

## Empowering Communities Partnership Newsletter.

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# Empowering Communities

Connect • Collaborate • Champion



## Welcome to...

### The latest Empowering Communities Newsletter

This month's newsletter as usual aims to give you a summary of the latest news affecting the VCSE sector. This month's comment piece comes from FUSE Norwich (a social enterprise) who talk about the need for greater collaboration across the sector and invite you to their social enterprise coffee morning in Norwich on 19th April.

As before we also provide a list of resources along with information about some forthcoming events that groups in Norfolk should find useful. We hope that this newsletter will ensure you get the information you need, as well as an understanding of what the Empowering Communities Partnership is doing to support you and your VCSE organisation.

We wish all our readers a great Easter weekend and relaxing bank holiday!

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## Comment about the importance of building connections



Collaboration, rather than competition, is a core tenet of the social enterprise movement. Through collaboration, we can all amplify our impact and create the change we strive for more effectively and efficiently. FUSE Norwich is working hard to provide spaces where organisations can come together to build the connections and trust we need to work collaboratively, whether it's a joint venture, a shared project or sharing knowledge. FUSE Norwich is fortunate to have the support of the Empowering Communities partnership, Norwich City Council and many more organisations in this mission!

At Empowering Communities, we know that many VCSEs are currently more time-poor than ever. But we also recognise that opportunities to come together, to form genuine connections and build relationships with one another, is crucial to the success of our sector. At events, we often hear that the time to talk together, sharing ideas, successes and challenges, is the most valuable part, but it is often sidelined in favour of more “productive” work. According to the Relationships Project, people commonly feel they need “permission” to prioritise relationship-building.<sup>1</sup> This month, give yourself permission to make some connections – you never know where it may lead!

If you would like to join FUSE for their Social Enterprise Coffee Morning on Friday 19th April, 10.30am-12.30pm, at Carberry's Cafe, visit [www.fusenorwich.org.uk](http://www.fusenorwich.org.uk) to book your place!

Click on the link below to read more...

[Read more](#)

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## Sector News Digest



The 2024 Spring Budget has presented a range of announcements which will affect the VCSE sector. Summaries of these and their potential impacts have been produced by the Rural Services Network on the [cultural landscape](#), [village halls](#) and [rural areas](#). Locally there are a range of budget-related consultations currently being undertaken by Norfolk County Council and other stakeholders which may have significant implications for the sector, with further information on these included throughout this newsletter. Despite the seemingly insurmountable challenges, our sector is resilient and charities are always finding new ways to support their communities.

### This Month's Top Picks

Throughout March NAVCA has [explored leadership and advocacy](#) on its blog and social media, providing a range of opportunities for VCSEs to reflect on and raise awareness of the amazing work of leaders and advocates in their communities.

On 4<sup>th</sup> March 2024 the Charity Commission published new [guidance](#) to help charities when deciding whether to accept, refuse or return a donation. The guidance is designed to help trustees have informed discussions when faced with a choice with potentially significant consequences. More information can be found [here](#). Also, the Church Urban Fund has released a [range of resources](#) designed to help you work well with volunteers including editable templates for risk assessment, expectations, problem solving, expenses and more.

The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) predicts ‘another year of considerable change and challenge’ for voluntary sector organisations. [‘The Road Ahead 2024’](#) report explores external developments, issues and trends that may impact on the voluntary sector, including the general election, technology and AI. NCVO explores the true cost of delivering public services [here](#), with VCSEs able to share their experiences [here](#). Alongside this, New Philanthropy Capital (NPC) has published its [‘State of the Sector 2024’ report](#), with findings from surveys of charity leaders and members of the public. It highlights that public services are ‘at risk’ due to underfunded contracts held by charities, estimating that charities ‘prop up state services by £2.4bn a year’ with 59% wanting government to work more in partnership with charities.

Norfolk Community Advice Network (NCAN) is part of a movement of civil society organisations qualifying as [Voter Registration Champions](#) to support voters at risk of being disenfranchised ahead of the general election. NCAN have produced social media content, posters and flyers to help spread the word about voting and are happy to provide training for staff and volunteers or to help run Voter Registration stalls at drop-in services or events. Find out more [here](#).

[Campaign Lab](#) are ‘a community of politically-minded progressive data scientists, researchers and campaigners’ working to develop innovative election tools. Their resources include a free 50-minute information-packed (beginners) session on [‘How to use ChatGPT for effective campaigning’](#).

The [Transport East Regional Strategy Hub](#) has published a report exploring the challenges for rural mobility in the East and recommends clear actions to improving rural transport provision. With a third of the East’s 3.5 million population living in rural communities, and 600,000 of these people living in ‘transport deserts’, improving rural transport options is an important priority. Transport East established the Regional Strategy Hub, of which CAN is a member, to tackle difficult transport challenges facing the East by bringing together experts and insight into key policy issues. Read more [here](#).

**In case you missed it...**

[Village Halls Week 2024](#) took place in March 2024 which included the release

of [Net Zero Design Guidance](#) outlining what can be done to improve the energy efficiency of village halls. The guidance features several pioneering communities that have sought to decarbonise their building and reduce bills by improving insulation, replacing heating systems and generating their own energy. Community Action Norfolk is the ACRE Network Member for Norfolk and further information can be found in our [article](#).

[Read more](#)

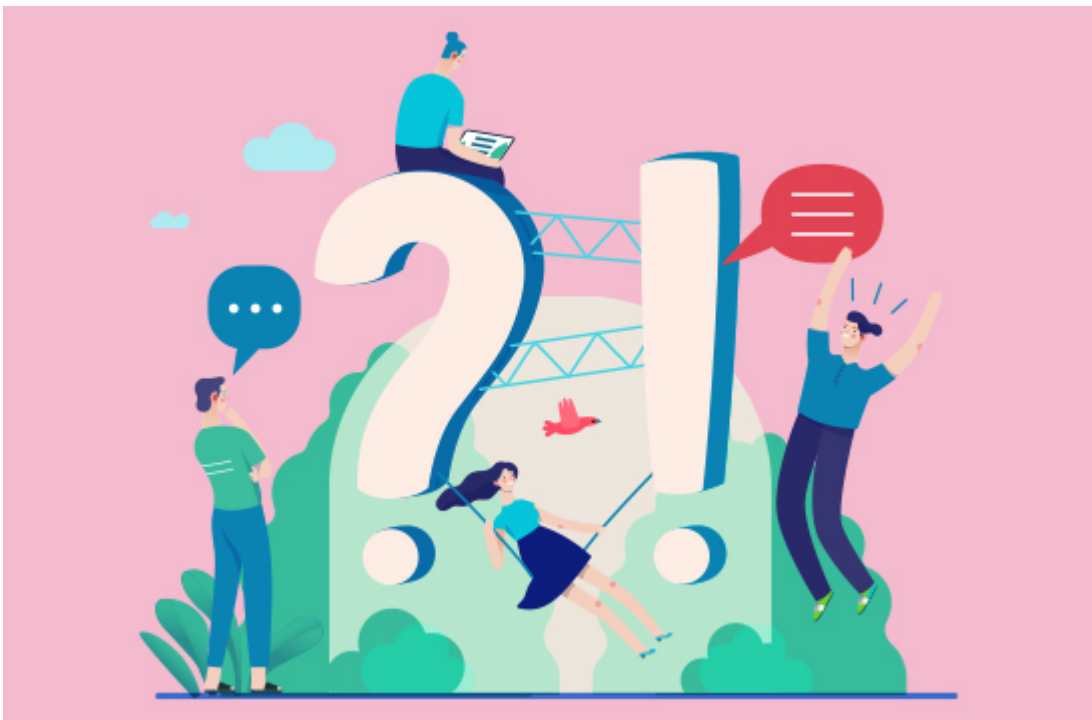
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## Keeping up to date...

You can find regular updates about the things affecting the VCSE sector in Norfolk [on our website](#). Otherwise please follow us on social media.

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## What the Empowering Communities Partners have been doing...



- CAN [support Community Buildings in North Norfolk](#) to make energy efficiency improvements, launch a Norfolk [gardening community network](#) and [comment on](#) VAT relief changes on certain energy-saving materials for charitable buildings.
- BBC Radio 4 feature the story of NCF's Nourishing Norfolk programme: <https://www.norfolkfoundation.com/what-we-ve-been-up-to/radio-4-spotlights-nourishing-norfolk/>

- Voluntary Norfolk comments on Young Carers Action Day: <https://www.voluntarynorfolk.org.uk/young-carers-action-day-2/>
  - CAN share feedback on its [West Norfolk VCSE Hub](#).
  - Ahead of the General Election, CAN [comment](#) on advice from the Charity Commission and Electoral Commission chairs for charities engaging in public debate.
  - Voluntary Norfolk's CEO Alan Hopley announces his retirement and comments on his 9 years at the helm: <https://www.voluntarynorfolk.org.uk/long-serving-ceo-to-retire/>
  - NCAN share new resources, including social media content, posters and flyers, to help organisations spread the information and tools people need to vote: <https://ncan.co.uk/norfolk-voter-registration-campaign/>
  - CAN comment on consultations from [Ofcom on postal service modernisation](#) and [Norfolk County Council on Minimum Income Guarantee](#).
  - NCAN report on the financial pressures facing Norfolk Councils: [NCAN Newsletter: March \(mailchi.mp\)](#)
  - NCF spotlight the Not About The Bike project, which helps young people to socialise and learn bike-repair skills, part-funded by their SPACE (Supporting Positive Activities and Community Engagement) fund: <https://www.norfolkfoundation.com/what-we-ve-been-up-to/its-not-about-the-bike/>
  - CBR Solutions (Voluntary Norfolk's trading arm) share advice on workplace wellbeing for International Day of Happiness: <https://www.cbrsolutions.org.uk/international-day-of-happiness/>
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## Staying up to date...

Find regular updates about how the Empowering Communities partnership has been supporting the VCSE sector in Norfolk [on our website](#).

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## Programme of Events and Training



## Upcoming Events

### **NCAN Partnership Meeting**

*3<sup>rd</sup> April 10:00-11:30 online via Teams*

This month's meeting will feature updates from NCAN and our range of partners, as well as presentations from the Norwich Living Wage Action Group and Creative Arts East. Full agenda to follow. Please email [info@ncan.co.uk](mailto:info@ncan.co.uk) to be added to the mailing list and receive the Teams link.

### **Social Enterprise Coffee Morning**

*19<sup>th</sup> April 10.30am-12.30pm in Norwich*

Join FUSE Norwich at Carberry's Cafe for a cosy and relaxed networking event to chat about all things social enterprise! Grab a breakfast pastry, coffee and a seat, take your time and really get to know each other. We welcome anyone working in the VCSE community to come along. We hope to enjoy lots of useful conversations, and create opportunities for collaboration and chances to learn from local social enterprises. To book, click [here](#).

### **Ask Us About Marketing with Creativity Unbound**

*23<sup>rd</sup> April (various time slots available) online*

Is your VCSE heading in a new direction? Do you know how to turn your vision into a plan? Each month the team from Unbound will be on hand to answer any questions you may have about your charity's design, marketing and fundraising needs, helping you to achieve better engagement, long term growth and financial stability.

To check availability and book a slot, click [here](#).

### **What Does Good Volunteer Management Look Like?**

*24<sup>th</sup> April 10:00-11:30 online via Zoom*

In the final workshop in our series Bringing the Norfolk Vision for Volunteering to Life, we'll cover:

- The basics of volunteer management
- Management style, with focus on a person-centred approach
- Keeping volunteers engaged
- Thanking volunteers and helping them feeling valued

We'll be joined by local organisations sharing their experiences, including BUILD and Norwich Samaritans. Our Voluntary Norfolk Volunteering Coordinator will also share good practice in volunteer management and keys to retaining your volunteers. To book, click [here](#).

[See our full events calendar and book your places here](#)

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## In case you missed it

### **Evolve Workplace Wellbeing Networking Workshop**

These “networking workshops” are facilitated specifically for Norfolk VCSEs by Dr Helen Fitzhugh of the UEA Evolve Workplace Wellbeing research team. In each session, we explore a section of the [Evolve Toolkit](#) with plenty of time for questions and discussion about real-world application in your organisations, inviting you to share your progress and challenges so far.

In this session, we focused on taking a proactive approach – embedding workplace wellbeing through an authentic, enduring approach which might involve small but well thought-out changes, rather than shiny and distracting “spangle traps”. Participants started a map of activities that impact on wellbeing in their organisations, to identify strengths to celebrate and gaps to work on.

#### ***Feedback from the sessions:***

*"As I plan my wellbeing strategy I can use my learning to make it more effective."*

*"[It's] always useful to know that others have same/similar experiences. There will always be something you had not thought of and/or another solution."*

[Catch up on some of our recent events here](#)

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## Funding Opportunities





Visit our [Funding for VCSEs Padlet board here](#)

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Thank you for all your work ensuring Norfolk's VCSE continues to thrive. Please forward this email to any other groups/people you think could benefit from it.

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