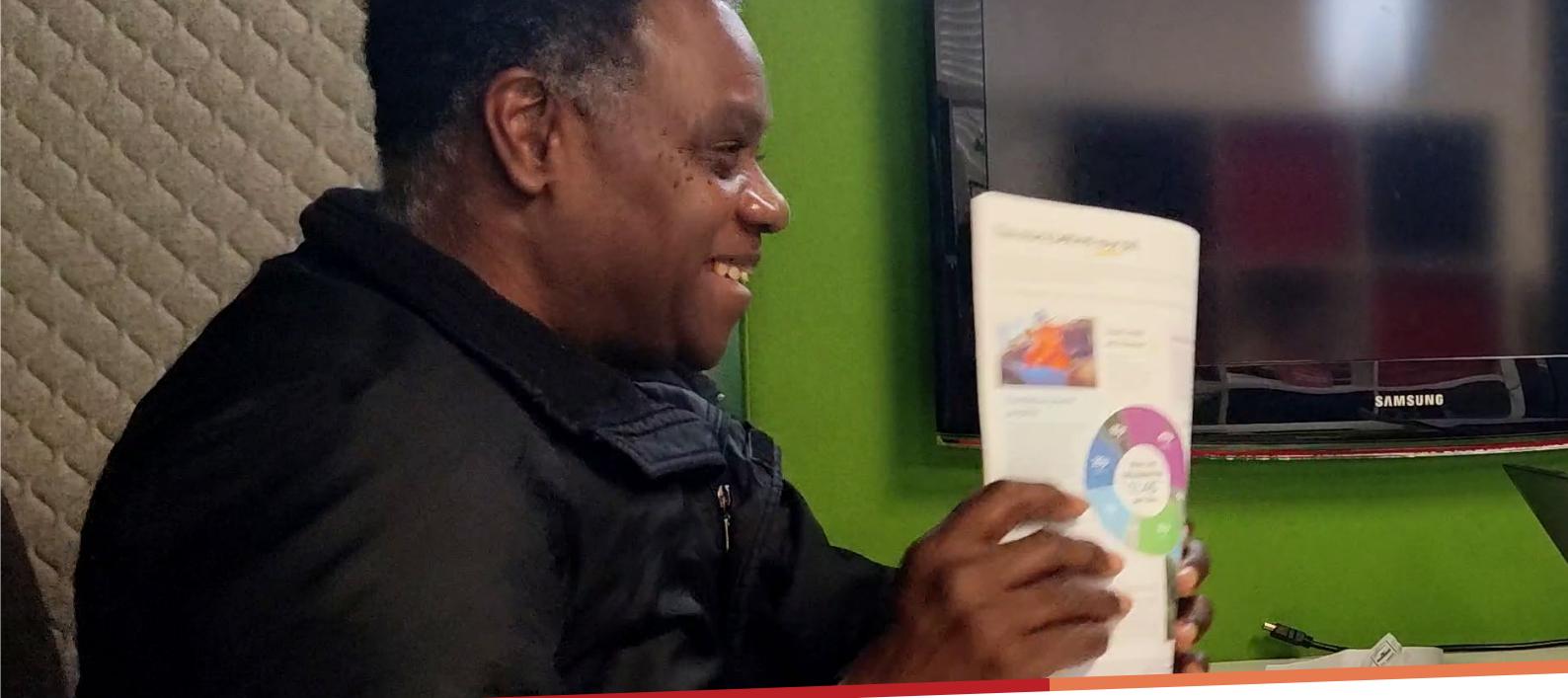
Voluntary Norfolk took the SOS Bus service on from Open Trust in 2019 in order to avoid its closure and has been committed to trying to maintain this service for the city of Norwich. Changes to the funding last financial year meant that it was no longer viable for us to continue to operate this service and instead we looked to set it up as its own charity which would be able to access grants and funding that a larger charity like Voluntary Norfolk would not be entitled to. As a result, we worked with the committed staff and volunteers to ensure that the SOS Bus service became an independent, financially viable, volunteer-led charity. This was successfully achieved in August 2024.



Wellness on Wheels Bus

We continue to be contracted by the ICB to run the Wellness on Wheels (WOW) bus, which we run in conjunction with CJC Transport Consultants. The WOW bus travels across Norfolk and Waveney to support those who need extra help. It continues to deliver vital health checks, advice and signposting to thousands of residents across Norfolk & Waveney. What began in October 2021 as the SOS Bus—initially set up in response to COVID-19 to support vaccination of people experiencing homelessness—has grown into a broader wellness service. Through our partnership with the Integrated Care System, the WOW Bus focuses specifically on reaching those communities that are less likely to access health and care via conventional routes: inclusion health groups, rural populations and areas of higher deprivation.

In many of these underserved and rural communities, geographic distance, lack of transport, social isolation, stigma or simply being unaware of what services are available can all act as barriers to care. The WOW Bus addresses these by bringing services directly to where people live, work or gather — reducing both practical and psychological hurdles. Over time, this service has built trusted relationships with individuals who may face multiple barriers: for example, people experiencing homelessness or insecure housing. These connections enable the service to provide immediate health and wellbeing support, but also to signpost people into longer-term care and community resources, helping to reduce inequalities in health outcomes across Norfolk & Waveney.



Getting people into work

Voluntary Norfolk's involvement in getting people back into work is focused on the Norwich area through 'Brighter Skills'. Brighter Futures is a pilot programme managed by Future Projects, with Voluntary Norfolk as a delivery partner. The service began in October 2024 and was originally commissioned to run for six months. In March 2025, the programme was granted an extension for a further nine months, allowing delivery to continue until 31 December 2025.

The project was specifically designed to reach individuals from underserved communities who face multiple barriers and are therefore farthest from the job market. By working together, the Brighter Futures team was able to hit the ground running, drawing on existing community networks and strong relationships across Norfolk's voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector.

Since its launch, the team has been delivering outreach appointments, drop-in services and events at various locations across Norwich. By collaborating with staff from the wide range of VCSE organisations active in the city,

our Employment Development Workers have been able to engage with individuals accessing services in areas such as housing, mental health, community hubs, schools, foodbanks, as well as through the Job Centre and The Forum.

By the end of the first delivery phase, on 31 March 2025, the programme had achieved the following:

- 138 participants engaged in total
- 11 successful exits, including participants who maintained employment following check-ins prior to case closure
- 36 participants awaiting initial appointments
- 31 people supported into education — more than double our original target
- 18 people taking part in work experience programmes
- 23 people gaining employment, including self-employment opportunities

In addition, the team has supported 145 people to address structural barriers to employment and skills. This has included help with issues such as accommodation, citizenship, finance



and debt, physical health concerns, family pressures and domestic abuse. Where specialist support has been needed, we have worked with trusted external organisations. Importantly, our approach goes beyond signposting. We ensure that individuals feel supported to engage fully, whether through warm introductions or by accompanying them to appointments.

A key focus of the project is upskilling participants in understanding employers' expectations. Recognising that every individual learns in their own way, we prioritise developing trust and engagement before introducing this element of learning. By tailoring support to each participant's needs, we are helping people not only move closer to employment but also build the confidence and resilience required to sustain positive change.

MK's Story

MK's story is one of remarkable resilience. After suffering a stroke at the age of three, she was left with limited use of her left hand. Now a young woman living with her parents and nine siblings, MK has shouldered a huge share of responsibility at home. With both parents working full-time, she takes care of her younger siblings, including managing school runs. These responsibilities, combined with low confidence, became a barrier to finding employment.

Her family's financial struggles meant they sometimes relied on emergency food provisions. But when MK joined our **Brighter Futures** programme, things began to change. She took part in the Ripple Acts course, which proved to be a turning point. MK's confidence grew rapidly, and those around her noticed a remarkable transformation in her outlook and personality.

With new-found self-belief, MK started volunteering at the Baseline charity shop. She quickly thrived in her role, enjoying contact with customers and even finding the confidence to step in when someone attempted to steal from the shop.

Today, MK continues to work with Brighter Futures. She is actively job searching, reaching out to companies, and attending interviews with a confidence she never thought possible.

MK's journey shows what can be achieved when the individual determination is greeted by the right kind of support. With encouragement and tailored help, she has found the strength to overcome barriers, and is now building a brighter, more secure future for herself.



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)

The Norfolk and Waveney Community Support Service (NWCSS) was commissioned in September 2023, replacing our previous Health & Wellbeing and Community Response services. Staff, volunteers, and expertise from these services were integrated into NWCSS, making the most of the skills already within the organisation.

NWCSS is a multi-agency model led by Voluntary Norfolk. In partnership with the

British Red Cross and Age UK Norwich, we use a staff-and-volunteer approach to respond to service demand. The service provides short-term, practical support to address temporary issues, helping prevent escalation and potential hospital admissions. Referrals cover a wide range of needs, from emergency food parcels to support attending appointments or community groups. Wherever possible, we connect people with local networks to help them remain independent.



The service operates across Norfolk and Waveney, with strong links to acute hospitals and community services including adult social care, social prescribers, and physiotherapy teams. This is the first model of its kind in Norfolk, and our teams are working tirelessly to make it effective, solution-focused, and responsive.

Over the past year, we received more than 2,600 referrals, the majority of which were met through the support of our staff and volunteers. Volunteers contributed over 2,300 hours to the service during this period.

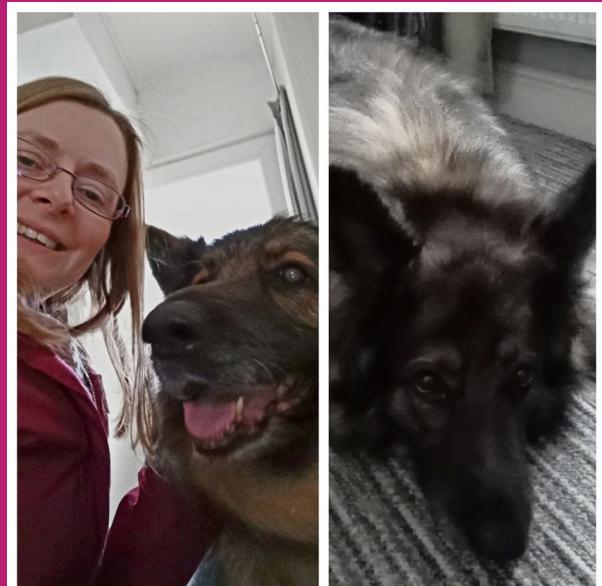
A volunteer's story

We received a referral for a client recovering from a broken arm and lower back injury. She lived with her husband, who has dementia, and required short-term support with dog-walking and light household tasks.

Our team visited the couple to assess their needs and arranged a volunteer to provide assistance for four weeks until the client could

manage independently. We also signposted local services for longer-term support. Over five weeks, our volunteer and staff visits ensured the client's home remained safe, tasks were completed, and both she and her husband had social contact during recovery.

The client reported feeling relieved and supported, saying she was "happy Sasha was getting outside for a walk." Volunteer Sarah reflected on the experience, highlighting the value of helping clients remain at home while making a meaningful difference in their lives.



Volunteer Sarah with dog Sasha

East Coast Community Healthcare CIC

This is the sixth year that Voluntary Norfolk has partnered with East Coast Community Healthcare (ECCH) to provide volunteers. Volunteers continued to assist 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.

This year the number of hours contributed by ECCH volunteers has more than doubled on the previous year, and we have seen the highest numbers of active volunteers and hours logged since our partnership with ECCH began. Across the various volunteer roles, 73 volunteers provided 2,895 hours of support, an increase from last year when 56 volunteers provided 1,353 hours.

Highlights from this year include:

- 5 different ECCH sites now have ongoing regular support from volunteers at their leg ulcer clinics
- In October 2024 the Looked After Children team started working with an admin volunteer for the first time, with great feedback from both the volunteer and the staff.
- In November 2024 the first volunteers started in roles to support ECCH in the transformation of Carlton Court, in partnership with JPUH
- Weekly patient activity sessions on Minsmere Ward began in February 2025, allowing volunteers to support the work of ECCH therapists by finding new ways to promote movement and activity in patients.
- During the year ECCH volunteers completed 286 surveys with patients over the phone to collect their feedback on ECCH services – over 3 times the number of surveys collected in 2023-24



As well as the invaluable contribution volunteers make to ECCH staff and patients, we have also seen some great examples over the past year of ways in which the volunteer program allows ECCH to contribute to the health of individuals in its local communities. The benefits some volunteers have reported have included increased confidence, the opportunity to learn about a career in healthcare and an increased sense of purpose.

Our volunteers' stories

One of ECCH's clinic volunteers told us:

“ As someone who suffers from mild to moderate mental health issues [volunteering at the clinic] allows me to feel “normal” and I feel a great sense of fulfilment after each voluntary shift. This feeling of fulfilment and self-confidence stays with me for days. I am also a carer for my Mum, and volunteering gives me a break from those responsibilities and a real feeling that I am making a difference to people. ”

Another volunteer, who came to ECCH looking to improve his employability, told us:

“ Volunteering at ECCH has benefited me in many ways. I lacked confidence in my skills, but volunteering has given me confidence in my abilities and transferrable skills. Furthermore, the team have been really helping and even given me access to training I wouldn't have previously been able to access, which will help reflect well on my CV. Also, the social element cannot be understated as a benefit. Feeling of use, meeting new people and getting along well with them all help lift mood which gives me more confidence in the future. ”



ERS Medical - Non-emergency Patient Transport

Our non-emergency volunteer drivers have continued to provide a professional, high-quality transport service to patients around the county and beyond. Our volunteer drivers use their own cars to provide door-to-door transport to essential, non-emergency medical appointments across East Anglia. 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 2024-25 financial year, Voluntary Norfolk had 54 active volunteer drivers. This compared to 49 active drivers at the end of the previous financial year. Throughout the year, 433,068 miles driven (up from 430,642 miles the previous year), completing a total of 11,470 (down from 12,536 journeys in 2023-24), ensuring that people who needed to travel to and from a hospital or other medical venue were able to do so.

Operationally, the big change happened at the start of October 2024, when Voluntary Norfolk stopped working with ERS Medical and started working with HTG due to a change in contract. The main difference was that the new contract with HTG covered Norfolk and Waveney, rather than just Norfolk. The transition has gone smoothly and for the most part the service remains the same.

**Our volunteers drove
433,068 miles
to get patients to essential
medical appointments**





Anne's Story

For one of Voluntary Norfolk's newest non-emergency patient transport volunteers, the decision to get involved was deeply personal. Her father's experience with dialysis—long journeys, early pick-ups and tiring appointments—highlighted the importance of comfort and care from the moment patients leave home until they return.

Motivated to make a difference, she joined Voluntary Norfolk's transport service, initially in partnership with ERS Medical and now with HTG, providing safe, reliable, and personalised journeys for patients. The role allows her to offer practical support while ensuring a positive experience for those attending hospital appointments.

Volunteering has also brought unexpected benefits. She enjoys meeting people from all walks of life and hearing their stories, while exploring parts of Norfolk she might not have otherwise discovered. She highlights the supportive on-boarding process, flexible scheduling, and professional, friendly staff who make planning and adapting to changes straightforward.

Reflecting on her experience, she says, "I get huge satisfaction from knowing I've helped someone get to their appointment on time and in comfort." Her story demonstrates the real difference volunteering can make for both patients and volunteers alike.



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 2024-25 financial year, our service had 134 (up from 128 last year) registered volunteers with a further 67 in various stages of recruitment and on-boarding.

Over the course of the year, volunteers contributed a significantly increased amount of their time (approximately 6% more hours compared with the previous year) across a range of roles logging a total of 7,832 hours across 78 different volunteer placements.

The roles our NCH&C volunteers undertook included:

- Providing companionship to in-patients
- 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
- 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 the rollout of the new NHS standard uniform by sorting deliveries for distribution to NCH&C sites
- Helping at large scale Community Assessment Days across the county

The NCH&C Volunteer Service supports a wide range of volunteering roles across the Trust, not only 'patient-facing' roles but also 'behind the scenes' roles such as helping out in clinical stockrooms. The impact of these 'unseen' roles is significant. Typically, 30-35 hours per week of clinician time Trust-wide is saved due to routine stockroom tasks being completed by 'unsung heroes' like Grant (who shares his story with us, below) working away in the background.

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.

**Our NCH&C volunteers
logged a total of
7,832 hours**



Grant's volunteering story

“ 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.

Grants

Grant's journey into volunteering began after redundancy in 2017, which led to a period of poor mental health. Supported by the mental health crisis team, he later chose to give back to the NHS through Voluntary Norfolk's Primary Care Volunteering project.

Starting in a GP surgery in 2019, Grant now volunteers at Norwich Community Hospital, where he manages medical supplies behind the scenes. His meticulous work ensures shelves and drawers are restocked, products are organised for easy access, and expiry dates are checked. This support saves clinical and administrative time and directly aids nursing and therapy teams in caring for patients efficiently.

Grant finds the role rewarding for both his wellbeing and fitness, appreciating the social contact and sense of purpose it provides. Staff praise his dedication and reliability, noting the significant impact his work has on the smooth running of services.

Grant hopes sharing his story will inspire others to volunteer. He says, "It is great to feel wanted again... I look forward to Wednesday each week as it is time to go to work again."



NCH&C Volunteer Grant

**Stockroom volunteers typically save
30-35 hours
of clinician time every week**



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

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

CBR Business Solutions facilitate all levels of DBS disclosures as well as a whole suite of pre-employment checks, including right to work, social media checks, financial checks, employment history verification checks, overseas criminal record checks, driver checks,

and National Insurance checks as well as a range of identity verification checks. We also now offer an 'Update Service monitoring check', meaning that for the first time we can link up with, and benefit from, the DBS' Update Service.

Our old platform, (OD), has been retired and all our clients are online and using the 'KYP' (Know Your People) platform, following a successful switch-over.

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 950 payees in 80 discreet customer payrolls (an increase in both from the previous year), 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.

Human resource (HR) consultancy

Our Consultants who are Members of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (MCIPD) 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, performance management, restructures, ill health and capability, disciplinary and grievance processes, consultations or redundancies or other HR related matters, our qualified consultants can assist. We act as Investigating Officers in case of complex disciplinary and grievance investigations. We also offer professional Workplace Mediation and Coaching services via our HR consultants. Currently, we are supporting around 82 charities and organisations through our Annual HR Contract and also a number of Consultancy clients.

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.

“ It’s certainly been a challenging few months and a steep learning curve. We are so grateful for your expertise and support us all throughout this difficult time. Your responsiveness, clarity and compassion have been so vital in guiding us through uncharted (and unwanted) waters. You have helped us abide by the formal process without losing sight of our company values in supporting our hard-working staff members. **”**

Consultancy SME client in Cambridge

Financial review

Key points

Voluntary Norfolk remains in a strong financial position. Its free Reserves exceeded the target level at the end of the year despite significant one-off expenditure on moving offices and transforming the management arrangements. However, the challenges for 2025-26 are securing sufficient funding to meet core costs and formulating and managing the transition to a new strategy for the organisation. The Board has agreed and is implementing a plan for the year which addresses these issues. We received a 'clean' audit report for the year.

Accounting policy

Nearly all income is received in the form of payments for delivering services to the Norfolk community, either in the form of grants or as sums payable for service contracts. On the basis of discussion and advice, the Board decided to modify the accounting treatment of these two types of income. From this year onwards, grant income will remain Restricted in accordance with charity law while income derived from service contracts will become Unrestricted but Designated by the Trustees, (see Note 1.13). Of course, the expenditure of income from service contracts will be bound by the terms of each contract. The distinction between these classifications of income is shown in Note 14, with the opening position for the year restated.

Financial performance

During the year, total income decreased by 2.46%, from £4,463,978 in 2023-24 to £4,353,966. Total expenditure on charitable activities also decreased - by 12.07%, to

£4,171,455 compared with £4,744,006 in the previous year. Consequently, income exceeded expenditure by £182,541 compared with a deficit of £280,028 in 2023-24. However, within these overall sums, Unrestricted expenditure exceeded Unrestricted income by £89,640. This was largely caused by the one-off expenditure on the office move and management restructuring. Restricted funds increased by £272,181.

There are two noteworthy aspects within our income. The total sum for the Volunteering for Heath contract (£319,387) has been appropriately accounted for in 2024-25 even though delivery will take place over more than one year, (see Note 10). CBR Business Solutions supported the charity's net income by £33,700 (2023-24: £6,727) on a 7.3% increase in turnover.

On the expenditure side, there was a reduction of £338,217 (11.9%) on staff costs in line with the reduction in the average number of employed staff, (see Note 6).

Financial outlook

At the beginning of 2025-26, Voluntary Norfolk was in a healthy position, (see Note 14). Its funds related to planned service delivery amounted to £701,486 compared with £470,317 on 1 April 2024. However, the contribution to core costs was projected to fall short of budgeted expenditure. The Board agreed a plan to address this deficit, underwritten by adequate free Reserves of £390,848. The Finance Committee and the Board are keeping this situation under close review and intend that a balance be restored by 1 April 2026 partly by diversifying income streams.

Financial health

Total reserves at year-end stood at £1,092,334, up 20.07% from £909,793 in 2023-24. The level of Undesignated funds within Unrestricted Reserves amounted to £390,848. The Charity's current Reserves Policy targets three months' essential operating costs. As of 31 March 2025, free Reserves exceeded this target by 2.67 months, reflecting a prudent financial position amid public sector funding pressures. The auditors and Trustees had no hesitation in certifying that the Charity a 'going concern'.

Risks

The principal financial risk remains the expiration of fixed-term service agreements and the challenge of securing new contracts and grants. These are closely monitored by the Executive Team and the Board. The charity faces no pension-related financial risk, operating a defined contribution scheme.

Compliance

All financial returns have been filed on time. The Charity continues to demonstrate effective financial management, aligned with its strategic objectives.

Structure, governance and management

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 as a Board six times a year and are the key personnel in terms of directing and controlling the charity. Reporting to the Board, the Finance Committee is responsible for advising on all financial matters. This includes recommending a draft annual budget and reserves policy,

monitoring progress against the approved budgets and assessing financial risk and identifying appropriate mitigation. The Head of Finance is key in supporting the Committee's role. The Chair is a qualified and experienced finance professional. All the trustees give of their time freely and no trustee received remuneration within the year.

At time of writing there are seven trustees with three new trustees joining over the course of the year, as anticipated last year to complement and increase the skills of the existing team, while two decided to step down. The current Board brings a collective wealth of knowledge and experience of voluntary sector and private sector delivery, management and governance. It is anticipated that in 2025-26 at least one further trustee will be sought to increase knowledge in particular in financial matters.

Management

Day-to-day responsibility for running the organisation is delegated by the Trustees to the CEO. Alan Hopley was Chief Executive until 31 May 2024. He was succeeded by Lucy de las Casas who stepped up from her role as Director of Development to become interim Chief Executive before Michael Kitching started on 16 July 2024.

The Chief Executive is supported in the running and development of the organisation by a management team of Directors. This year, there have been significant changes in the organisation's senior staff structure. Up to January 2025, there were directors overseeing Voluntary Sector Infrastructure, Operations, Finance and Development. Now there are two directors – one for Partnerships and Influencing and the other as Chief Operating Officer.

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

The trustees, CEO and management team in 2024-25 were assisted by an external consultant 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, which we have completely overhauled over the last year. Individual risks are identified at programme level and escalated, where appropriate, into the higher-level corporate risk register, which captures and monitors the organisation's overarching strategic risks. Identified risks are properly managed and we 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 2024/25 including

Shoebox Community Hub, Out There Arts, The Benjamin Foundation, Bridges, Age UK Norwich and British Red Cross and others. 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.

We would like to express our profound thanks to all the individuals and organisations who have supported Voluntary Norfolk and the work we have undertaken over the course of the last twelve months.

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 2024-25 and further plans agreed for the coming year.

Reporting back against 2024-25 plans

Area of work / Context	Aims for 2024-25	What does success look like?
Infrastructure	Sustain and evolve Empowering Communities partnership to meet new sector needs and commissioning intentions.	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.
	Embed Vision for Volunteering collaborative work plan across Norfolk stakeholders, further extending reach into health and care.	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.
	Build the Momentum Children and Young People's support programme, to strength youth voice and sector collaboration.	A vibrant programme of sector support initiatives that support children and young people in Norfolk to flourish through a resilient youth sector.

Area of work / Context	Aims for 2024-25	What does success look like?
Services	Strengthen our unpaid Carers provision for all ages.	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.
	Rebuild our Employability provision.	Gaining employability contracts following the cessation of European Social Fund to ensure we offer holistic services to people, supporting them back into employment.
	Secure the future of the SOS Bus as an independent service following cessation of ICB funding for the service	SOS Bus service transitions to an independent volunteer-led CIO, continuing to support those needing assistance on nights out in Norwich
Development and sustainability	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.
Internal development	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

We are pleased to announce that in almost every area, we have achieved our goals as can be seen in the sections above outlining the achievements of the various strands of the organisation. Diversifying our income streams remains ongoing and will undoubtedly continue into the next financial year and beyond. The one area where we have not achieved the aim we expressed in 2023-24 is gaining new employability contracts. During the year 2024-25, a strategic decision was made to focus on our core offer rather than bidding for contracts that would dilute it. Nevertheless we remain committed to working with other organisations and sharing both our experience in this area and our unique offer, to support those looking to get (back) into work in Norfolk and beyond, as can be seen in our work with the Brighter Futures project.

Future plans for 2025-26

Area of work / Context	Aims for 2025-26	What does success look like?
Programmes	Improve processes and procedures	SOP and KPIs in place for each operational team
	Ensure safeguarding practices and processes are fit for work	Safeguarding procedures and statutory requirements all met for 2026.
	Ensuring commissioned projects meet the requirements of their delivery contracts	No projects in review by commissioners by March 2026
Partnerships and Influencing	Research into fundraising audiences	Data to inform a move into fundraising programming
	Raise our first funds from Trusts and Foundations	Circa £80k raised from Trusts and Foundations
	Secure our first corporate partnerships	Circa £30k raised from Corporate sources
	Research into brand identity, strategy and positioning	Branding Project Launching in 2026 informed by high quality data
Core – internal development and culture change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build on staff survey results to reimagine a new culture at Voluntary Norfolk Governance Reviews at Non-Executive and Executive levels Finance Procedures Refresh 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff Survey follow up early 2026 showing significantly improved metrics New ways of working established at leadership levels of organisation. Automations and practices that better enable decision making. A renewed board of trustees

Area of work / Context	Aims for 2025-26	What does success look like?
VCSE Sector Support	<p>That the VCSE sector in Norfolk is more resilient and better placed to respond to increased demand and the multiple challenges it is facing</p> <p>That, through the leadership of the Empowering Communities Partnership and the Sector Support Team, the VCSE sector works together to influence social and economic policies and processes that impact on organisation sustainability</p> <p>That the benefits and increased wellbeing of volunteering are available to everyone at every stage of their lives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More organisations engage with the Sector Support Team's networks, information channels and events; Organisations report that they have benefited from attendance and the support received; Organisations' staff and volunteers increase skills and knowledge through the Get Involved Skills Hub. The August 2025 Open Letter to Stakeholders and Statutory Partners in Norfolk promoting 'a Shared Commitment to Partnership with the VCSE Sector' results in positive responses to the 12 'asks'; The Sector Support Team has 'a seat at the table' of influential and decision-making groups such as the VCSE Assembly, Business Board, etc; The VCSE Leadership Network continues to grow and have its voice heard. The Volunteering for Health project increases volunteering in primary healthcare settings, and identifies ways to make volunteering more inclusive; Norfolk & Waveney Vision for Volunteering harnesses cross-sector knowledge and experience by actively promoting volunteering to increase the pool of willing and able volunteers; The membership and effectiveness of Get InVOLved Norfolk volunteer recruitment platform increases

Reference and administrative details

Current trustees	David Walker (Acting Chair) Robert Hetherington Mark Hitchcock Vivienne Clifford-Jackson Ian Morrison - appointed 9 October 2024 Stephen Wright - appointed 9 October 2024 Tessa Haskey - appointed 5 February 2025
Resigned this year	John Archibald - resigned 5 February 2025 Josephine Smithson - resigned 5 February 2025
Company registered number	05616120
Charity registered number	1112017
Registered office	Voluntary Norfolk Units 4-6 83-87 Pottergate Norwich Norfolk NR2 1DZ
Chief executive officer	Michael Kitching
Independent auditors	Larking Gowen LLP 1 st Floor Prospect House Rouen Road Norwich NR1 1RE
Bankers	Bank of Scotland Plc 33 Old Broad Street London Branch PO Box 1000 BX2 1LB
Solicitors	Leathes Prior 74 The Close Norwich Norfolk NR1 4DR