

# COMMUNITY ACTION NETWORK

A YEAR IN REVIEW  
2020/2021



COMMUNITY ACTION NETWORK

BOURNEMOUTH | CHRISTCHURCH | POOLE

# INTRODUCTION

Community Action Network (CAN) is an independent non-profit making registered charity and company limited by guarantee, registered in England & Wales, formed in 2019 from the merger of Poole Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) and Bournemouth CVS, These charities had a rich history going back over 50 years, and form the foundations of our work today.

We provide professional and practical support to organisations working within the voluntary and community sector in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole.

We want to see our local communities healthy, diverse, vibrant and flourishing.

We do this by:

**EMPOWERING** the voluntary sector

**ENABLING** volunteering

**INVOLVING** communities.

**We believe that together, we CAN  
make a difference.**

We provide professional expertise, practical services and a platform for promoting and sharing volunteering opportunities. We help groups set up, speak up on their behalf to ensure they have a say in the local community, support them to network, and give them the tools and knowledge they need to grow and thrive.

Any charity, voluntary/community group, public or private sector organisation working for the good of the local community can join us – our members are the heart of everything we do.

# HIGHLIGHTS

In 2020/2021 we have:

## Empowered charities and community organisations

Provided one to one support for 255 organisations - up 74 from last year  
97.5% satisfied or very satisfied with our support,

Advice and support had:

- 81% said we had improved their governance a great deal or a lot
- 67% said we had improved their management a great deal or a lot
- 70% said we had improved quality a great deal or a lot
- 66% said we made their organisation more sustainable a great deal or a lot

Between April and September (when funding withdrawn) worked with youth organisations to attract £32,250 additional funding.

Grew our Trustee network to 137 with the majority telling us our support had increased their knowledge and confidence in the role.

Improved quality through training over 200 people – the majority report a positive increase in their skills and knowledge.

Reviewed and developed the diversity of perspective on our board to ensure we are representative of the BCP community'.

# HIGHLIGHTS

In 2020/2021 we have:

## Enabled volunteering

Promoted 117 volunteering opportunities for local charities and community groups and enabled 848 people to volunteer with these organisations.

Recruited 3325 volunteers to support the #TogetherWeCan initiative.

Recruited trained, deployed and supported over 2,000 CAN Volunteers, to support the vaccination programme at the BIC, local pharmacies and GP surgeries.

As of June 2021 nearly 50,000 volunteering hours have been given with more committed through to September.

Provided peer support and expertise to Volunteer Coordinators working in the VSC and Public Sector.

Supported 75 older people to feel less lonely through the A Good Life programme including the use of 23 young volunteers as Pen Pals

# HIGHLIGHTS

In 2020/2021 we have:

## Involved communities

Engaged with hundreds of people and local VCS groups – 96% would recommend being members of CAN.

Gathered and acted on views of the VCS through a conversational survey with 135 local groups.

Supported essential public health messaging.

Launched Community Hero in the Spotlight – celebrating the great work of local charities and community groups.

Facilitated VCS Leaders exCHANGE – bringing leaders together to work collaboratively.

Proactively championed our sector on Boards – supporting and influencing public sector service development.

Developed VCS collaborations and networks.

Increased our social media followers by 72%.

Provided a user friendly website promoting and supporting our sector.

Launched 'Spread the love' – our pledge to fight racism.

Worked with system partners including the NHS, Council and VCS to consider the role of the VCS in safely discharging people from hospital and avoiding being admitted to hospital

# EMPOWER

## The voluntary sector by:

- improving quality and governance of VCS organisations
- supporting growth and sustainability of VCS organisations
- sustaining and developing CAN as a strong umbrella infrastructure charity

To achieve this we will:

- provide expert advice and guidance
- deliver and facilitate high quality training
- recruit and support a strong board of trustees to oversee the effective running of the charity, and ensure we have excellent operational processes in place

## Support collaboration

We collaborated with and supported the National Citizenship Service on their summer programme for local 15 & 16 year old's by working to identify and develop five young people friendly projects including repainting the rooms at Portfield Community Centre. 'Your help with charities has been priceless for us, thanks again!'

Following identified need for additional wellbeing checks and peer support for voluntary youth workers, particularly during Covid, we co-delivered online sessions to support improved mental health and wellbeing of the youth workers. with 'WIRED', a local community interest company. Although funding for this specific area of work has been lost we continue to support this work. "This meeting is fantastic! Collaborating is key to empowering and strengthening successful decision making and offering a fuller service. The next meet is already in my diary!"

Covid has had a significant impact on children's education - CAN are supporting. We've been working with a local parent and school governor to develop a plan to engage, enthuse and equip the community to put on a Children's Literacy Festival for Key Stage 2 children in local schools.

The festival will consist of author visits to schools that sign up, an immersive walk through experience based on the book *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, a Grand Book Exchange where children receive a Festival Voucher which can be exchanged for a good condition second hand children's book at a number of pop up shops, plus other events, activities and competitions. They approached us for advice about setting up a charity to fundraise and run the event. We advised them about the process but strongly advised that looking to work with an existing local charity may be a good way forward. Due to our support and intervention, they are now partnering with Bournemouth YMCA who will bring their expertise, knowledge and reputation to support a funding bid to co-create a Festival in 2022. The organisers will also be reaching out to other local groups we suggested to explore how they can work together. "The advice received enabled me to contact and partner with local literacy charities in planning a Key Stage 2 Literacy Festival for schools in the BCP area."

## Gathering and acting on feedback

Our annual survey showed that 22 groups (71% of those who responded) said CAN helped with increased collaboration with just under half saying this was as a result of our work. Our work as described in the *Involve Communities* section very much supports these findings.

## Health and Wellbeing

We supported 54 groups that have a health and wellbeing focus, 15 being newly formed.

For example - STAR Recovery is a new charity building on work carried out by Faithworks Wessex to develop a quality standard, training and support for churches that want to run services for vulnerable people, initially those recovering from addiction. We worked with them to agree a constitution, make the application for charity status (which was successful) and develop a range of policies. "We have now become a registered charity, have a great team of trustees and will be looking to employ people in the near future, with the launch of STAR nationally in January 2022. It has helped to really establish the charity well and with good foundations so will help all involved - you were so unbelievably helpful in every aspect."

Helping organisations working with young people to adapt and grow – We provided expert advice and guidance to 57 organisations working with young people; 107 requests actioned through face to face meetings, emails and phone calls. This included for example:

- A new group providing opportunities for NEET young people in the Bournemouth area
- The Powerhouse's new youth mentoring scheme
- Citygate church through their reopening
- Ansbury new NEET project in Boscombe

We completed our evaluation work for Ansbury on their Face Forward programme (ESF and National Lottery Community Fund) working with 15-24 year old NEETs and linked the findings and issues identified at national level:

"Many thanks for your commitment to Face Forward and your hard work on this evaluation. It is very much appreciated."

## Improving quality

We helped improve practice through our support and advice to 144 groups (of which 37 were newly forming, 54 with health and wellbeing focus and 9 BAME) across BCP. This was via 608 interactions by phone, e-mail or face to face ranging from 15 mins to a total of 32 hours each over 12 months.

Setting up a new charity can be a minefield – we worked extensively to achieve 5 successful charity applications and 1 CIC.

Of the groups we worked with:

89.5% reported they were very satisfied and 8% satisfied

81% told us our support had improved governance a great deal or a lot

67% improved management a great deal or a lot

70% improved quality a great deal or a lot

66% felt their organisation was more sustainable a great deal or a lot as a result of our input

"We have had a significant increase in volunteers, our trustee committee has grown by one and paid staff has increased from 3 part-time staff in March 2020 to 8 part-time staff currently. We have also had an 80% in referrals into our services from last year."

"We were able to adjust our business plan accordingly and were made aware of several things we needed to put in place. It helped increase our understanding of employment/volunteer issues and gave us better governance as a result."

"I have the correct people in place and structure to really help make a difference."

"Smooth closure process of our CIO"

"We've extended the reach of our charity into Poole and Christchurch, potentially doubling the number of beneficiaries and open spaces we can support."



We advised a new organisation Youth Empowerment Platform (YEP) in their application for charity status. This is a BME led group that is working with BME young people and in particular trying to divert them from anti-social behaviour through youth/group work. We advised on a constitution and application to the Charity Commission which was successful. Subsequently ran a session for their trustees on roles and responsibilities and interpretation of their constitution. "I did not know the right wording to use for the application and had taken it for granted. However, when I was recommended to contact you, it changed everything. You supported me with tidying up the constitution, especially with clarifying objects & purpose. You then supported me with the actual application which I found some sections really difficult to put the right information. You were there 100% all the way, even when Charity Commission returned the application. I was nearly giving up but when you looked at the questions you guided me with the right responses leading to the successful registration. To be honest it wouldn't have been a success without your help, so much appreciated."

## Support access to training

Covid-19 lockdown resulted in us looking at new and innovative ways of delivering training.

### **Webinars:**

We developed a range of webinars covering, returning to work, redundancy, employment contracts, recruitment and HR policy checklist. These were attended by a total of 60 people from local groups – the majority of which reported an increase in confidence.

Participants were asked what they would do differently following the course:

"Review HR and other policies and procedures. A job that has been on the to do list for a long time."

"Have performance management processes in place for a new employee's probation period."

"Do more research into corporate donors and high net worth individuals by reviewing the rich lists etc."

### **Communication and supporting the sector**

Our weekly e-mail updates to members are positively received and cover changes to legal and good practice including advice on Covid related matters of opening, HR and service delivery.

## Supporting voluntary youth projects

– our work stopped in the main in December due to loss of funding. But up until then we:

- sent 30 e-alerts to voluntary groups supporting young people about training and funding opportunities
- sent 21 e-newsletters to 56 registered voluntary youth projects and 48 statutory/VCS groups, included information about guidelines for supporting young people and sessions through the pandemic, online resources for young people, supporting mental health and funding available. We included special reports on Covid guidelines and risk assessments (with template documents collected and shared to the sector), QR Codes for youth groups and track and trace. 74% said it was useful or very useful, saying our communications provided up to date and authoritative information, updates and are a one stop shop of information.

“It's so valuable to keep in the loop about other things going on in our area of work. Sometimes churches can be a bit insular and 'forget' we're part of a big network all aiming to support young people but it's so important we all work together.” and “They provide informative information to funding opportunities, networking and general awareness of youth sector within BCP.”

### Gathering insights

23 local youth groups completed our annual survey, a 53% response rate. 100% of the groups we worked with found our support helpful, 87% stated our face to face support was very useful. Over 75% of the groups that responded rated the overall project as good and 78% felt the work raised their awareness of other services and support, in particular feeling more connected and knowledgeable about what other youth groups and organisations were doing.

“Over the last year we have had support about delivery of youth work through Covid, providing training opportunities and linking us with other organisations.”

“It has really helped to link us to other organisations. For example, I met people from The Colourworks Foundation, who ran virtual sessions for our young people. The feedback from young people was fantastic.”

### Getting to grips with Zoom

Session to help 13 local groups better understand how to effectively utilise Zoom to work creatively and interactively with young people.

### SEN Training for Youth Workers

Young people with SEN worked with us to design and deliver SEN training to 12 youth workers.

## Developing high quality leadership and governance

Volunteer trustees are the life blood of the voluntary and community sector – we work to ensure they are supported and trained to provide essential governance by delivering:

- Our Trustee e-network has 137 members and we sent 4 e-alerts
- Virtual training – attended by 35 volunteer trustees, with the majority telling us our support had increased their knowledge and confidence in the role.

When asked what they will do differently after the course:

“Engage more with process of being a trustee, rather than being a volunteer. Question others - can we do this better?”

“Be more aware, ask more questions, review and implement trustee information packs for new trustees”

“Feel more confident to speak out when things are not understood or to express views without feeling embarrassed, awkward or challenging”

- Bespoke trustee training provided to 8 trustee boards

“Thank you so much for today, was very useful.”

“Many thanks for today I feel a lot more confident about how to move forward”

- A webinar with charity lawyer regarding governance issues and Covid, attended by 17 groups
- A presentation about governance issues related to Covid at Ward Goodman’s virtual Dorset Charity Conference, attended by 68 people

## Supporting growth and sustainability

- Weekly Funding Updates to our members based on What Funds alerts from BCP Council plus some other opportunities.
- Local Covid emergency funding opportunities were advertised on CAN website and using e-mail alerts.
- Place on BH Coastal Lottery Grants panel. Three rounds awarded a total of £37,111 in grants to 27 groups.
- Worked with Fundraising Academy based at BU who ran a pilot webinar in February 2021 about researching large donors which was attended by 14 people with good feedback.
- Supported at least 21 groups with advice on income generation including Friends of Canford Cliffs Library on a successful funding bid:

- "I had wonderful news yesterday that our application for the CIL funding for the extension of the Canford Cliffs Library conservatory community room has been approved. Thank you so much for taking the trouble to write in support of this earlier. We really are most grateful"
- Survey of voluntary youth groups showed that it helped 7 groups attract £32,250 including a £25,000 grant from the National Lottery.
- Support was given to Sovereign Housing to advertise their fund for youth organisations, 3 groups including AIM Community applied.
- Worked with Bournemouth Water to identify community groups that would benefit from their donation of £15,083. In total 16 organisations were awarded pots of money ranging from £305 to £1083.
- Held funds totalling £4461.50 on behalf of Sandbanks Neighbourhood Forum, Bi-polar Support Group who could not hold the funds themselves, and for Hurting to Healing who closed down,

Resource donation and loan scheme working well - over 100 items rehomed.

Over 60 items of office furniture and equipment - 17 items of assorted stationary and over 30 unusual items including a pool table, a games console and a toolbox to charities and community groups in BCP.

## Sharing good practice for Youth Workers

12 youth workers attended SEN training, designed and delivered by young people with SEN from The Chatterboxes.

Peer support for youth workers - The 'Lets' Connect' meetings for voluntary sector youth workers have been well attended and despite losing funding to support these CAN has decided to continue them:

"It was great to have a space to share with other likeminded people locally what's going on for your young people, particularly in the current climate. As someone who is generally a 'lone worker' it's vital to have that space to connect."

"Enable me to connect with other organisations, hear how they are during these challenging times of Covid, ways that they were working online with young people and be inspired."

## Sustaining and developing a strong and proactive CAN Board of Trustees

Our Board of Trustees continues to grow and develop. They provide scrutiny, stretch and support to the Chief Executive. Trustees also undertook a review of the demographics of the board to further develop a diversity of perspective. This resulted in the recruitment of three new members who bring a different and diverse range of experience and talent to CAN.

The Board also:

- Carried out a skills audit to identify any training needs
- Undertook a review of delegated responsibilities
- Reviewed our Risk Register
- Reviewed and updated our Complaints Policy – now Compliments and Complaints Policy
- Reviewed our vision and mission
- Assessed if we are 'living our values' – fully agreed that we absolutely are
- Reviewed our recruitment and induction policies and processes
- Reviewed and agreed our updated Personnel Policy and all related policies
- Reviewed and agreed our updated Equality and Diversity Strategy and action plan (now a standing agenda item) and appointed a lead Trustee.
- Agreed an overarching safeguarding policy to ensure CAN protects the safety of all who come into contact with it and more detailed policies for working with under 18s and adults at risk
- Provided strategic advice and sought assurance on our contract with Dorset HealthCare volunteer to stop covid programme
- Approved investment on new staff posts
- Held a short 'business only' virtual AGM for members

Our Board of Trustees continues to grow and develop. They provide scrutiny, stretch and support to the Chief Executive. They scored themselves with 8 out of 10 for how well they supported and challenged the Chief Executive over the past year and 9.2 out of 10 for their degree of satisfaction with the operational work of CAN.

Covid made it difficult to have physical meetings however the Board made a smooth transition to the use of virtual meetings and the Board have decided that in the future they will continue to have some of their meetings virtually.

Finance – A Finance Committee oversees the accounts and budget. Accounts have been presented to Trustees who are assured we are financially sound and on budget.

Membership (see Involve report)

## CAN organisational development

An experienced Trustee undertook a root and branch review of our recruitment and induction policies and processes. This resulted in a series of recommendations that the staff team actioned and took forward to ensure we have a high quality and robust process.

Quality assurance – NAVCA QA achieved, and our submission being used as an example of good practice nationally.

Staff recruitment:

With new projects and a growing portfolio, we recruited new staff this year:

Involve Communities team:

- Partnerships Manager to head up the Involve Communities team
- A Project Officer to lead on the Home First VCS project
- Enable Volunteering team:
- Four Senior Volunteer Coordinators and a Recruitment and Deployment Officer to support the volunteers at the vaccination site at the BIC and beyond
- A Volunteering Coordinator to work in the Enable Volunteering team growing the Volunteering Hub and promoting volunteering
- Empower the voluntary sector team
- Programme Coordinator – A Good Life

Core Team

- Business and Administration Apprentice – this is a new role for CAN and was developed working with the support of Bournemouth and Poole College.

We also welcomed two volunteers. One supporting our teams with social media and one supporting the 'Volunteer to Stop Covid' programme.

Planned recruitment in quarter one includes:

- Finance Officer to replace our retiring officer

## Involve Communities team

- Project Officer to lead on the Health Equalities insights project
- Involvement Lead – to support increased engagement and community led development
- Through the pandemic we have been working to government guidelines and staff have been working at home in the main, and only travelling in exceptional circumstances. We will be reviewing and updating our approach in line with lockdown restrictions.

# ENABLE

## Volunteering by:

- Champion the role of volunteering
- Enable people to volunteer
- Support organisations to promote, recruit, train, induct and provide ongoing support to volunteers

To achieve this, we will:

- actively promote volunteering to the public, young people and organisations
- provide a volunteering platform, which enables organisations to recruit volunteers and volunteers to access volunteering opportunities
- provide expert advice, guidance and training on all matters relating to volunteering to individuals, businesses, stakeholders and the voluntary and community sector

## Promoting the value of volunteering

We use a variety of methods to effectively communicate the value of volunteering. This year through the pandemic the majority of this has been online. People have come forward in their thousands this year to give their gift of time and CAN has been at the forefront in supporting and enabling safe and effective volunteering to make a huge positive impact on the lives of communities across the BCP area and beyond.

We are also working with BCP Council colleagues to develop a Volunteer Strategy to support and encourage volunteering across all communities.

New website – we have reviewed, rewritten and added new content for the volunteering hub section of our website this included a FAQ section for volunteers. Feedback from volunteers has been very positive.



Social media – we use Twitter to promote the value of volunteering and highlight / showcase the amazing work of our local volunteers carrying out a huge variety of tasks to help their community. We have also had a focus on the excellent work being undertaken by the CAN Volunteers at the large scale vaccination site at the BIC, with regular ‘volunteer spotlight’ posts from people of all ages and from different backgrounds explaining why they got involved. These posts are always well received, with numerous likes, retweets and positive comments. Drew Mellor – Leader of BCP Council commented “Great work from the local NHS and partners including the superb army of CAN volunteers.”

Spotlight on volunteers – we are gathering stories and photos about local volunteers talking to us about their motivations, the benefits to them and the community, and what advice they would give to someone looking to volunteer. These stories are being added to our website / social media, used in talks and shared with the press, to highlight and value volunteering and encourage more people to come forward.

## CAN Volunteering Hub

We promoted 117 volunteering opportunities for local charities and community groups and enabled 848 people to volunteer with these organisations

22 new organisations joined our Volunteer Hub.

In total we received 848 enquiries about volunteering, this was through a number of means including registration on our online portal, by telephone, email and social media. Volunteers were signposted to various different projects that needed volunteers including those on Simply Connect, Together We Can (including Adult Social Care), Flu clinics, Covid marshals, Pharmacies to assist with delivery of medication and even at the height of the first lockdown to local businesses to assist with the delivery of shopping to vulnerable people.

When setting up the volunteer programme at the BIC, we set the minimum age at 16 to enable young people to get involved. To enable us to do this, we had to ensure we had the relevant safeguarding policies in place and also have signed returned parental consent forms before a young person was approved to volunteer. In total 130 young people aged 16 to 18 signed up to help, with 71 of those actively recording hours ranging from 3.5 hours (per shift) to 130.25 hours. Dorset Healthcare are now looking at ways to promote NHS careers to our young volunteers.

We worked with young people looking to volunteer and dealt with 18 enquiries about youth volunteering (April to September when funding ceased) – 6 from young people, 4 from parents, 4 from BCP Council, 3 from VCS and a business.

Our priority for last year was to really build our volunteering hub and promote the ethos of volunteering widely. Our approach had adapted to work with and around the pandemic.

Many charities, community groups and public sector services had to stop using volunteers through lockdown. Those that were looking for volunteers for example Age UK and Prama, we were able to support to successfully recruit. This resulted in organisations being able to adapt and, in some cases, significantly increase their volunteering offer to the community.

We proactively supported over 172 organisations including Jobcentre Plus, Job Hubs, mental health support groups, Bournemouth & Poole College and Bournemouth University looking for volunteering placements, by sending details of new volunteering opportunities along with access to our online volunteering platform.

## #TogetherWeCan

When the first lockdown was announced in March 2020, we were approached by BCP Council to work with them on the #TogetherWeCan initiative to support people who were clinically vulnerable and having to shield.

Within 48 hours we put all the processes in place and put out a call to action to the community. Over the first weekend 1,000 local people had stepped up to help. This was a humbling experience for us all, that so many people were willing to help their friends and neighbours. We were quickly able to share details with the Council who then deployed the volunteers to support the community via their Helpline – great partnership working.

Eventually 3325 people signed up to help, with around 1800 being used to carry out tasks within the local community, including shopping, collection of medication, food parcel deliveries, and having 'doorstep chats.'

As our work progressed it was clear we needed volunteers that could respond at a moment's notice, so we also recruited 83 people who were willing to be 'emergency response volunteers.' – we toyed with giving them a blue light hat but decided against it! Our Council colleagues tell us these volunteers have been invaluable to support the most vulnerable residents often in urgent need.

We now have a pool of CAN Volunteers so were able to support a request from Adult Social Care to collect and distribute emergency food parcels, and we were also able to support distribution of PPE to carers. This has resulted in over 5,000 vulnerable people being supported and kept safe.

## Pharmacies collection of medication

During the first lockdown we worked with Public Health Dorset, the Local Pharmaceutical Committee and Volunteer Centre Dorset to identify volunteers who could help with the delivery of medication from local pharmacies. We also provided advice and guidance to pharmacies around involving volunteers. We received referrals from 15 pharmacies, and 48 volunteers were signposted to them. Two pharmacies came back to us and requested additional volunteers and we signposted a further five people to them to help.

## Flu Clinics

In Autumn 2020, GP surgeries approached us for volunteers to help with their flu clinic. We provided draft risk assessments, volunteer handbook, code of conduct, template emails and offered ongoing support. In total 38 volunteers were matched to cover 76 shifts across six GP surgeries. We developed a good working relationship with the surgeries e.g. Talbot Medical Centre and we were able to build on this success when offering support with the covid vaccination programme.

A volunteer told us "The role of assisting at the flu clinics went very well. I was able to help on five afternoons and we had no problems whatsoever. Relationship with all the staff was excellent and all those I worked with expressed warm appreciation. Contact with so many members of the local community was a good tonic for me as I live very close to the surgery. Refreshments midway through each session were lovely."

GP surgery said: "All of the volunteers were brilliant & we really appreciate the support they were able to give us, as without their support would have meant on occasions, we would have been short of helpers. I would also like to thank you as well Amy as you also have been brilliant in this process."

## Supporting the vaccination roll out - volunteer to stop Covid-19

In December 2020 we were contracted by NHS Dorset HealthCare (DHC) for 12 weeks initially, to support delivery of the vaccination roll out at the BIC, starting on 18th January 21. The requirement was for approx. 20 volunteer marshals, 12 hours a day, 7 days a week. Dorset CCG also underwrote our costs to support pharmacies and Primary Care Networks with volunteers as required.

We set up all the processes, including a comprehensive induction pack - good practice guides, task descriptions, volunteer agreements. We developed the training in partnership with DHC, commissioned an online volunteer shift booking system (Team Kinetic), and recruited Senior Volunteer Coordinators and a Recruitment and Deployment Officer, to operationally support the work, and were ready for the start on the 18th January.

We had an amazing response from the community to our previous call to action - would it be the same this time? Yes it would!

Over 2,500 people came forward and 1,805 went on to complete our mandatory training delivered by our team via Zoom - we provided one to one support to enable everyone to access the training, which was very successful. More volunteers are now being recruited and trained to sustain the effort to September 2021.

We are the only large scale site in the country to offer volunteering opportunities to 16-18 year olds, and have all the required policies and safeguarding in place, to enable over 100 young people to volunteer. Giving them an opportunity to support their community, but also an insight into a potential job as a clinician. Again, this approach is being held up nationally as an example of good practice. We're now looking with our BCP Council colleagues at how we can offer 'looked after' children the opportunity for work experience with our team at the BIC

DHC are very happy with the service and tell us we are the "heart" of the programme. Our contract has now been extended to September. Working with DHC we have introduced rapid lateral flow testing for all our volunteers to ensure their safety and that of patients, staff and other volunteers.

We are also providing our Volunteer to Stop Covid19 service at seven community sites including Talbot Medical Centre and Wallisdown Pharmacy. We have held numerous remote meetings with each of the sites to establish their volunteer requirements including writing new role descriptions, guiding them through how to use Team Kinetic and working with them to provide trained volunteers to meet their needs.

The project has been a resounding success with nearly 50,000 volunteering hours committed as of June 21 at the BIC and in the community. We anticipate over 85,000 volunteering hours will be given by the end of September. We are proud to be compliant NHS England Standard Operating Procedures, and our induction training has been held up nationally as an example of good practice.

A CAN volunteer said "I'm not a clinician so I can't help that way, but I can volunteer with CAN and play a part in history and help people get back to their lives"

Another told us "We're like a family - I have a reason to get out of bed in the morning - I'm needed, I'm helping save lives and CAN supports me beautifully"

When asked about the volunteering onboarding experience - we were told "Thank you for an excellent induction presentation on Saturday evening. I attend lots of webinars at the moment with my work but this was the best so far! Clear, professional, engaging and friendly - also no errors in the presentation - it really was excellent so please give my thanks to everyone who gave up their Saturday night to spend an hour and a half explaining to us how the volunteering will work."

A member of the public told us "My husband had his vaccination here last Saturday it was pouring with rain yet those volunteers outside were helping people with a smile on their faces and inside he said was really well organised."

## Police Lateral Flow Testing

Dorset Police brought in lateral flow testing for their staff at both the Bournemouth and Winfrith sites for which they needed volunteers to oversee the process. We put a call out for help to all our Covid Marshals and just over 200 people came forward who were willing to help and undertook the necessary online lateral flow testing training. We set Dorset Police up on Team Kinetic and advertised their shifts. Weekly contact was maintained with Dorset Police to discuss the viability of the scheme, which only ran for 4 weeks due to a change of policy with self-testing now available.

As we move (hopefully) towards recovery, we are developing the CAN Community Volunteer offer, to ensure we are ready to support the community as and when needed.

## Supporting good practice in recruiting and managing volunteers by providing expert advice and guidance:

Helping new groups quickly and safely establish - Our work to ensure effective recruitment and management of volunteers was extensively called upon during the pandemic. Many new informal groups, mutual aid groups, friends and neighbours stepped up to help their community. CAN was there offering our expert advice and guidance on setting up safe and effective volunteering. As a result, new groups were established with good governance and we avoided any serious safeguarding issues.

Sustaining charities and community groups - We supported established organisations to advertise their volunteering opportunities more effectively on our online platform, through a series of one to one and online training sessions, resulting in a significant increase in meaningful and appropriate volunteering opportunities.

Developing quality improvement - Throughout the pandemic we kept in touch with volunteer coordinators, although many were furloughed. Our training and networking went online to ensure good and safe practice in supporting volunteers continued.

## Delivering Effective Projects: A Good Life

We are mid-way through delivering 'A Good Life' programme. This is an exciting initiative designed to bring community groups, businesses and volunteers together to tackle loneliness in later life.

Funded by the National Lottery Community Fund, the programme brings together public and voluntary sector agencies including ourselves, BCP Council, Public Health Dorset, Bournemouth University, Prama, Poole Housing Partnership and Help and Care.

The programme aims to increase awareness amongst the wider community of the challenges of loneliness and social isolation that older people face, test different tools to address the need and equip community groups and businesses to identify and engage with older people, ultimately developing their own solutions to local need.

Due to the pandemic, we have adapted the programme and sought different and innovative ways to tackle loneliness in later life. This includes the introduction of:

- Telephone friendship groups
- Yours Sincerely pen pal project
- #HowAreYou social media campaign with local businesses

We are currently providing a service to 75 older people across BCP.

Telephone friendship groups - have proved to be a vital service for over 20 older and socially isolated people.

They are a partnership with other local charities and developed from the Volunteer Sub-Group hosted by CAN during the pandemic. PramaLife took out the contract with the phone company following research and collaboration by several charities. A few of these across BCP have been trialling the telephone friendship groups in order to meet the need that community coffee mornings had been fulfilling prior to the lockdown. We are sharing our findings from these groups, which have without exception been very positive, with the hope of offering this as a solution for other charities. It is believed that there is demand for this service 'post-covid' as many older people are housebound or attend very few face to face activities even in non-lockdown times. As one of the participants said recently; 'Normally I sit here talking to myself. It's nice to have someone else to talk to.'

There are three open groups for people to drop into like a coffee morning, and also three community groups using the telephone groups facility; Maritime Memories through Poole Museum, Bourne Over 55s and The Stroke Support Group. These are all hosted by CAN.

We also facilitated with Bournemouth University a telephone session to help people engage with nature. 14 participants attended with feedback stating that it was a wonderful experience. We are working to expand the deliver more sessions in 2021/2022.

At Christmas we personally delivered small gifts to older people we have connected with. One person told us 'It was lovely - I stood talking to Robynne for a 5 minute natter. I was thrilled to bits with the parcel. I know how much organisation goes into this. It's very much appreciated.'

We are now training A Good Life CAN Volunteers to help facilitate the telephone friendship groups. We hope in the near future volunteers will also host the calls. We are also planning to train more community groups to run their own telephone friendship groups in the near future.

Yours Sincerely - is a pen pal project that invites young people and older people to write to one another to help reduce loneliness and feelings of isolation. Originally devised by young people to give "sunshine in an envelope" to older people perhaps with no family or friends and send a happy letter, card or picture through the post. CAN provides support and oversight to ensure safety for all involved.

We were able to secure additional funding from Sovereign Housing to provide youth worker support for the young volunteers involved, this includes weekly online check in sessions with the young volunteers to discuss issues, ideas and their letters. In the sessions they also what they have learnt about their pen pal and what to write in their letters.

A young volunteer told us - "This project is the highlight of my week. I get to work with new friends who want to make a difference like I do. It feels great to be a part of something like this, I can't wait until it's safe to meet in person the friends I have made spanning across generations."

To date 51 older people and 23 younger people take part. 125 letters have been exchanged, including a Christmas box, letters, artwork and knitted items! The young people also send handmade cards, poems and magazine articles.

When we check in by phone with the older person, 100% report the letters are making a positive difference to their lives and they all tell us 'please keep writing' - A daughter of one older person told us "My dad (86) received his first letter recently and was so animated about it. He is now corresponding with an 18-year-old who has been matched perfectly with his interests. The letter was detailed, engaging, and asked lots of questions - a great project not only to help with isolation and loneliness but also breaking down some stereotypical views between young and old and vice versa."



#HowAreYou - we developed innovative ways to increase engagement with local businesses without proprietors having to donate much time and resource. We developed the #HowAreYou? social media marketing campaign that sought to find businesses that looked after their local community. The aim for the campaign was to engage with and encourage local businesses to increase accessibility to lonely and socially isolated older people by creating their own content around the #HowAreYou? hashtag. This has opened links with the Co-Op, Spar, The Fisherman Café and others in the Poole area. The content created for the campaign has seen an incredible reach across Twitter, having been retweeted and shared by a variety of high profile charities, CEO's and Councillors. A full branding kit has been developed for #HowAreYou? Along with focus group reports and how businesses can harness renewed community cohesion due to COVID. A dedicated page on the CAN website supports delivery.

# INVOLVE

## Communities by:

- Promote & champion the sector – increase the visibility of CAN
- Be the point of contact, reference and information for the sector locally. Identifying need and effectively communicating, developing and influencing policy
- Enable effective involvement and codesign of services, through meaningful community connection

To achieve this we will:

- actively champion and promote the work of our sector and CAN to support joined up collaborative working
- increase membership and reach – gather and share knowledge about our sector locally and nationally
- develop and deliver voluntary and community sector led engagement and networking through VCS Leaders exCHANGE and Forums

## Developing engagement

Throughout 2020-2021 we have continued to increase our engagement with charities and community groups.

We want to ensure that we are representative of the community and organisations living and working in the conurbation of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole. We are actively promoting membership to these groups and have been successful in building excellent links.

Our focus for engagement this year is around groups who maybe not aware of CAN, and what we offer, these include:

- Groups supporting ethnic minority communities
- Individuals of 'good will' – people within the community supporting individuals who are homeless or need food but are not part of a formalised community group
- Uniformed Groups.
- Community Centres
- Primary Care Networks
- Patient Participation Groups
- Sports groups
- Faith groups

In addition to this we have developed a Business Supporter Membership to be launched in the summer of 2021. To enable us to consolidate the work we have been developing a desirable package which engages businesses - enabling us to:

- further build on our relationships with the local chambers of trade and commerce
- champion the work of the VCS across BCP
- help leverage funding and resources for the local VCS

In May 2020 we conducted a conversational 'State of the Sector' survey. We spoke to 135 organisations, the average length of each call was 34 minutes - 27% Bournemouth, 23% Christchurch, 30% Poole, 20% Dorset wide.

- 69% told us they were still operating and/or had increased their offer
- 31% told us they were struggling to still offer support or were 'on hold'
- In total 350 staff working in the organisations, we spoke to had been furloughed, which is a significant % of staff
- 51% told us they were worried about future funding / sustainability of their organisation. This reflects the national picture and was especially highlighted by organisations that community fundraise and/or rely on retail income. Some felt funding had been diverted only to Covid19 work
- 20% told us they had more volunteers during the pandemic, with over 500 people being recruited and utilised overall
- 52% told us their volunteers were shielding, due to their age or health
- 42% told us they had changed their offer to online / virtual as a result of the pandemic, and had never been as busy, with an increased demand on their service.

The general consensus from those we spoke to was that they were keen for us to continue to champion the work of the VCS (70%) and 75% of them wanted to utilise our online volunteering platform to support their organisation.

For 2021/22 we are partnering with Dorset Community Action (DCA) to carry out a pan-Dorset 'State of the Sector' survey. We are looking to assess the impact of the pandemic across Pan-Dorset, as we are aware that many of our members work across all areas.

In January 2021 we conducted our membership survey - seeking the views of our full members on the different elements of the membership - our training offer, networking, championing and celebrating, the volunteering hub and our communications. The responses were overwhelmingly positive.

Highlights include:

- 96% of respondents would recommend being members of CAN
- An average of 86% for how well we are championing the sector
- Our training was rated at an average of 77% out of 100% on a sliding scale (100% being considered excellent, 50% being ok and 0% being poor)
- Our networking opportunities were rated an average of 84% out of 100% on a sliding scale (100% being considered excellent, 50% being ok and 0% being poor)
- 77% of respondents had been successful in finding volunteers through the CAN Volunteering Hub
- Useful suggestions and requests which will be acted upon in the coming months including:
  - An online Volunteer Fair (planned for June 21)
  - Restarting of the volunteer coordinator meetings – following a temporary pause due to Covid.
  - Opportunities for partnership working (particularly in relation to funding)
- Respondents asked that we share statistics and information on the volunteering that is taking place across the conurbation

We have continued to develop awareness of the CAN in Christchurch. We have regularly attended the Christchurch Health and Wellbeing Locality Board and we have set up a Southbourne, Pokesdown and Christchurch focussed networking webinar to encourage Christchurch organisations to engage with us.

As we move out of Covid Restrictions the aim of the Involve team is to:

- resume face to face engagement with groups on a one-to-one basis
- Attend groups and sessions our members deliver for their service users/communities – helping us to get a better understanding of what they offer and how we can support them.
- focus on developing closer links in Christchurch

## Promoting and valuing charities and community groups

In February we launched our Community Hero in the Spotlight initiative. Each month we showcase the work of a particular member organisation to share their untold stories and give them the recognition they deserve. We share press releases with our press contacts, have a monthly segment on Hope FM and promote the organisation through our website and social media.

Truth be Told were our first Community Hero in the Spotlight and in March Your Planet Doctors was our second. Both the founders of the organisations joined our Partnerships Manager on Hope FM to be interviewed by Blair Crawford and the press releases we have shared about the organisations have been published by Bournemouth Echo. Feedback from our Community Hero in the Spotlight participants has been overwhelmingly positive. Gemma Gilliard, founder of Truth be Told said "I'm so grateful for your kind words and really so encouraged that CAN selected Truth Be Told. I meant every word about your fab organisation!"

## Supporting essential public health messaging

We were commissioned by Public Health Dorset to support the development of Trusted Voices in the community to help better engage with communities. The work has progressed really well with various positive outcomes including:

- The development and creation of ten 'talking heads' videos, enabling key messages to be shared with a range of communities in different languages across social media and through the Trusted Voices newsletter
- Facilitation of myth busting/information sharing sessions with the Polish and Gambian communities.
- Regular attendance at the Health Ambassador meetings to introduce the Trusted Voices project to a wider audience.
- Interviewed seven local Polish residents to gather their insights and establish how communications might be better received
- Attendance at numerous community group meetings to talk to individuals about the initiative.

Due to its initial success, we have been asked to continue with the project for a further 6 months.

Following the success of Trusted Voices, we have been asked to partner with Dorset Community Action (DCA) and Dorset Race Equality Council (DREC) on a six month research project. The Health Equalities Project will support the gathering and analysis of local health inequalities to provide further knowledge and insight into the Dorset Integrated Care System. We want to find out the reasons why in some communities there is a lower uptake in preventative health measures and understand if we are masking any areas of hidden inequality. We start recruitment for the role in April 2021 to enable the project to start early June.

## Developing collaborations and networking

The recruitment of a partnership's manager has further enabled development of the Involve team and the ability to enhance our networking offer.

Working with local sector leaders we have developed a Leaders exCHANGE group to better collaborate, share good practice and inform our work. The group is made up of VCS leaders from across the VCS. Priorities of the group were co-designed and challenges our members are facing were discussed including the impact of Brexit on some of the most vulnerable in our communities and funding challenges due to Covid-19. Leaders are also working with us to co-design our future forums and collaborations.

We have continued to facilitate networking and new collaborations even though opportunities have been limited due to Covid 19 restrictions. Consequently, we moved our networking online. These have been developed following requests from members. In total we have facilitated 12 networking sessions during 2020/2021 all successful in enabling discussion of potential opportunities, knowledge sharing and peer support with others in the same position / with a similar purpose. These have included:

- Supporting women - 2 online networking events for organisations that specifically support women and girls in November 2020 and January 2021. At both events 12 different groups attended including WAND, Water Lily Project, the Wardrobe Foundation, Soroptimists Bournemouth, Safe and Sound, the Women's Centre Cornwall.

The group decided they wanted to celebrate International Women's Day in March 2021. Consequently, we facilitated weeklong social media campaign and a celebration event bringing groups and people together. The social media campaign included 2-3 posts each day Monday to Friday and 9 short videos from WAND, the Water Lily Project, Chinese Angels, the Wardrobe Foundation, Soroptimists Bournemouth, Safe and Sound and Unity in Vision all celebrating the power of women and their organisations. 27 people attended the celebration event from 15 different organisations. Dannie, from WISE Ability said "Really enjoyable, engaging sessions, varied content, involved everyone. Had a great time, thank you!"

- Pokesdown, Christchurch and Southbourne area -online networking events for organisations specifically working in these areas to share good practice and increase collaborations. Our first session was informal networking to enable organisations to get to know each other and in total 15 different groups engaged.

To our second session we invited Ebi Sosseh from BCP Council to give an update on the 'Mind the Gap' project – making train stations more community friendly, as he is particularly keen to work with VCS groups working in the area.

Feedback to us included “Thank you for all you are doing and your encouragement” Jane, BH1 Project, Boscombe Salvation Army.

We organised a session focused on Boscombe - working in partnership with BCP Council to facilitate a networking session for organisations and groups working and supporting the communities of Boscombe. It was received very positively, and 26 people attended a mix of CAN members and others – we gained 2 new members from the session and several attendees requested a follow up session which will be taking place in May.

### **Supporting the community / supporting young people**

We work in partnership with Project Wired to deliver a wellbeing session for youth workers across BCP called Lets Connect. Six sessions held this year with 10 local organisations accessing the support - 100% of attendees told us they found the session beneficial for their wellbeing, useful for connecting with other local youth workers and find it a effective balance of wellbeing and networking space.

### **Supporting wellbeing**

After a year of unprecedented stresses and strains for many the Involve team felt there was an opportunity to offer a session of festive fun and frolics and provided a short networking webinar for members to let off steam and celebrate the festive season. We had 17 different members attend and although we did not gather formal feedback the general feeling from those who attended was that the session was gratefully received, and fun was had by all.

### **Linking with local MP's**

In March 2021 we were asked by Conor Burns MP to facilitate an event for VCS organisations based on delivering services within the Bournemouth West constituency. Providing them with the opportunity to share with him the difficulties they have been facing and what they feel should be his and the Governments priorities as we move into recovery – 14 organisations attended, shared their views and provided him with valuable insight.

## Developing our online presence and influence

Website and social media - We continue to be active on social media, and both our website and social media have continued to be key to reaching out and championing our sector. Our target was to increase our social media following by 20% across all platforms. We exceeded this significantly with a 72% increase on Twitter and 44% increase on Facebook.

CAN website- we continue to review and update the website to ensure that it is fit for purpose and easy to use -feedback from members is really positive, with the membership zone being the only area for improvement that will be taken forward this year.

During 2020/2021 we had 37,319 visitors; the majority (31,021) were 'new visitors'.

Our bounce back % (visitors who enter a site and then leave) has stayed consistent throughout the year at approximately 50% which is 'good/average'. The most visited webpages on [www.can100.org](http://www.can100.org) over the last quarter have continued to be volunteering opportunities, interested in volunteering, jobs and volunteer to stop Covid all with approximately 1000 page visits each. We have seen the number of visitors increase quarter on quarter with Jan - March 2021 seeing the most significant increase in interaction on the website with nearly 20,000 visitors.

### Twitter

Our followers have increased by 578 this year to 2,020. We have seen our twitter page go from strength to strength each quarter which culminated in our most successful quarter in quarter 4. We tweeted 279 times and @Can100org was mentioned in 519 tweets over the final 3 months of 2020/2021 (a staggering increase from the previous quarter of 191 mentions). We also saw a significant increase in visits to our CAN twitter page from a total of over 2,045 throughout the whole of quarter three to 7,010 visits in January, 5,567 visits in February and 4,875 profile visits in March.

### Facebook

Our friends have increased by 626 to 1,069 and we also have 832 likes on our page an increase of over 500! We regularly post 2-3 times a day throughout the week.

### LinkedIn

Late in quarter 3 we created a LinkedIn page which has continued to grow and we now have 153 followers. We have posted regularly throughout including updates from the organisation, job opportunities and updates from our members. Both the Partnerships Manager and CEO use their personal LinkedIn pages to share and engage with the page to encourage engagement from others.



We have increased our PR activities to raise the profile of CAN, the membership and champion and celebrate our members – for example, through increased media activity, promotion of events and use of external communication tools. This year we have:

- been featured in the Bournemouth Echo on 10 occasions – articles have included #TogetherWeCan, Covid Marshalls, Yours Sincerely and Community Hero in the Spotlight
- been on Radio Solent twice to talk about the 'Your sincerely' project
- been on Hope FM 3 times to be interviewed by Blair Crawford alongside our Community Hero in the Spotlight that month.

## Prejudice free communities

In 2020 we felt moved by Black Lives Matter and re-focused and doubled down on our commitment to promote equality and diversity. So far we have:

- Launched #SpreadTheLove - our pledge to support prejudice free communities
- Reviewed and updated our Equality and Diversity policies – supported by Dorset Race Equality Council (DREC)
- Developed an E&D action plan reviewed monthly and reported to the Board
- Received whole team training on unconscious bias
- Investigated E&D induction training for staff
- Worked with DREC to be better representative of ethnic minorities
- Reviewed our resources, publications and website to ensure they Reflect all of the local community
- Become an active member of Prejudice Free Dorset, a pan-Dorset collaborative across different sectors bringing people together to tackle prejudice and discrimination across Dorset

Empowering local communities – focusing on what is strong not what is wrong: Leaders exCHANGE and a focus group of leaders from our sector have been working with us to co-develop new Community Partnership Forums, which will enable us to build better community centred/led empowerment and develop a way of working that better enables effective collaboration, engagement and codesign, which improves outcomes across all our communities. Further discussions have also taken place with the CCG and BCP Council who support this new approach.

In April we will be recruiting a new Involvement Lead, initially on a one year fixed term contract to enable further development of our engagement work at pace.

Networking, championing and representing the VCS

We continue to support both the Council and the NHS to engage with communities through our extensive network – sharing and gathering vital information and data.

During 2020/2021 we have been reviewing our voluntary sector representative initiative. Historically Bournemouth and Poole CVS endeavoured to support VCS representation with some success – we will build on this ethos and take it to the next level.

CAN currently sits on numerous Boards and meetings – representing the sector. 'Representation' of the voluntary sector in principle is an excellent approach, however, in practice it has the potential to be problematic for all concerned. Any form of representation needs adequate resourcing or becomes tokenistic. In the past there was the expectation that CAN were 'representing the sector', but with limited mechanisms for gathering / cascading information this role can be hampered for both us and for our partners.

We are going to change this. We have been co-designing with our members a new approach to align our work with communities and both the public and private sectors. This will be a key priority into 2021/2022.

During the pandemic we have sat on local, countywide, regional and national groups, helping to form and influence policy at a considerable pace.

We are seeking a place on the Integrated Care System – Partnership Board to bring the perspective and insights from our sector to this strategic group. So far we have not been successful but we will keep trying.

We also continue to attend a diverse range of boards and meetings including:

- BCP Councils Homelessness Strategy Board
- Leading on the engagement element of the new strategy addressing homelessness across BCP.
- Building Health Partnerships – working with our NHS colleagues to:
- Build trust and mutual understanding between partners and between people in communities
- Support staff and citizens to develop shared local leadership to build on existing momentum to health priority areas
- Develop opportunities for more effective engagement
- Children and Young People Partnership Board
- We've worked with the board to update the new Children and Young People plan to have a more community focus

- Community Equality Champions Network
- Led by BCP Council an opportunity for a range of VCS and public sector partners to come together and discuss equality.
- Community Safety Partnership
- Domestic Abuse Strategy Group
- Dorset Health Equalities Partnership
- We are working closely with Public Health Dorset to ensure CAN are included to ensure there is VCS representation.
- Dorset Integrated Care System - PEG
- Dorset Local Resilience Forum - Volunteering Cell and Community Recovery Cell
- We've working with our Council and NHS colleagues to ensure volunteering / the voluntary sector are at the heart of response and recovery
- Engagement Leads Network
- Facilitated by the CCG bringin leads from across public and voluntary sector together to share good practice and promote collaborations
- Health and Wellbeing Board
- we're a strong voice of the sector and advocate for volunteering
- Integrated Community and Primary Care Services Board (on hold)
- Integrated Health and Community Partnership (on hold)
- NHS Home First steering group
- We're partnering with the NHS across Dorset and our Dorset Community Action colleagues to deliver this project
- Safeguarding Adults Board
- SEND Improvement Board

Over the past year collaborative and respectful working across all sectors has grown quickly for the benefit of the community. We have been pivotal in partnership working primarily with the Council and the NHS. We've supported our sector to flourish and nurtured new community groups and charities.

People and communities have stood up and have shown us all a new more community and person-centred way of working that we should take into the future.

It's key that the VCS continue to be key partners and involved in how we create an environment in which our communities feel empowered to make positive changes.

We were commissioned by Dorset CCG to deliver a 9 month project, running until September 2021 to inform how local people can get home from hospital safely and quickly, as well as prevent them being admitted in the first place. Working to develop a system wide understanding of how the voluntary and community sector can contribute to meeting the needs of patients on discharge from hospital and to avoid hospital admission, including building on learning from national Home First initiatives. This is a short project so we are working at pace alongside DCA and CCG colleagues to engage effectively with VCS organisations and a range of NHS services to look at what needs to be introduced to improve services of those leaving hospital not requiring formal help from health or social care.