



COMMUNITY ACTION  
NETWORK

Working with communities to be  
resilient, healthy, diverse and thriving

Annual Report 2022 / 2023

We CAN

**EMPOWER**  
THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR

**ENABLE**  
VOLUNTEERING

**CONNECT**  
COMMUNITIES

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# INTRODUCTION

## Hazel Walker – Chair of Trustees

We've enjoyed another successful year, sustaining our core work and developing exciting new projects without any mission drift.

Our hard working and committed team have grown again this year and are undertaking a huge range of work to very high standards, I thank them all and our Board of Trustees for their wonderful work.



## Karen Loftus – Chief Executive

We're passionate about the power of people who want to make a difference in their community. We create environments for community led empowerment through inspiring community and voluntary action by.

**EMPOWERING** the voluntary sector to survive and thrive, by providing expertise, support, development opportunities and training

**ENABLING** volunteering, helping everyone to play an active role in their community

**CONNECTING** communities by helping to create conditions where everyone's voice is valued and heard by facilitating great local networking and communication

This year we've consolidated our work and now have a team of 35 – 10 volunteer trustees and 25 staff. We've also sustained and grown our brilliant team of volunteers, mainly focused on the vaccination programme, but also supporting other projects, with 823 people registered and a core team of over 100 actively volunteering.

Our members are the heart of everything we do. Alongside our offer of expert support and advice we constantly promote volunteering, champion our sector and nurture collaborations. Any charity, voluntary group, community organisation or public sector service working for the good of the local community can join us for free. We also offer a Business Supporter membership, enabling local businesses with a 'social conscience' to connect and collaborate with like-minded people, and fulfil their social corporate responsibilities.

Together we **CAN** make a difference

Our values have been co-produced by trustees and staff and aspire to NCVO Charity Ethical Principles. They underpin our vision and mission and demonstrate the behaviour we expect from ourselves and others.

For us how we work is as important as what we do.



Pictured are some of the CAN staff team at our EXPO'23 event

# EMPOWER THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR HIGHLIGHTS

In 2022/ 2023 we've made a difference:

**EMPOWER** the voluntary and community sector (VCS) to survive and thrive, by providing expertise, support, development opportunities and training

We gave individual advice and support to:

- 132 groups in BCP of which 23 were newly forming, supported. 73% had annual incomes under £100,000, 40 had health and wellbeing focus and 9 were ethnically diverse.
- 221 groups in Dorset Council area, of which 24 were new, and 39 reported to be as operating in an area identified as having the highest quartile of deprivation

Feedback tells us:

- 100% reported they were very satisfied / satisfied
- 96% would definitely recommend CAN to a friend or colleague
- 85% said our support had contributed a great deal or a lot to their improved governance
- 73% said our support had contributed a great deal or a lot to their improved management
- 73% said our support had contributed a great deal or a lot to their improved quality
- 56% said our support had contributed a great deal or a lot to their growth
- 54% said our support had contributed a great deal or a lot to their increased sustainability

Undertook four individual organisational reviews of governance and management, resulting in a series of recommendations.

Work started on our partnership project with International Care Network (ICN) to help support groups in BCP working with Ukrainian refugees with co-ordination of effort, liaison with statutory bodies and upskilling.

Our bid to National Lottery Community Fund, on behalf of a partnership with Dorset Race Equality Council, Dorset Community Foundation and BCP Council, to improve support for ethnically diverse voluntary and community groups (EDC) in BCP to become more sustainable. for £815,763 over 5 years was successful at Stage 1.

Helped the sector improve its income generation to apply for £473,532 with £258,155 successful between October 2021 and December 2022. Users also reported:

- 75% of groups said they have a better understanding of income sources
- 93% say they are funding ready
- 88% said it has improved their bid writing
- 38% said that the advice has made them more sustainable
- 69% would definitely recommend this service to a friend or colleague .

Launch of part-time Funding Advisor service which in the year supported 29 groups, carried out 17 funding searches, and reviewed 7 funding applications. Start of regular fund raising webinars and launch of a fundraising toolkit.

Improved quality through 29 webinars or training sessions (including 8 Meet the Funder sessions) with 292 attendees, 153 unique organisations.

The Dorset Team ran 8 face to face roadshows across the Dorset Council area to raise awareness of the services CAN could provide local groups but also included presentations from funders and trainers on a range of topics attended by 160 attendees and 112 unique organisations.

99% of those attending a training/webinar or Dorset Roadshow reported an increase in their understanding or confidence relating to the session topic and 99% would recommend CAN to a friend or colleague.

Weekly e-newsletter, Know Your Stuff, of recent changes in legal and good practice relevant to the voluntary and community sector and launch of a section on the Members Zone of the CAN website which contains advice on running a voluntary/community group.

The Board has continued to provide high quality governance and has agreed, and updated, a number of key policies and so feels its governance role is robust and successful and continues to improve year on year.

# ENABLE VOLUNTEERING

## HIGHLIGHTS

In 2022/ 2023 we've made a difference:

**ENABLE** volunteering – helping everyone to play an active role in their community

180 volunteering opportunities registered from local charities, community groups and public sector organisations

115 local organisations supported on a diverse range of matters relating to volunteers

Delivered 14 training courses for organisations on a range of topics relating to volunteer management. In total 119 attendees.

1940 people have been supported by CAN to volunteer

280 volunteers registered through our online volunteering hub.

249 instances of one-to-one advice and information on volunteering opportunities to the public via email, social media, and telephone.

Attended 30 community events and spoke with over 520 people looking to volunteer

3 volunteer fairs held – 68 stands and over 140 people looking to volunteer

Delivered 14 pop-up sessions in community centres and libraries and spoke with 49 people

Delivered 3 volunteer information pop-up session for the vaccination marshals and spoke with 20 people.

Steps Forward volunteering – 16 learners signed up and successfully completed the programme.

Continued working on the Vaccine Hesitancy project, delivering 2 vaccine conversation training sessions to voluntary sector organisations, working with Dorset HealthCare to plan and deliver pop-up vaccination clinics and attending numerous community events to identify barriers around vaccine uptake.

Vaccination Programme – total hours of volunteering given to end of March 2023  
95,951

# CONNECT COMMUNITIES

## HIGHLIGHTS

In 2022 /2023 we've made a difference:

**CONNECTED** communities by helping to create conditions where everyone's voice is valued and heard by facilitating great local networking and communication

Supported essential public health messaging and now have 107 Trusted Voices Champions who between them support and advise a diverse range of local communities

Through a Community Soup event we have 4 community groups seed funding to support people living in Poole.

Celebrated another year of Community Hero in the Spotlight – celebrated the great work of 12 different local charities and community groups

Embedded the VCS into the Integrated Care System through the development of the VCS Assembly.

Proactively championed our sector on 12 strategic boards by electing and supporting 5 external VCS Involvement Partners - supporting and influencing public sector service development

Facilitated 33 networking sessions - geographical and thematically focussed depending on need - On average we saw 78 people a quarter engage with the networks with approximately 9 different organisations being represented at each network

Increased our media activity – Website visits up to over 25,000 approximately 2-3,000 visitors each month.

Increased social media engagement across Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. Most notably our posts have been visible on 156,000 peoples' timelines and feeds with our posts reaching over 82,000 people.

We have been working in partnership with VCS organisations, NHS and Council colleagues to develop community wellbeing support through the CAN Wellbeing Collaborative project and the Dorset Wellbeing Hub project. Since January we have integrated the two projects under the name, Wellbeing Collaborative, supporting both the Home First Programme (BCP Council) and the Mental Health Transformation programme (NHS Dorset). We are developing the elements that support connection across the Integrated Care System, enabling professionals and citizens to easily access the information, support and guidance they need, at the universal, community level, enabling people to live their best possible lives.



# EMPOWERING the voluntary sector



Steve Place heads up our work to empower the voluntary and community sector (VCS). Here Steve shares data and stories to demonstrate how our work has a positive impact in supporting our sector to survive and thrive, by providing expertise, support, development opportunities and training

## Keeping people safe - improving quality, governance, growth and sustainability

In the BCP area we helped improve practice through our support and advice to 132 groups, of which 23 (17%) were newly forming, 97 (73%) had annual incomes under £100,000, 40 (30%) with health and wellbeing focus and 8 (6%) ethnically diverse. This was via 559 interactions by phone, e-mail or face to face ranging from 15 mins to a total of 40 hours each (average 2.8 hours) over 12 months.

Of the groups we worked with:

- 100% reported they were very satisfied
- 96% would definitely recommend CAN to a friend or colleague
- 85% said our support had contributed a great deal or a lot to their improved governance
- 73% said our support had contributed a great deal or a lot to their improved management
- 73% said our support had contributed a great deal or a lot to their improved quality
- 56% of groups said our support had contributed a great deal or a lot to their growth
- 54% said our support had contributed a great deal or a lot to their increased sustainability
- 27% of groups said we had helped sustain their current funding, 54% said we had helped them find new sources and 42% that it had resulted in increased funding
- 75% said that our support had resulted in more volunteers
- 73% said that our support had sustained their services, 50% that they were delivering more services and 77% said they had more users
- 71% said CAN helped with increased collaboration (Our work as described in the Connecting Communities section very much supports these findings)

Feedback included:

- "We were struggling to become a registered charity. Steve helped us achieve registered status."

- “We have been able to comprehensively review our governance documents and ensure that we are complying with charity commission rules and have policies in place for things such as safeguarding, equality etc.”
- “I did not know how to do spread sheet and I didn't know all the dos and don'ts of running a charity. I feel I can be a better manager now.”
- “We have been able to smoothly change our team of trustees whilst being sure that we are compliant with the relevant regulations. We have just converted to a CIO which would not have been possible without the advice received.”
- “Being able to have someone like Steve as a Mentor/ advisor who has such a wealth of knowledge of setting up a charity has been wonderful. As mentioned, although we have worked within the voluntary sector for many years, we felt completely out of our depth knowing where to start with setting up .... Charity...Although we could Google things, actually having CAN there to hold our hand and guide us through the process has been wonderful.”

When asked about how the advice had benefitted their users many groups felt that being a more efficient, effective and sustainable organisation would automatically lead to better outcomes for those they work with. This included groups that CAN had helped with setting up. Some said that it will lead to increased funding that would increase services and users.

From February 2022 we were commissioned by Dorset Council on an initial 18 month contract to be the local infrastructure organisation empowering a resilient voluntary and community sector. In the first year:

- 221 organisations were supported (of which 24 were new, and 39 reported to be as operating in an area identified as having the highest quartile of deprivation) through One-to-One support, Training / Webinars and Roadshow.
- Through our Roadshows we engaged with 160 attendees from 112 unique organisations of which 20 came from areas of deprivation.
- We circulated 638 promotional emails and shared 209 Tweets.
- We invited all funded partners to our open roadshow events, regularly working with the Volunteer Centre Dorset, #Help and Kindness, Dorset Council and other funding partners.

Areas of support given included:

- Business Plans
- Constitution/Charity Commission registration
- Data Protection
- Funding
- Health check
- Management/Governance
- Policies/Procedures
- Recruitment
- Safeguarding/DBS Checks
- Trading
- Volunteering

Feedback included:

- “Thank you CAN for the support provided, I’m really happy to say we have now been awarded the full grant we applied for from the Nature Heals Fund (DCF). The assistance provide was a great support when we really needed it and the service has been outstanding, we’ll definitely be in touch again if we need any further advice”.
- “Thank you for meeting with me. I've been really happy with support provided by CAN the advice, templates and links were really valuable. We’ve already started making good use of the money received.
- “Many thanks for your time this morning. As explained when we set up the video call, we were becoming concerned that the Club's set of policies were potentially out of date and incomplete. In the course of our discussions, you largely confirmed that view and signposted a number of sources where we can access suitable templates and further information. Your knowledge of the various agencies supporting the voluntary sector has saved us many hours of searching the internet and possibly missing valuable content.
- “Subsequently, CAN has helped us with all aspects of being 'Funding Ready', sustainability and the importance of a third Director and a skills audit. CAN has provided us with a lot of their time and knowledge, as well as replying to some difficult and late-night emails! I would recommend CAN to all.”

This contract has now been extended to July 2024.

## Growing community support

Setting up a new organisation and charity can be a minefield. We advised 23 groups and individuals in BCP and 24 in Dorset about becoming a voluntary/community group, advising on pros and cons of different legal structures and status. In Dorset we ran a webinar about different legal structures. We worked extensively to achieve 4 successful charity applications and 1 new constituted group.

One of the new groups supported was formed during the Ukrainian crisis. We gave concentrated support to what was set up originally as an informal group, Bournemouth Help to Ukraine, that successfully transported aid to refugees within Ukraine and is now one of the few agencies to do so (others are raising money for the larger aid organisations or provide direct aid to those outside Ukraine). We helped them decide on a legal structure and status, agree a constitution and new name ([Ukraine Relief Aid](#)), recruit trustees, prepare their application for charity status and deal with subsequent queries.

“We actually received the good news today: our request has been accepted. Thank you for all your help and support to submit our charity request!”

As well as providing advice and support to groups on specific queries we offer organisational health checks. These involve a thorough review of the governance and management of an organisation, involving desk top reviews, surveys and interviews, resulting in recommendations. Many of these are supporting local groups that have received Reaching Communities Funding from the National Lottery Communities

Fund. In the past year we have carried out four reviews, including with [SPACE Youth Project](#). The recommendations were used for a trustee's away day and resulted in an action plan. "Yesterday we had a Trustee Action and began completing actions linked to your recommendations. It was brilliant to have a focus and we have an action plan in place." Following this we advised on some of the recommendations about better reserves statement, recruitment pack for trustees, their annual report and attended a trustee meeting to discuss how to improve linkage between charity objects, mission, strategic aims and monitoring and evaluation.

CAN's BCP and Dorset teams started work with Dorset Council to pull together templates, toolkits and list of advice and training related to safeguarding. We have updated our general policy and work has started on an adults' policy toolkit. We hope by the middle of next year to have produced a list of resources.

Work started on our partnership project with International Care Network ([ICN](#)) to help support groups in BCP working with Ukrainian refugees with co-ordination of effort, liaison with statutory bodies and upskilling. By the end of the year:

- Contact was made with groups already supporting Ukrainian refugees and we promoted the project to all our members
- ICN has set up a network of 24 groups (a couple are newly working with refugees) for sharing information including about who is doing what. E-mails being well received and used to make connections.
- ICN is giving groups advice and support on working with refugees, in particular those from Ukraine
- Put on the first course of four about working with Ukrainian refugees. Feedback was extremely positive with 75% strongly agreeing, and 25% agreeing, on delivery and content "It was above my expectations. Very informative and very helpful."
- Have decided to have regular peer support meetings for groups.
- ICN is attending the multi-agency forum which is constructive and links being made between statutory agencies with individuals and groups.
- Currently there are about 284 families and 546 individuals in BCP. Housing is most pressing need.

CAN continues to lead a partnership bid with Dorset Race Equality Council, Dorset Community Foundation and BCP Council to National Lottery Community Fund to improve support for ethnically diverse voluntary and community groups (EDC) in BCP to become more sustainable. Following extensive engagement with EDC groups by Dorset REC a project outline was developed and CAN applied, on behalf of the partnership, to the Lottery for £815,763 over 5 years to:

- Provide 2 FTE capacity building workers (Dorset REC)
- Governance , management and funding advice from CAN
- Grants programme administered by Dorset Community Foundation
- Development of a training programme and advice resources.

We were successful for Stage 1 and have started to work on the Stage 2 bid.

## Charities supporting Health and Wellbeing

We supported 40 groups that have a health and wellbeing focus in BCP, 7 being newly formed. We worked with small local charity, [Downright Perfect](#), supporting children with Down's Syndrome and their families. At the beginning of the year one of the users of the charity contacted us concerned that the long standing trustees wanted to stand down and close the charity. We gave advice on the recruitment of new trustees so that it continued to operate. "The EGM went ahead on 23 May and we now have 5 trustees with all details updated with Charity Commission." We then gave subsequent advice on safeguarding and data protection policies and practice, as well as how to better record their annual accounts. To help allay some trustees' concerns, and others wishing to join, over individual legal and financial liability we ran a Zoom session with the five trustees about the benefits of converting to an incorporated charity, a CIO. Subsequently we helped them with the process by drafting a constitution, advising on a successful charity application and transfer of assets to the new CIO.

"We are extremely grateful for the help, advice and support provided by CAN. We were told about CAN by another charity who they support. We initially contacted them when considering whether to take on a charity which was otherwise going to close. They have provided us with a huge amount of very valuable advice on charity governance generally, the process of taking over the charity and recently converting to a CIO. We simply wouldn't be in the place we are now without their advice which has ensured that we are compliant and transparent."

## Funding support

We continue to send information about income generation, including grant opportunities, to our membership via our weekly Know Your Stuff e-newsletter. BCP Council's regular What's Funds newsletter of new funding opportunities was reinstated during the year and we provide a link to this in Know Your Stuff.

Bounce Back was a project originally funded by BCP Council to give advice and support on income generation to the sector to help them recover from Covid-19 between September 2021 and the end of March 2022. However, we were able to use some underspend to continue the project until June 2022. Between April and June 2022, we supported ten groups with seven applications.

As a result of the project over 10 months:

- Assisted with 62 applications to apply for £473,532. £258,155 has been confirmed which represents a significant 5.2:1 return on investment from the council's grant, and a success rate of 55% which is better than the expected 30-40%
- 75% of groups said they have a better understanding of income sources

- 93% say they are funding ready
- 88% said it has improved their bid writing
- 38% said that the advice has made them more sustainable

In January 2023 we surveyed those who had used Bounce Back to identify if there had been sustainable changes. The survey showed:

- 84% said they had a better understanding of the potential income sources available to you?
  - “Yes we have now understood the need to diversify our income streams and how that might develop.”
- 74% feel better equipped to apply for funding
  - “Previously we applied for funding from a place of ignorance of the process. Thanks to the training courses and consultancy we are much better equipped to identify funding opportunities and to make better informed funding applications.”
- 68% feel more confident to write better funding applications and 19% saying to some degree
  - “Advice helped me focus on the actual question asked by a funder - rather than just copying and pasting our blurb from other applications.
- 41% said their group had increased its income as result of the support, with 22% saying to some degree and 35% not really
- 39% said the support made their group more sustainable, with 32% saying to some degree and 18% not really
  - Without the funding that we have been able to access, many of our activities would have been forced to shut at a time when our clients have needed them more than ever. This is largely due to the rises in cost of living . We would have had to massively streamline our activities whereas thanks to learning more about the funding process , we have accessed funding which has enabled us not only to maintain existing activities but to extend the support on offer.”
  - “We have not heard back from the applications.”
- 69% would definitely recommend this service to a friend or colleague and 14% not.

As Bounce Back was such a successful project CAN looked at ways to continue a funding advice service. We have continued to provide Meet the Funder webinars where groups can see a presentation from a funder about the grants they offer, the funders priorities and any do’s and don’ts, with the chance to ask questions. During this year we organised 8 such events. Unfortunately, no external funding was identified for a new post and so the trustees decided to allocate monies from CANs own free reserves to fund a two year part-time Funding Advisor, who started in November 2022. Since then they have:

- Supported 29 groups
- Carried out 17 funding searches
- Supported/reviewed 7 funding applications
- Supported to 17 groups to review and build a case for support and evidence

- Supported 9 groups to review and build monitoring and impact information
- Produced a fundraising toolkit

Feedback has included:

- "Thank you for the Awards for All course, I applied and we got awarded £6000 towards our electric bills for the next 12 months. Just wanted to let you know a successful outcome from your training."
- "As a small organisation, trying to navigate our way through challenging financial times can feel overwhelming. Fundraising support from CAN helped me to identify a path forward. The training events give lots of great tips, advice and resources. My 1:1 session with Louise allowed me to focus on how to use that knowledge for our organisation. To come away with an action plan lifted the fog and I know I can access them again when I need to."
- "Thank you so much for this helpful advice. Very much appreciated." Thanks for your great suggestions - have incorporated them in the bid. And thanks for the swift response."

We're delivering a series of four webinars on different aspects of fundraising, and delivered two of these in March:

- "The Introduction to Fundraising webinar was very helpful and I'm looking forward to the rest of the sessions on this subject. As suggested by Louise I immediately applied to become a member of CAN on behalf of our Charity"
- "It was really helpful and a really good balance. Was able to ask question too which was really helpful."
- "The training was good and delivered clearly."
- 80% of attendees rated the session 'excellent' in relation to meeting their expectations
- 100% of attendees rated the session 'excellent' in relation to quality of training delivery
- 80% of attendees rated the session 'excellent' in relation to practical use
- 100% of attendees reported an improvement in their understanding or confidence relating to the topic

We continued to represent the local sector on the grant panel for Communities Against Cancer which provides small grants to those across Wessex who can reach those sections of the community who are most at risk of cancer to raise awareness of the risks, signs, prevention and screening services. During this year there have been monthly panel meetings that have awarded 8 grants totalling £33,387 to BCP groups. This grant scheme sadly closed in March 2023 but we have fed back that it was a highly effective grant scheme and hope that it may be reinstated in the near future.

CAN have a place on the BH Coastal Lottery Grants panel. A single round this year awarded a total of £18,459 in grants to 6 groups.

Some organisations cannot hold funds themselves, for practical (e.g. do not have a bank account) or legal reasons (e.g. not being a registered charity or an incorporated body like a company). Therefore, we offer this service to our members. We continued to hold funds on behalf of the Bipolar Support Group and, for the first time, North Dorset Poverty Action Group.

## Our work makes a positive impact:

[Shaftesbury and District Carers](#) work with those that are at risk and vulnerable in the community. They aim to provide a safe haven for those who need it. They applied to the Dorset Council Community and Culture Project Fund round 4 to set up a project to address the needs of people struggling with the current cost of living challenges. Dorset Council agreed in principle to award £4,000, with the caveat that they contact CAN for support to improve their Safeguarding policy. We met and provided template documents, guidance and advice including processes for volunteers, trustees, and staff in respect of safeguarding and EDI, which we identified could also be improved. We signposted to the Dorset Volunteer Centre for safeguarding training and DBS checks for volunteers. Shaftesbury & District Carers Association plan to train everyone within the charity in respect of Safeguarding which will enable them to identify and confidently report any concerns, improving and strengthening their governance. They re-submitted a new safeguarding policy and Dorset Council approved the £4,000 funding.

“We had an excellent Teams’ meeting this afternoon with CAN, which we found extremely useful. They provided a template for Shaftesbury & District Carers Association to customise to reflect our own needs and signposted us to the Ann Craft Trust which will help us create basic, robust safeguarding standards that everyone from staff, volunteers and beneficiaries can be reassured by. They also went through the template they provided as a base so that we know what is expected in each section”.

[Acts Fast](#) is the only local charity in England helping families impacted by child sexual abuse and indecent images. We were originally approached to originally approached to look at trustee recruitment but with the resignation of their acting Manager assisted and advised the Board on recruitment process including drafting a job description and person specification, application form, questions and process. Due to the low capacity of the small trustee board we were on the interview panel which appointed a highly experienced new manager. We also help with some HR about some staffing issues they were facing, “Just wanted to say a huge thank you for your time last week. It was a huge help and support. We have got legal advice and it all ran along the routes and opinions as yours.” The new manager wanted us to review Acts Fast so we undertook an organisational review to identify strengths and opportunities to improve governance and management. “Thank you for your report and the resources to help us along our way!”. Our new Funding Adviser discussed their funding needs and gave advice about evidence, user involvement, financial needs and potential funders and has reviewed two applications for them. Feedback



[Broadstone Scouts Group](#) are seeking to raise funds for capital improvements to their scout building, requiring approximately £30-40,000. We reviewed the costings for the project and how to make the right approach, as well as which funders to approach for capital grants. As Broadstone isn't a deprived area, there are many scout groups around the country competing for funds and the building is only 30 years old, we discussed what distinguishes the work of the group which might make the project a higher priority for funders. Following conversation, we identified key pieces of work, including support for families with the cost of living crisis, support for Ukrainian refugee families, community cohesion, children at risk of school exclusion, mental health support and intergenerational working. We also discussed the opportunity to highlight local pockets of deprivation and targeted work to support families suffering poverty and disadvantage. The scout group has undertaken some informal consultation with the young people involved and their families but hadn't recognized that this would provide important evidence of need for funders. We discussed creating a structured survey which could be repeated periodically to collect data from the young people and their families. We also spoke about formalizing and recording young people's consultation and engagement, as well as peer group activities, to provide data in support of funding applications. Also recommended that the group review tools such as outcomes stars which could be used to record and communicate the impact of the group on the personal development and wellbeing of the young people attending. We discussed outlining a fundraising strategy for the project and drawing up a proposal document containing all the key information, which could be adapted for different funding applications. Lastly we identified some key capital funders to approach and suggested the group review the funder's websites to become familiar with their criteria and other funded projects.

"When we approached CAN for advice, we had no idea how to approach grant-funding applications for our hall refurbishment project. Louise has given us some excellent advice on the kind of information that will strengthen our applications, particularly around getting some feedback from our young people and families. Louise has provided us with lots of excellent advice on putting together a strong application for grant funding, and directed us to some funds that we can apply to."

## Our work to support trustees

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:

- Two virtual and one in person training courses – to increase knowledge and confidence in their role as a trustee was attended by 33 people
  - "Really appreciate the way it was lead. Excellent"
  - "Very enjoyable, great to understand responsibilities"
  - "Really well delivered session, packed with information"
- Five bespoke sessions to individual trustee Boards

We identified the need for Trustee Recruitment Training which has provided opportunities to collaborate and co-create with the Volunteer Centre Dorset. To meet the needs of harder to reach rural areas we planned both a webinar and face to face

training session. Collaborating enabled us to utilise all the skills and experience of Volunteer Centre Dorset and CAN, providing thought provoking information about “What would your perfect trustee look like?”, “How to draft a role description”, “20 ways to recruit volunteers” and “How to conduct a skills audit to identify knowledge gaps within your current board”. We wrapped up by looking at beyond recruitment, future proofing and succession planning; all of which attendees said they found very useful:

- Harry Susser [Space Youth Project](#) said: “Thanks for all the resources. We greatly appreciate it. I will share with my fellow Trustees.”
- Harriet Laurie [The Horse Course](#) said: “Really good session-and I thought I was pretty good at this stuff already!”
- Kelly from [Ascape](#) reiterated: “It’s been really helpful, and I definitely feel more confident in recruiting and also being a trustee and doing things correctly,”

## Supporting access to training

Covid-19 lockdown meant that we started to experiment with virtual ways of delivering training and the use of shorter webinars. A member survey found that virtual rather than face to face was a popular method of delivery as were webinars and half day training. Therefore, we delivered a range of one-hour webinars and short training courses in 2022-23 based on needs identified by the member survey and others articulated by the sector.

From January 2023 we have offered a monthly bespoke HR webinar “Looking after your people”. This provides the opportunity to obtain, free monthly advice and guidance, from HR expert Sonia Wilson of Populo. The sessions are aimed at smaller charities, groups or social enterprises with no formal HR support and under £1 million turnover. This has been particularly well received with organisations returning each month for the employment law updates and the Q&A session. The training and webinars were available for all groups within the BCP and Dorset Council areas and many were recorded so that those unable to attend could view them in our Members Zone of the CAN website. The Dorset Team ran a series of face to face roadshows across the Dorset Council area to raise awareness of the services CAN could provide local groups but also included presentations from funders and trainers on a range of topics.

During 2022-23 we delivered:

- 8 roadshow events; 160 attendees; 112 unique organisations.
- 29 webinars or training sessions (including 8 Meet the Funder sessions); 292 attendees; 153 unique organisations.
- 100% (147/147) of attendees reported their session met their expectations, with 62% (91/147) reporting sessions as ‘excellent’.
- 97% (143/147) of attendees reported the quality of their sessions as ‘good’ or ‘excellent’. 75% (110/147) specifically responded ‘excellent’.

- 93% (118/127) of attendees reported the practical use of their session as 'good' or 'excellent'. 60% (77/127) specifically responded 'excellent'.
- 96% (80/83) of attendees reported the depth of the session topic as 'good' or 'excellent'. 65% (54/83) specifically responded 'excellent'.
- 99% (117/118) reported an increase in their understanding or confidence relating to the session topic, with 84% (100/118) reporting a significant increase.
- 99% (138/140) of attendees reported they would recommend CAN to a friend or colleague, with 94% (132/140) 'very' or 'extremely' likely to recommend CAN to others.

- Feedback included:

#### Roadshows

- "Good info, I will utilise the policy help and good to know funding available. Many thanks. :)"
- "Some really great connections as well as reconnecting with people. Lots of information to pass on to my charity."
- "An outstanding meeting - special thanks to the hosts who made everyone feel welcome."
- "Just wanted to say many thanks for organising last Friday's event. It was very enjoyable to chat with other groups as well as really informative re the presentations. I am going to feedback to the other trustees in our organisation."

#### Training & webinars

- "Link to further resources were useful as was the reminder about looking at skills to inform board recruitment. Ideas for where to recruitment were particularly useful."
- "Really appreciate the way it was lead. Excellent."
- "Huge thanks for laying this all out so clearly, very reassuring! We can now plan our CIO transition with confidence."
- "Steve as always is very knowledgeable & informative, with a good mix of narrative, visuals & examples, that you come away with a decent understanding & confidence in what you have learnt. Also includes lots of places to look at the topic in more detail if you are interested or need to for your charity work. Thank you."
- "Really well delivered session, packed with information."
- "A huge thank you - these sessions are fast becoming a frequent occurrence in my diary, and they are so helpful and the groups easy to engage with. You make them easy to participate in and I feel I can easily come to you afterwards with any queries. Thank you!"
- "I have come out of that with a specific action that I know will help us, which I wasn't necessarily expecting from attending for the first time. The advice from Sonia and the other participants was genuinely very good."
- "This week's session was really excellent - the suggested techniques for how to deal with difficult conversations are easy to remember and I'll be

sharing the presentation with my key staff and talking through it to help increase confidence, which should have some immediate impact, thank you.”

- “Sonia facilitated a safe atmosphere to ask simple and complex questions relevant to small organisations. The meeting is a great place to hear from other colleagues in organisations and share best practice. Thank you!”

[The Colour Works Foundation](#) aims to help young people understand themselves and in turn contribute to wider society, through their state-of-the-art colour model. They look to enable young people to develop self-belief and work with them on understanding the differences in others so that they are able to build stronger, more collaborative relationships and make better life decisions. The Foundation staff and trustees have engaged in six CAN training or webinar sessions since the summer of 2022, including ‘Being a Charity Trustee’, ‘Essential HR policies and documents’, ‘Recruiting trustees’, ‘Financial Governance for Trustees’ and our popular ‘Meet the Funder’ series. Liz Dawes, CEO of the Foundation, stated:  
“We absolutely rely on CAN’s trustee training. We now think of this as a part of our onboarding process for new starters. We would not be able to source this training otherwise within our own budget. It really gives an insight in to what the role is and ensures attendees understand what is expected of them.”

## Keeping the sector up to date

We continue to communicate weekly updates, Know Your Stuff, of recent changes in legal and good practice relevant to the voluntary and community sector. With sections on legal, charity, employment and volunteering, income and other. During the year we have aligned these with other CAN e-newsletters and link them to pages with our website’s Members Zone. This has streamlined the newsletter and created a repository of past editions that members can view easily. We receive a steady stream of positive comments from readers:

- “I love the new look and feel of Know Your Stuff
- “It’s our go to for up to date information”

In April 2022 we launched a Members Zone on the CAN website which contains advice on running a voluntary/community group with a wide range of useful information, links, toolkits and videos including policies and procedures, good governance, planning, outcomes, reporting, employing people, data protection, safeguarding, equality, raising income and looking after assets. We have updated and added new section in the year. This area allows our members to access expert advice when they need it.

## Resource donation and loan scheme

Many local charities are very small and do not have much money to spend on furniture and equipment. Therefore, CAN offers a small equipment loan scheme for

its members and brokers donations of furniture, equipment and resources. During the past year we have loaned out equipment and supported donations of 198 items of office furniture, IT equipment and bulk stationery were rehomed. Not only does this assist our hard pressed members financially it helps support our environmental policy in diverting from landfill and purchase of new. In the coming year we will promote these services.

## Sustaining and developing CAN as a strong umbrella infrastructure charity

Our Board of Trustees continues to grow and develop. They provide scrutiny, stretch and support to the Chief Executive.

The Board regularly consider their diversity of perspective and work to actively recruit new members to reflect the work of CAN and the demographics of the local community – building a strong and effective team. This year we welcomed Rupert Ogwuazor from the Nigerian Community in Dorset – a registered not for profit group that encourages and nurtures unity. Rupert will be taking up his place in May '23.

The Board carried out another governance review based on the Charity Governance Code. The results continue to show that we have a well-functioning Board with only the need to tweak to improve practice. The Company Secretary ran a webinar for all trustees about their role and responsibility to oversee financial matters. Those who attended the training had found it very useful. As a result of the training the Board have improved reports from the Finance Committee, so it is clearer then the Board needs to take a view or decision.

The Board regularly reviews its mission and this year decided to change the strategic aim from INVOLVING communities to Connecting communities, being that honest broker in bringing together people from the local community, within community groups and charities with the council and the NHS and going forward businesses too.

During the year the Board considered that CAN currently has a good enough portfolio of funding so spreading the risk of operations reducing due to loss of particular funding. It also reviewed its scheme of delegations which were assessed to be working well. New environmental policy and disaster recovery plan were approved by the Board. The Board considered its Keeping Everyone Safe, a policy recommended by the Charity Commission to make sure every who comes into contact with CAN is kept as safe as possible (so is more than safeguarding of children and adults at risk). The report showed only a few minor incidents in the past year and so the current policy (and associated policies) are currently working. It also undertook its annual review of the risk register. The major change was to slightly decrease the likelihood and impact of loss of funding given that CAN had significantly diversified its funding in past year. The Board will be developing an 'appraisal' process for trustees

based on a reflective approach and has tighten up on its recruitment policy. It also updated its Conflict of Interest, Gifts and Bribery policy.

Following the relaxation of Covid-19 restrictions, this year's AGM was held in person, with some attendees attending virtually. Following the AGM business there were presentations from Sam Crowe Director of Public Health about the role of the VCS as valued partners within the new Integrated Care System and how the developing VCS Assembly can better bring the voice of the sector to the ICS.

## CAN Organisational Development

### Hybrid working

We continue to spearhead flexible and hybrid working, putting in place policy and process to enable safe remote working. Our Management Accountant told us this way of working remotely has increased her productivity, improved her work life balance, saves significant commuting time and saves her travel expenses.

### Staff recruitment:

This year we have consolidated our staff team and recruited new staff:

### Empower the voluntary sector team:

- Funding Advisor

### Enable Volunteering team:

- Administrative Officer

## Promoting equality, equity and diversity

Trustees have standing agenda item to discuss these matters and ensure they are embedded in all of our work. Not so it is seen as separate, but to ensure it remains a high priority.

Our funded work with Public Health 'Trusted Voices' has continued to support new and positive relationships with people across different communities and cultures that we had not reached out to successfully before. Enabling us to better engage and increase our membership of charities and community groups that support people / communities with protected characteristics, bringing this element of our membership to 107

We continue to work with Dorset Race Equality Council to develop a Lottery Bid and to support their work.

# ENABLING volunteering



Amy Collins heads up our work to enable volunteering, she also oversees our work to support the vaccination programme. Here Amy shares data and stories to demonstrate how our work has a positive impact in helping everyone to play an active role in their community.

## Supporting good practice

In September 2022, we transferred to a new volunteering hub platform, Team Kinetic and currently have 80 active organisations advertising over 180 roles.

Alongside advertising roles, we provided one to one advice, information, and guidance to over 115 organisations, including Alzheimers Dementia UK, MYTIME Young Carers, Planet Doctors, and Dorset Family History Society. Some organisations were supported on multiple occasions.

Support ranged from an email being sent explaining how to use our volunteering hub platform, to more in-depth advice provided on a host of topics including, how to write an effective role description, reviewing and giving feedback on volunteer policies, advising on volunteer expenses and what to pay and how to support volunteers with declining health needs,

### Organisation story

**Treasure:** Working with Kesch from Treasure, we designed draft role descriptions, a template application form, volunteer agreement and problem-solving procedure. We also supported them with registering their roles on our volunteering hub. By supporting Treasure in this way, we were able to ensure they had the necessary paperwork in place to begin the process of recruiting volunteers. They also understood how to deal with any issues should they arise. Kesch said: "Thank you so much for all the work you have done."

**Planet Doctors:** Working with Anne from Planet Doctors, we designed draft role descriptions and a template application form, expenses form, volunteer agreement and problem-solving procedure. By supporting them in this way and ensuring they had the basic paperwork in place, they were able to start the process of recruiting volunteers.

"These documents are incredible. I have just had chance to look at them properly and realise you have mostly done the work for us. We are so grateful." Planet Doctors

## Volunteer Coordinators meetings

We facilitate these regular meetings to discuss topical issues, share good practice and support people who have a role in managing volunteers in their organisation.

This year we held 3 virtual co-ordinators meetings. In total 40 people from a range of organisations attended. Topics discussed included: support and supervision of volunteers, how to have difficult conversations with your volunteers and what are your current challenges and expected priorities over the coming months.

A strength of these meetings is the level of excellent peer to peer support. Being a Volunteer Co-ordinator does involve wearing many hats and for some it can be quite an isolated role.

Feedback received said: "It was great to chat, catch up and share experiences and ideas. I always pick up lots of ideas from others at the meetings and it's always a great opportunity to find out what other projects and activities are going on in the local area. As the only person working for the Trust, it's especially important to be able to meet up with others."

## Training

This year, we have been focusing on delivering training to our members, based on the needs identified in our recent CAN survey and from feedback received from Volunteer Coordinators.

These training sessions are designed to give volunteer managers confidence and the knowledge needed when recruiting and managing volunteers.

We ran 4 online and 1 face to face 'Introduction to Safeguarding' training sessions. This training covers both adult and child safeguarding and provides an overview of what safeguarding is, the types of abuse, signs of abuse, how to report concerns and barriers to making a referral. This training was open to both staff and volunteers from organisations across Bournemouth, Christchurch, and wider Dorset.

Caroline (manager at Townsend community centre) said: "The training was a great introduction for the volunteers. The training was informative and simple to understand, it gave clear details of what to do if volunteers have concerns."

- 2 'How to recruit and retain volunteers' online training sessions
- 2 face to face 'How to recruit and involve young volunteers' training sessions. This training session focused on the benefits of involving young volunteers, the barriers, DBS checks and policies and procedures.
- 2 'Volunteers and the law' online training sessions

**Feedback:** We asked organisations for feedback after attending the Volunteers and the Law training session. They said:

Q. How would you rate the session in terms of meeting your expectations?



100% rated it excellent

Q. Depth to which material was covered:

100% rated it excellent

Q. Practical use of the training to your group

100% rated it excellent

Q. What was the most useful part of the session?

- Inherited practices within the organisation that I can now with confidence have removed and also be more confident that we are doing the majority correctly!
- I found being able to brainstorm, ask questions and seek advice/guidance on particular areas really useful.

In January 2023, we launched our series of monthly webinars for organisations, on a range of key topics relating to volunteer management. The aim of these sessions is to **increase attendee's knowledge on the subject matter, ensure good practice and offer reassurance they are doing the right thing.** Following each webinar, attendees receive a copy of the presentation, templates, further reading and offer of a one-to-one meeting if they need further help.

Between January 2023 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023, we ran the following webinars:

- How to...use our volunteering hub (Team Kinetic) x 2 sessions.
- How to...recruit volunteers.
- How to...write an effective and engaging role description.

We have further monthly training sessions scheduled in up to December 2023.

Over the course of the year, we had 119 attendees attend our 14 training sessions.

## Promoting the value of volunteering

In September 2022, we held 3 Volunteer Fairs, with 1 in Poole, 1 in Bournemouth, and 1 in Christchurch. These Volunteer Fairs were set up to raise the profile of volunteering in the local community and to enable people to come along and chat to a variety of organisations with the intention of finding a suitable volunteer role. These events also provided an opportunity for organisations to network with each other.

Across the 3 sessions, there were 68 stands, and around 140 people attended including individuals looking to volunteer and staff from DWP Job Centre, specialist schools and Bournemouth and Poole College who were looking for opportunities for their clients / students.

Organisations told us:

“Just a note that this event has been fantastic for networking, and I am leaving with an amazing list of new contacts. I feel that footfall has been slow likely due to the Queen’s mourning which is out of anyone’s control.”

“I just wanted to say a huge thank you as the event was a fantastic opportunity for us to talk to people about who we are and what we do! We have potentially gained 2 volunteers, who we are chatting to still now.”

The organisations in attendance were asked for feedback on the different elements of the fair and asked to score them out of 5 (with 1 being very poor, and 5 being excellent). The averages across the 3 fairs were:

- Recruiting volunteers – 3/5
- Networking – 4.5/5
- Organisation of the event – 4.9/5
- Overall event usefulness – 4.2/5

Footfall was lower than expected despite extensive publicity of the events. This may be partly due to the timing as they coincided with the passing of the Queen and subsequent funeral. However, all organisations commented on how useful it was to be able to network with the other organisations.

This feedback will help us to improve on future events to make them even more successful for both the organisations and members of the public attending.

### **CAN’s engagement with volunteers**

280 new volunteers registered through our online volunteering hub. In addition to this we also provided one to one information on volunteering opportunities on over 249 occasions via telephone, social, media, email and zoom calls. This was to both individuals and local organisations supporting their clients into volunteering including Dorset HealthCare, Winchelsea School, DWP staff and YMCA Bournemouth.

Dorset HealthCare Employment Advisor said: “Thank you very much for all the information that you sent on voluntary roles in cafes and kitchens in the local area. I have passed on the information to the patient today and she said that she will be in contact with the relevant organisations over the next few weeks. She was very appreciative of all your help.”

### **Pop Up sessions**

This year, saw the launch of our monthly Volunteering Hub pop-up sessions whereby members of the public can come and have an informal chat with us about volunteering. The pop-up sessions are typically held in libraries or community centres and at various locations across the BCP area. To date, we have held fourteen pop up sessions and spoke with 49 potential volunteers.

We also held three pop-up information sessions at Bournemouth Vaccination centre, for the current Covid vaccination volunteers. The aim of these was to promote the other roles available within CAN they could get involved in and to talk about the range of external roles available within the local area. These were organised with the knowledge that our volunteer programme could potentially be drawing to a close. We value all our volunteers and have seen firsthand the difference that volunteering has made, and we want to ensure that everyone has the opportunity and support to consider other volunteer roles, should they wish to continue volunteering. Across the three sessions, we spoke with 20 people,

## Promotional events

We have attended a number of promotional events this year to talk about the value of volunteering, what people can get out of it and how to find the right role which matches their skills, interests, and availability. Events attended include:

- Dorset Adult Asperger's Group monthly meeting
- Festival of Employability (BCP College, Lansdowne site)
- Two Loneliness Awareness Week events (Poole North Primary Care Network)
- Two Developing Work skills sessions run by Skills and Learning
- Three DWP Pave the Way into Work events
- BCHA Festival of Wellbeing
- BCHA Millennium House
- Bournemouth Uni careers fairs
- Sheiling School 'Next Steps'
- Dorset Healthcare Living Well with a Brain Injury event.
- Citygate Church and ICN Asylum seekers drop in session
- Two DWP Job Centre sessions with pre-booked appointments

In total, we had stands at 30 different events and spoken with over 520 people interested in volunteering.

## Young Volunteers

In November 2022, we were commissioned by BCP Council to gather insights on what young people look for in volunteering, what they may gain from the experience, as well as the kind of volunteer roles they had taken part in and what they might be interested in doing in the future.

We ran a series of workshops involving 66 students across 4 secondary schools in Bournemouth, Christchurch, and Poole. During the course of the workshops, we looked at what volunteering actually meant, discussed the young peoples' experiences, and identified the benefits of volunteering and the ways in which they could get involved.

They were asked to complete a survey asking if they would be interested in volunteering, the types of roles they would like to do and what barriers they feel they would face.

From the findings, we put together a report which highlighted:

- The types of roles young people would like to get involved in
- Factors which would encourage them to volunteer e.g., easy access to information on available volunteer roles, more volunteer roles available for young people and help with application forms.
- Barriers that prevent the young people from volunteering e.g., reliance on public transport, nervousness, and a concern there wouldn't be other young people there.

The report shows that there is clearly a lot of enthusiasm for volunteering among young people in the BCP area and they understood the benefits this would bring both to themselves and also their community. There is a call to action for the voluntary sector to harness this potential more effectively.

We have put forward a number of recommendations and CAN will be working with BCP Council and the VCS to better support young people to become more involved in their community through impactful volunteering. This will involve supporting VCS groups in developing a range of good quality, meaningful, flexible volunteer roles suitable for young people aged 14 to 18. Ultimately, we would also like to support young people in applying for a role and then at the start of their volunteer placement, helping them to settle in and understand what is expected of them.

## Steps Forward Volunteering

The Steps Forward volunteering scheme successfully ended in June 2022. This was a short practical course designed to develop, recognise, and accredit the skills gained through volunteering. It then builds on those skills to enable volunteers to progress, be it with their volunteering, with training or towards employment.

16 participants completed the programme and as a result of the knowledge gained and confidence built, 2 went into work during the project and many have gone on to undertake further training courses including teacher training courses, horticulture, and Math's GCSE.

Alongside supporting them with volunteering, we were also keen to develop the participants' confidence in writing a CV and applying for jobs. In partnership with National Careers Service, we delivered 2 employability workshops, which were attended by 6 learners. These workshops enabled the learners to understand more about the local labour market, where to search for jobs, how to strengthen their CV and what to expect in an interview.

We also accompanied several of the learners on a visit to the Bournemouth Jobs fair. By having someone with them, the learners felt more confident in asking the exhibitors' questions and staying focused throughout their visit.

The project was a great success in supporting the participants to try a new volunteer role and watch them increase with their confidence and learn new skills. Many are still volunteering with the same organisation and have really flourished over time.

### Step Forward participant story

One of the participants is a lady in her 50's who suffers with mental health problems. Before starting the Steps Forward programme, she struggled to get motivated most days and was feeling depressed. Based on her skills and interests, we found her a role with the Dorset Children's Foundation working in their stock room. She is now volunteering there twice a week and says it has given her mental health a real boost and she looks forward to her shifts as it gives her a sense of purpose. [Her story](#) is now helping others in similar situations.

## The future of volunteering

On 10<sup>th</sup> May, the national Vision for Volunteering was launched online. CAN along with several other organisations were asked to share a short reflection on the brand-new vision as part of the event. We talked about the momentum of volunteering that occurred during the pandemic and how we needed to capitalise on that by continuing to offer flexible volunteer roles open to everyone whilst reducing as many barriers as possible.

"Thank you, really good points about the volunteer roles becoming more flexible and around inclusivity and diversification of volunteer roles."

## Partnership working

### BCHA

Working with BCHA, we helped them to design and launch a 5 week 'introduction to volunteering' course, Brighter Futures. Aimed at people new to volunteering, it covers all aspects of volunteering including developing positive attitudes and qualities, action planning for self-improvement, the rights & responsibilities of volunteers, health and safety and equality & diversity. We will be working with participants to help them explore and apply for volunteer roles.

### Bournemouth University:

Working with Bournemouth Uni, we will be starting a 2-year project with them on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023, to support their staff into volunteering. This work will include hosting information stands, creating promotional materials, attending staff meetings, organising volunteer fairs, and offering tailored one-to-one advice and support. The

idea being that staff will use their annual 2 days volunteering allowance to either share their existing skills with a local organisation or try something completely new. There will be support and guidance for those staff who would like to continue volunteering beyond the 2-day allowance.

### **Dorset VCS Expo '23**

This quarter we were privileged to work with 4 organisations, whose services cover the breadth of Dorset to film the amazing work they do and to find out more about how they work in partnership with the NHS and local authorities and how this relationship could be developed further or improved. The purpose of these videos was to highlight how essential VCS groups are and that they need consistent, long-term funding to enable them to plan effectively and continue the work that they are doing. These videos were initially shared at our VCS Expo and are [available via our website](#).

### **Vision for Volunteering Launch**

On 10<sup>th</sup> May, the national Vision for Volunteering was launched online. CAN along with several other organisations were asked to share a short reflection on the brand-new vision as part of the event. We talked about the momentum of volunteering that occurred during the pandemic and how we needed to capitalise on that by continuing to offer flexible volunteer roles open to everyone whilst reducing as many barriers as possible.

NCVO feedback: "Thank you, really good points about the volunteer roles becoming more flexible and around inclusivity and diversification of volunteer roles"

## **Supporting the vaccination roll out**

### **Volunteer Marshals**

Between, 1st April 2022 and 31st March 2023, the vaccination marshals have given 9739 hours of their time at 1 large scale vaccination site and 2 community pharmacies. The total hours given since the volunteer programme commenced in January 2021, is 95, 951 hours.

### **Award:**

We were shortlisted under the umbrella of NHS Dorset HealthCare for a Nursing Times Workforce award. This was specifically for the work we undertook in creating the 2 sensory rooms at Bournemouth Vaccination Centre. CAN staff and 2 of our vaccination marshals were delighted to attend The Award ceremony in October 2022. Although we weren't winners, it was good to have our work recognised.

### **Volunteer Celebration**

To recognise Volunteers Week, we held a celebration event at the beach for the vaccination marshals, attended by over 40 people. It was good to be able to say

thank you to them in person, award them certificates for their hard work, give out lush goodies and then enjoy the buffet largely donated by local businesses. Seeing everyone come together, highlighted the strong friendships that have formed amongst the group and how volunteering can have a really positive impact on people's wellbeing.

## Feedback

In May 2022, we sent out a survey to all our vaccination volunteers to find out about their experiences of volunteering at the vaccination sites, what worked well and what could work better next time / in the future. This will help us with the successful delivery of the volunteering programme going forward and to identify any areas in which we could improve the volunteer experience.

Q. Did you feel well supported and managed in your role?

94% of volunteers strongly agreed or agreed

Q. Did you enjoy your volunteering experience?

95% volunteers strongly agreed or agreed

Q. Did you receive the training needed to carry out your role?

98% volunteers strongly agreed or agreed

Q. Would you consider volunteering in other roles either with CAN or with other organisations?

54% said yes

25% said maybe

20% said they already volunteer elsewhere

Q. Would you recommend CAN to other people who are interested in volunteering?

96% said yes

4% said maybe

When looking at what could work better, the main issues were around availability of shifts and shift lengths, both of which link predominantly to the BIC site when we had more volunteers available than shifts.

Overall, 94% of volunteers said the volunteering met their expectations which we are proud of as this was a brand-new volunteer programme launched during unprecedented times.

## Vaccine hesitancy

We worked with Dorset HealthCare Inequalities team to better understand the reasons behind low take up of the vaccines in certain areas and within particular groups of our community to identify how these could be addressed. The focus has

been identified as: those experiencing homelessness, those with learning disabilities/serious mental illness and people under the age of 49 (U49s) and those living in areas of deprivation.

## Promotion

The Dorset HealthCare Coms team developed promotional material for the evergreen vaccine offer, aimed at those who either have not yet received a vaccine or have missed previous booster shots and showing how it fits alongside autumn 2022 and spring 2023 booster roll out. This information was shared with our members, at various community events and on social media.

We also worked with the Dorset HealthCare Coms team to update promotional material for the booster campaign and took part in a number of leaflet drops to give a final push to the evergreen offer. These included handing out leaflets at Polish supermarkets, Chemists, shops, charities, and residential streets.

## Working in partnership

We made contact with CAN members and partners to find groups interested in giving feedback on experience of service users, vaccine hesitancy and take up vaccine conversation training including:

- BCP Council's Community Team
- Help & Care
- CAN Volunteer Co-ordinators
- Trusted Voices
- Volunteer Fairs
- SEND Parent Carer Drop-in Somerford Arc
- Working together to prevent homelessness conference

We also met with Dorset Race Equality Council, part of the Health Inequalities Partnership to gain their insight as to why there had been low vaccine take-up amongst certain groups. Insightful feedback included:

- After travel restrictions lifted, many visiting family and friends outside the UK took the opportunity to have medical check-ups including Covid-19 vaccines and boosters. South Asian and Indian communities reported no unvaccinated contacts, advising that many had received their second or subsequent vaccines outside the UK. People advised of difficulties updating their NHS records with vaccines administered outside the UK. A way of doing this is available but may need to be publicised more. [Tell the NHS about coronavirus vaccinations abroad](#).
- Many from the Polish community get a full health MOT when returning for holidays in Poland. There is vaccine hesitancy and a holistic therapy culture. Reports from family and friends of bad experiences hold most sway.

## Outreach and pop-up sessions



Working with the Dorset HealthCare team, we identified locations and contacts for dedicated community pop-up clinics in existing community spaces. We have shared contacts with the team for organisations working with people experiencing homelessness.

As a result, Dorset HealthCare carried out a trial pop up clinic at Lansdowne Church, Bournemouth. The learning and good practice gained from this has been used in other pop ups and will help address health inequalities in the delivery of other NHS services.

Using NHS Dorset HealthCare data and targeting areas of low vaccine take-up, we explored venues, made site visits, shared contacts, and introduced the team to locations that could host further pop-up clinics. These have focused on existing VCS services and community facilities in areas of deprivation, where already established and trusted services support those experiencing homeless, people with Learning Disabilities/Serious Mental Illness and U49s. These include Somerford Youth and Community Centre, Townsend Community Centre and Boscombe Town's Fund building based in the Royal Arcade. Using the learning gained so far, the Inequalities team has bid for funding to host 10 additional pop-up clinics.

### **Promotional events**

As part of U49 engagement, we spoke to Bournemouth University students about the vaccine at three volunteering events engaging with 100+ people. We provided contact details for the NHS coms team for those who wished to be involved in further publicity campaigns. Alongside this, we also attended two University careers events in January 2023, engaging with 60+ students about the vaccine.

Colleagues from the Inequalities team joined us at a range of promotional events, to engage with local communities and to identify barriers to the vaccine take-up. These included:

- Somerford Arc SEN drop-in
- Townsend Community Centre Community Fridge and Friendly Food Club
- The Health Inequalities Symposium
- Volunteering hub pop-up sessions (Hamworthy Library, Boscombe Library and Southbourne Library)
- Trusted Voices
- Living Well with a Brain Injury event

Between us, we obtained a number of useful insights and feedback including:

- Adult males in their 20's needed a different approach than that offered by the Sensory Room at Kings Park. Needed to be less childish. We suggested the Mental Health Forum training sessions running at AFC Bournemouth as a way particularly to connect with young men.
- Vaccine uptake in Bournemouth based Brazilian and Portuguese communities was felt to be very high and Bournemouth Vaccination Centre was well used.

- Experience of long-Covid is felt to be a big motivator to being vaccinated, where there had been resistance previously.
- Those who have made a conscious decision not to have the vaccine did not trust what was in it. Pop-clinics would not help.
- Care worker based in Charminster at residential home for adults with learning disabilities advised all vaccines administered in the home. Information shared re sensory room and there was an interest in creating one for general use at the home.

## Training

We delivered a further two online Vaccine Conversation training sessions held, attended by a total of 18 people from the NHS Mental Health Team for patients with Serious Mental Illness and Learning Difficulties

Feedback: 'Thanks to you and your colleague for a very informative session'

## Sensory rooms

Following the huge success of the Sensory Room created by CAN at Bournemouth Vaccination Centre, we have supported the Dorset HealthCare Inequalities team in their successful bid for over £1k funding to create a similar space at the Linden Unit in Weymouth.

We have updated information for partners to share with families/users of the Vaccination Service sensory rooms.

# CONNECTING communities



Emma Lee heads up our work to connect communities. Here Emma shares data and stories to demonstrate how our work helps to create conditions where everyone's voice is valued and heard by facilitating great local networking and communication.

## Developing engagement

Throughout 2022-2023 we have continued to increase our engagement with charities and community groups – growing our membership to 559. 479 full members and 78 affiliate members.

This year 120 new organisations have joined CAN - 106 full members and 14 affiliate.

We have had a particular focus on groups who may not be aware of CAN, and what we offer, particularly:

- Groups supporting diverse 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

With our work expanding across the county of Dorset with the successful tender with Dorset Council, our work with NHS Dorset on the development of a universal offer for mental health and wellbeing as well as the development of the Dorset wide VCS Assembly we welcome as members charities and community groups with a Dorset wide brief. Consequently, we have seen a significant increase in the number of organisations who work in the Dorset Council area predominantly. The breakdown this year has been 54 members based in Dorset Council area and 52 in BCP area of the 106 full members that have joined us.

We launched our Business Supporter Membership late November 2022 and so far have 4 active members who are helping us to develop our offer to both business and the VCS. Moving into 2023/2024 we are working in partnership with Dorset Chamber of Commerce, Dorset Council, BCP Council and Prama to deliver a workshop on how links can be built between the businesses and the VCS. Enabling us to further champion the work of the VCS across Dorset and help leverage funding and resources for the local VCS.

## Dorset State of the VCS Sector Report

Over the summer we sought to gather intelligence on the current 'state of the through our annual Dorset State of the VCS Sector Survey. Asking our members how their organisation is managing following the Coronavirus pandemic and now the cost-of-living crisis.

Overall, the findings aren't too different to what we expected correlating with our ongoing view and delivery model and will enable us to focus and prioritise our work. Within the report you will see some amazing statistics demonstrating just how great the sector is in Dorset. Such as the economic contribution of volunteers is approximately £700 million or the value of hours given by volunteers during 2021 is estimated to be between £640 - £950 million.

Findings suggest a mixed picture. Research does indicate that although there are considerable pressures on the VCS and on individual organisations, and it remains potentially fragile. The sector continues as a large, diverse and active movement with considerable social and economic impact across the county.

Key highlights within the report included:

- **Financial sustainability** is a big issue. Short term funding, confusion around effective commissioning, along with the national cost of living crisis is having a big impact on the VCS
- **Collaborations** – organisations want more opportunity to engage with and collaborate with each other **and** the public **and** private sector
- **Volunteering** – organisations want to recruit the right volunteers with the right skills
- **Skilled workforce** – the sector needs and deserves skilled and motivated volunteers and staff. Investment is needed to ensure this happens.

Positively our findings suggest that many organisations are adapting and developing to meet the evolving and changing needs of our communities and to ensure their own sustainability as we head into further uncertain times.

You can read more [here](#) about the 'state of the sector' and how we plan to support our members to not only survive but thrive.

## Building community resilience through community insight

The [Health Equality Partnership](#) is an initiative we have supported by gathering insights and data through a health research and engagement program. This exciting project started in June 2021 and is commissioned by Public Health Dorset. It has evolved enabling us to gather community insights and identify any areas of hidden inequality that people from diverse communities, with enduring mental ill health or with learning disabilities face across Dorset.

We have been working in partnership with Dorset Community Action and Dorset Race Equality Council on this initiative to understand more fully the views of those with enduring mental ill health, learning disabilities and individuals from diverse communities using health services, the challenges they face, and their overall experiences. These people often fare poorly in terms of general health and life expectancy when compared to the rest of the population.

Since April 2022 we have been working together on addressing the recommendations from the [report](#).

### **Supporting people with severe mental illness (SMI) to improve access to health services:**

Alongside Dorset Community Action we worked with NHS Dorset and their SMI Physical Health Check Project to identify:

- what training is currently offered to professionals focussing on SMI and whether there is an opportunity to develop bespoke sessions co-designed in partnership with those with lived experience
- the peer support offer that is available and how these could be linked into supporting people to “wait well”
- whether there are any VCS groups providing buddies or advocacy to support people who might be reluctant to attend health checks or need additional support to attend their health check.
- people’s experiences and how they felt about their health check experience, both positive and negative to enable us to inform service development and training of staff.

This has now evolved into the [SMI Physical Health Check Project](#).

Through the project the following was identified:

- there is a limited amount of mental health training currently available to staff and volunteers in the VCS across Dorset and there is a need for a range of mental health training such as:
  - Suicide Awareness Training
  - Mental Health First Aid Training
  - SMI Awareness Training
- there are only a small number of VCS organisations with a primary focus on mental health as their main support offer with very little support for those diagnosed with a SMI. For example.
  - Dorset Mind
  - Dorset Mental Health Forum
- there is a lack of peer support groups available in Dorset for those diagnosed with a severe mental illness.

Working with these findings we continued to work with NHS Dorset to support Implementation of a “SMI Awareness Training Package” to be made available to the

VCS and healthcare professionals – it involved supporting Dorset Mental Health Forum who were initially commissioned to do the work.

- Explore available options for a fully moderated, “community online digital mental health support” platform for adults in Dorset. ‘Togetherall’ is the platform identified as a digital support offer
- To explore reasons why people with SMI do not attend (DNA) their annual physical health check appointment and to assist in developing a pilot, working with several GP surgeries (Central Bournemouth PCN) using a new ‘DNA Liaison service’

In the coming year April 2023 – March 2024 we’ll be continuing to develop and deliver this work. Stage one of the Pilot has been extremely successful, working with 4 GP practices in Bournemouth we have been able to engage with 20 patients out of 25 who have either disengaged with health services, declined or not attended their physical health check and we have supported 10 of them to rebook their health check by finding out their personal barriers and offering support or solutions to help them attend and engage with the community.

## Health Inequality Project

We are now onto the second phase of the Health Inequality Project working with Dorset Community Action and Dorset Race Equality Council which has seen us:

- identify that there is a limited amount of training currently available to professionals working with individuals with learning disabilities and there is clearly an opportunity to develop bespoke sessions co-designed in partnership with those with lived experience.
- film and speak to individuals affected by unconscious bias and discrimination to form a resource demonstrating the impact bias and discrimination can have on people (you can take a sneak peak at the short videos completed [here](#)).
- co-create with colleagues from across health services to develop an easy to access 24/7 unconscious bias training for health professionals.

## Working in partnership to support wellbeing in communities

Since January we have been looking at the way in which we bring the two programmes, CAN Wellbeing Collaborative and the Wellbeing Hubs, together. We have decided to retain the name, Wellbeing Collaborative, as we are growing and expanding upon what has already been developed. The joining of these two programmes has shown real integration by commissioners across NHS Dorset and BCP Council, recognising that the elements of the Wellbeing Collaborative are able to support both the Home First Programme (BCP Council) and the Mental Health Transformation programme (NHS Dorset).

In this annual report, we’ll be outlining the developments of CAN Wellbeing Collaborative and Dorset Wellbeing Hubs separately. Moving forward, we’ll report as one programme: the Wellbeing Collaborative.

## Wellbeing Collaborative

The Wellbeing Collaborative team started in March 2022, as a learning partnership, exploring how we can better integrate the voluntary and community sector with social care and health partners across BCP. We wanted to trial and evaluate practical ways to help our colleagues keep people well and feeling independent at home, for as long as possible. We did this by raising awareness of the breadth of expertise available in the voluntary and community sector.

We co-designed and developed 3 key areas of work to strengthen how people in the Integrated Care System can stay connected to the support available from voluntary and community organisations. When we started, data was thin on the ground, we did not know what to expect in terms of numbers or needs, so the process of setting up the CAN Wellbeing Collaborative was very much needs driven and responsive to the gaps in support that were identified.

### Phase 1 – Pathway Exploration

#### Social Care

Frontline workers in social care teams were finding it difficult to keep up to date with what was available in their local communities to support people to stay well, and independent. They were also changing the way in which they supported people to access social care, making it simpler and more dynamic, using the 'Three Conversations Model'. We had to find ways to support both the old and new ways of working.

#### UHD Hospitals

Frontline workers in hospital discharge teams initially requested for us to be on site in the hospital which through our learning, was found not to be an efficient use of our Pathway Coordinators time. The Red Cross were already commissioned to support hospital discharge for the first 3 days at home, so we promoted the services they provided. It was also our role to support people after the initial 3 days, helping them recover well and avoid re-admittance.

#### Gaps Identified

We found there were 2 gaps in the system:

- Professionals who needed more choices to offer individuals that needed their continued support.
- Individuals who no longer needed social care or clinical support but would benefit from community support to recover and remain well and independent at home.

#### Solutions Identified

For professionals working with people who required continued support, we created our Virtual Hub. A single point of access, easily accessible on Teams, where professionals can ask a question to ascertain information and awareness of the support that is available, providing options for the person they are supporting. We also assisted professional teams through emails when the signposting enquiries were more complicated.

For individuals who no longer needed statutory support, we created a direct referral process. Key professionals from social care or hospital teams, including the Red Cross, could refer an individual to us and we would contact the person by telephone and assess their needs using Dialog+, an innovative approach from NHS England. We developed a role for a Wellbeing Volunteer, who could bridge the gap in telephone support if the person felt isolated and needed regular conversations and encouragement to access services that would benefit them. Wellbeing Volunteers were matched to a recipient and the conversations were monitored.

### **Phase 1 - The Results**

The team have supported 234 professionals to find information about local services since July 2023 through our virtual hub and 147 enquiries through email signposting. In January, we successfully migrated the Virtual Hub to the CAN Teams platform, expanding our offer to allow 1000 frontline professionals access to the hub from across the county of Dorset and from any organisation. We expect numbers to grow rapidly as we move forward to advertise this service more widely in 2023.

There is a real community spirit in the Virtual Hub, where all professionals are getting involved and sharing their knowledge to support colleagues from across the system. This is a giant step towards integration of services, delivering what professionals in 'OUR Dorset' need, at pace and scale.

An adult social worker recently said, 'It has changed the landscape of our way of working. I no longer go to visits worried about what I am going to say to support the clients, because I know I can search for information on the virtual hub or get information from the team'

In response to direct referrals, the team has helped 209 individuals to find the support they need in order to stay well and independent. This has resulted in improved wellbeing for people, on average there has been an increase of 5.4 points (assessment measure of Dialog+). We have also saved the Integrated Care System £189,466 in our first year.

We have 6 active Wellbeing Volunteers. A key outcome of our work is about raising awareness of community support that is available, when we receive feedback, as stated below, we know that we are hitting the mark.

"It is a funny thing to say really, but going into hospital has meant that so many doors have opened up for me in terms of receiving support. I am really looking forward to my first wellbeing call!"

### **Phase 2 – Face to Face Support**

From the work completed in Phase 1, we knew that some people wanted face-to-face support as opposed to telephone support. So, in September, we launched trials of our community Information Stations, in hospitals, in community spaces and at events. Professionals could refer people to an Information Station where their needs could be



assessed by Pathway Coordinators. It was also possible for people to drop by to have a conversation without a referral.

Our Wellbeing Volunteers, help at Information Stations with a warm welcome and time for a chat. They also help to raise awareness of the station and explain what support can be given.

## Phase 2 - The Results

Since January, the team have run 54 weekly Information Stations across four libraries in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole. People come to us with all sorts of enquiries and no question is too small. We often find that someone starts with one question which then opens Pandora's box. They ask us about the things that matter to them and that are impacting their wellbeing and we connect them to the right support for them.

### Other successes

- We have attracted another year of funding from BCP Council to keep the team in place until June 2024 and grow our service to accommodate community hospitals and reablement services in the BCP Council area.
- BCP Council have asked us to trial the issuing of one-off personalised wellbeing grants to reduce hospital stays by at least one night or prevent people going into hospital.
- We have developed Wellbeing Volunteers offering community friendship and navigation and short tasks in the community to help people stay well and independent. These will roll out in May 2023.

## Dorset Wellbeing Hubs

### Poole Hub

We are working in partnership with VCS organisations, NHS and the private sector to develop the first wellbeing hub in Dorset. Following a successful expression of interest, Prama and Help & Care became the VCS leads for the Poole hub and together we are working closely with the NHS to develop the hub space. It will provide a universal offer of support for mental health and wellbeing as part of the new model of mental health services. The hub is aiming to open by September 2023.

Elements of work include:

- Refurbishment of the shop unit including structural and interior design
- Naming and branding of the hub
- Staffing – staff model, role descriptions, recruitment
- Partnerships and connection with VCS and statutory partners – including the timetabling of organisations working from the hub to support people
- Connection to community voice and co-design of the offer
- Development of multi-disciplinary team interface meeting

### Weymouth and Portland Hub

The next hub in development will be in Weymouth. A Weymouth and Portland Innovation Session took place March 2023 with partners from across the system. The aim of the session was to consider the possibilities for supporting people in the local area with their mental health and wellbeing. The outcome of the meeting was to consider the development of a wellbeing hub in Weymouth, using Hope House as a location. The lead VCS organisation for the development of this hub will be The Lantern Trust. Conversations will continue to take place this year.

### **Understanding the 'Big Picture'**

We have been taking time to understand the landscape across Dorset:

- Understanding strengths in the system, what is already happening, and already making an impact.
- Identifying the gaps that exist whether thematic or geographic.
- Learning about the various programmes and initiatives that are in development to support alignment and avoid duplication.
- Continuing to understand the spaces that communities use and how we can connect the system with a hub and spoke model.
- Understanding the best way to connect and communicate across the system.

### **Joining the programmes**

Our priorities will include:

- Expansion and development of the established streams of work: Virtual Hub; Information Stations; volunteering roles.
- Supporting the development of wellbeing hubs through engagement and co-design with communities.
- Developing the 'hub and spoke' model to connect the system across communities, VCS, NHS and Local Authority partners.
- Develop the grant funding model for VCS organisations alongside NHS Dorset and Dorset Community Foundation.

## **Promoting & valuing charities & community groups**

We have had another successful year of our [Community Heroes in the Spotlight](#) initiative. Each month we showcase the work of a particular member organisation to share help raise their public profile and give them the recognition they deserve. We share press releases, have a monthly session on Hope FM's 'Community Now' programme and promote the organisation through our website, weekly newsletters and social media.

Over the year we have championed and celebrated 12 organisations, including one which supports young carers, one which celebrates the cultural diversity of our local area, another supporting men's mental health.

Each organisation has joined our Engagement Lead on Hope FM, with some having the opportunity to speak on BBC Radio Solent to share the tremendous work they are doing for the community.

We have also had 6 press releases featured in different printed publications including the Daily Echo and BH Living.

Feedback from those involved include:

- “We have had a steady increase in visitors to the radio website. We had a lot of engagement on our social following being the Community Heroes in the Spotlight in October” Raymond, Afro\*Disiac Live Radio
- “Our call-out for volunteers got a response while we were live on air!” Charlie, Bournemouth Samaritans
- “We now have a ‘Ways to Donate’ page on our website (due to being Community Heroes)” Donna, Leonardo Trust

## Supporting essential public health messaging

Public Health Dorset have continued to commission us to support the development of Trusted Voices Champions to help better engage with communities. We now have 107 Trusted Voices Champions who between them support and advise a diverse range of local communities including:

- people with protected characteristics
- people experiencing poverty
- refugees and asylum seekers
- people with mental health difficulties

Through a Community Soup event, Trusted Voices provided four groups with seed-funding to support people in Poole. This included mental health support for young people, counselling for ethnic minorities and single parents, educational resources to encourage young people to make good choices and stay out of prison and friendship groups for all, based in local cafes.

We have led three online workshops with Nigerian Community in Dorset, focusing on Mental Health and Wellbeing, Diabetes and Prostate cancer with a focus on how these affect black men and women. We have been asked by Nigerian Community in Dorset to lead three more events over the next year and are scoping out topics for these.

We’ve held two online networks for Trusted Voices Champions and three in person, which have been particularly well attended and appreciated.

Due to the ongoing success of the project we are now working with the Trusted Voices Champions on mental health messaging, cost of living signposting and support and general health information.

We have had confirmation that the project will be extended for a further year until March 2024 where we will be working with Public Health Dorset to explore how we

can ensure funding reaches the community groups who support some of our most vulnerable communities in Dorset.

## Winter Crisis Support

During quarter 4 of the year we launched our [Winter Crisis project](#) which saw us working in partnership with NHS Dorset and Citizens Advice BCP to provide support to people most affected by the cost of living crisis, including:

- individual payments of £250 in supermarket or energy vouchers (via Citizens Advice BCP)
- grants of up to £10,000 to small charities / community groups supporting their communities through the crisis

In the space of three months, we launched and awarded £89,577 worth of funding to 13 groups, ranging from £2,545 - £9,900 and with the support of Citizens Advice BCP we provided 200 individual supermarket or energy vouchers to people who have been most affected by the cost of living crisis this winter in the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole area. Successful organisations are using the grant to:

- Run communal cooking classes, with a focus on nutritional, family meals
- Extend the opening times of their warm spaces, offering hot drinks and snacks and having signposting support to other services on hand
- Support low income families with mental health support for their young people
- Offer training and employability support
- Provide snacks and a warm space for young athletes and their families to enable them to continue to attend training and events

Feedback from the groups we have supported include:

### Home Start Wessex

"We have mums reporting that they are watering down formula milk to make it last without realising the health implications to their babies, just to survive the week as formula milk costs are at their all-time highest on average £12 a tub so this grant is making a big difference in enabling us to help lessen the strain." Kerry, Family Groups Manager.

### SMILE, Poole who distributed cook bags to lone parents

'One family was unfortunately staying in a B&B but still had access to a kitchen and said that they loved that the ingredients didn't need to be refrigerated, the recipes were simple and that it helped them to save money in a difficult time.'

## Developing collaborations and networking

We have continued to develop our networking offer over the last 12 months, through our mostly online networks.

In total we have hosted 33 networking sessions during 2022/2023, all enabling attendees to share what they do, find opportunities for collaborative working, share knowledge and offer peer support. Our networks are based on geographical areas or are thematically focussed.

Most of the networks have been requested by our members and so far include:

- **Network for groups supporting disability** – a new network this year
- **Network for groups supporting men** – our newest network, requested by members
- **Southbourne, Pokesdown and Christchurch area network**
- **Network for groups who support women and girls** – our longest running network
- **Boscombe Network**
- **Community Spaces Network** - for groups who run community centres, village halls, uniformed clubs etc across BCP and wider Dorset.
- **Poole Network**
- **Early Years Network** - for groups who support families with children from conception to five
- **Let's Connect** - supports the wellbeing of youth workers and volunteers from all settings in BCP
- **Older Peoples Network** - for groups supporting older people across BCP and Dorset council areas

We have received positive feedback about the networks, including:

- "I'm so grateful to you and everyone at CAN for all the meetings and work you do. I'm filling my diary with CAN meetings at the moment, as you are helping me make so many connections" Kai from Ara Recovery for All
- "I was so pleased I came along and really impressed with how much is going on in the community across BCP. I am a great advocate of community and I learnt a lot on Saturday" Andrea from Bournemouth Sea Cadets
- "Just a quick note to say thank you so much for this morning's networking event. I really enjoyed it and found it so helpful. What a lovely group of people. I look forward to attending more events in future!" Bels, HealthBus

On average 78 people a quarter engaged with the networks, with approximately 9 organisations being represented at each network and an average of 13 people attending virtually each time.

This year we ceased the **Leaders exCHANGE** in its original format however there has been a request for a more informal virtual network for leaders of VCS organisations which would provide an opportunity for people to come together to offer peer support and explore potential partnerships. This will be launching early in 2023/24.

## Prejudice free communities

Engaging with our diverse communities across BCP and wider Dorset has continued to be priority for us.

We are active members of Prejudice Free Dorset, regularly attending their quarterly meetings and supporting the collaboration with the education and the communications work streams.

After re-designing the Connecting Communities team earlier in the year with our diverse communities in mind – our new Engagement Lead has ensured a wide range of communities from across the county are members of CAN and engaged with the exciting work that is taking place between the VCS and our public sector partners. Enabling us to better engage and increase our membership of charities and community groups that support people / communities with protected characteristics, bringing this element of our membership to 118

We are active members and allies of the **LGBT+ Voices Dorset Forum**, and are on the Education sub-group. This group had a break for a few months over the past year whilst the chair took stock about the direction of travel the forum wished to go in. It is now meeting again with more regularity and we continue to attend and support the work

## Embedding the VCS into the Integrated Care System (ICS)

Since mid 2021 we have been working with [#HelpAndKindness](#) to embed the VCS into the Integrated Care System (ICS) through the co-creation and development of a new Assembly for the VCS for both the Dorset Council and BCP Council areas to enable the VCS to be an equal partner of the ICS.

Throughout the year we have facilitated and supported a series of meetings and a lengthy process of discussion and collaboration between dozens of VCS representatives from across Dorset and the public sector to enable the development and agreement of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the VCS and the integrated Care Partnership and a terms of reference for the Dorset VCS Assembly (Dorset VCSA) to be in place from July 2022.

Since July we have been negotiating with NHS Dorset to ensure this model is adequately resourced and at the moment it all sounds very positive and were expecting a decision in early April following a proposal being presented to the ICB Leadership Group.

In February we worked with an Independent Appointment Panel, of individuals from across the country with many years of experience in the VCS, to recruit the Governance Board for the Dorset VCSA.

The Governance Board's role is to oversee and ensure that the values for the Assembly, that were identified by the VCS in the co-production process, are woven into the work of the Assembly. The Panel looked for people who are committed to and experienced in supporting these founding values. They were also sought to identify a blend of skills and experience, across the Board's composition, to meet the needs and demands of the Governance Board's role.

The Board will not only be responsible for developing systems to help the Assembly to function, but will also hold the Engagement Group\* to account for the work they will be doing on behalf of the Assembly.

The total membership of the Governance Board will comprise 11 Members. The IAP have appointed 7 people to the Board at this point. One of the activities of the Board will be to design the process for including further people on the Board to reach the full complement of 11 Members.

The appointments to the Board, in alphabetical order, are as follows:

**Zoe Bradley** - Chief Executive, Citizens Advice Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole

**Daniel Cadisch** - Chief Officer, Citizens Advice Central Dorset

**Charlie Coward** - Deputy Chief Executive, Active Dorset

**Peter Green** - Trustee, Dorset Race Equality Council

**Ken Heap** - Chair, Dorset Mind

**Mark Sharman** - Chief Executive, Help and Care

**Martin Yelling** - Chief Executive, Stormbreak

## Access to Food Partnership

We continue as active founding members of the Access to Food Partnership which has recently won a Silver award from iESS for community and statutory joint working.

A Grass Roots funding pot has been established, giving £200 to groups who want to buy equipment or start a project. Funds also used to help arrangements for refugees and asylum seekers have communal meals during Ramadan.

We have continued to support BCP Council and the Access to Food Partnership by enabling individuals to access food hygiene training. Over the course of the year **41 people from 19 different community groups/organisations** have either completed the Level 1 or Level 2 Food Hygiene training and there are currently 6 people in the process of completing their training.

There are lots of exciting plans for next year including a dedicated worker to help promote and share about the work of the Partnership and there are plans for a new logo and branding. A co-created recipe book is also planned and members of the forum will be asked to pitch to the partnership to produce this for us.

## Networking, championing and representing the VCS

### VCS Involvement Partners

This year we launched our VCS Involvement Partners. Ensuring the sector has a place at the table where discussions are held, and decisions are made, which is vital as it informs and positively influences how local public services are developed and delivered.

'Representing the voluntary sector' is often asked of local charities who find themselves at meetings with public sector colleagues. This can often be difficult and unrepresentative. We have co-designed a more inclusive and joined up way of representation that supports the individual, their organisation and the wider community to better enable effective collaboration, engagement and co-design through our elected VCS Involvement Partners.

We currently support VCS representation with elected VCS Involvement Partners on the following 11 statutory boards/meetings:

- **Community Safety Partnership (BCP)** – Sara Armstrong, The Footprints Project
- **Children and Young People Partnership Board (BCP)** – Lynn Giles, Action for Children
- **Domestic Violence & Sexual Abuse Strategy Group (pan-Dorset)** – Sara Armstrong, The Footprints Project
- **Health and Wellbeing Board (BCP)** – Karen Loftus, Community Action Network
- **Local Resilience Forum (pan-Dorset)** – Volunteering Cell and Community Recovery Cell - Working with our Council and NHS colleagues to ensure volunteering / the voluntary sector are at the heart of response and recovery - Karen Loftus, Community Action Network
- **Safeguarding Adults Board (BCP)** – Natascha McAllister, SEDCAT
- **Programme Group for SEND Improvement Board (BCP)** – Sam Everard, The SAMEE Project
- **Vibrant Communities Partnership Board (BCP)** – Karen Loftus, Community Action Network
- **Voluntary and Community Sector Emergencies Partnership (South West)** – Karen Loftus, Community Action Network
- **Missing, Exploited and Trafficked (MET) Panel (BCP)** – Lisa Hooper, Escapeline
- **BCP Health and Wellbeing Board** - We're a strong voice of the sector and advocate for volunteering – Karen Loftus, Community Action Network
- **Integrated Care Board** - Karen Loftus, Community Action Network
- **Integrated Care Partnership** - Karen Loftus, Community Action Network



We have worked with both the Board and the VCS Involvement Partner to ensure all are clear on roles, responsibilities, governance and agreed how insights will be gathered and shared. This has been a really exciting development and there are more VCS Involvement Partners in the pipeline for 2023/24.

We continue to support both the local authority and the NHS to engage with communities through our extensive network – sharing and gathering vital information and data. We continue to sit on local, countywide, regional and national groups, helping to form and influence policy at a considerable pace continuing to build on the relationships that we built during the pandemic.

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

- **BCP Council led 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
- **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
- **Engagement Leads Network**
  - Facilitated by the NHS Dorset bringing leads from across public and voluntary sector together to share good practice and promote collaborations

### **DBCP Adult Safeguarding Board and Community Engagement Group**

Since January 2023, we have co-chaired the quarterly Community Engagement Group for the pan Dorset Adult Safeguarding Board.

Our focus is to increase the number of members in the Group to ensure as many members as possible of local communities are represented. We will offer support to understand what safeguarding is and where to get help, as well as collect stories of lived experiences of local safeguarding. This will be fed directly to the Board to identify good practise and where/what improvements are needed.

Our first online meeting featured presentations from Dorset Advocacy to describe how they support community members with safeguarding concerns.

## Digital Systems Project

As a membership led infrastructure charity, we have always held data and information about our members and we use this information to publish, historically on paper, a directory of services. We have a duty to have, maintain and share this information and we will continue to do this in a digital format.

Over the last year we have been in the process of updating and reviewing our digital systems which includes the introduction of an online 'Service Finder'. Alongside this we have been having conversations with our partners and colleagues in NHS Dorset, about the importance of accurate, maintained, trusted data and for this data to be easily accessible and shared across the system, who were looking to create a maintained digital service directory with a focus on suicide prevention and mental health.

Last quarter, through these conversations NHS Dorset offered to invest in us to explore how data sharing and a system wide data standard would benefit all system partners and the community ensuring a 'no wrong door approach'.

Conversations have begun with partners from across the VCS, NHS and local authorities to enable the co-design of a data standard, using [Open Referral UK](#). This is to establish a consistent way of publishing and describing information, so it will be easy to find and share community information in a personalised way. As an initial starting point, data collection processes have already begun with members of the Dorset Community Mental Health Alliance.

### What's next?

We will be working collaboratively with partners so that databases across the Integrated Care System, such as CAN's Service Finder can be connected to each other through Open Referral UK, therefore enabling data to be shared in a smarter way. So far, we have facilitated two working group sessions to introduce the project, with four further sessions scheduled in May 2023 to establish "common language" to be used when recording and tagging services.

Ultimately, we hope this will enable frontline workers and local communities to be able to access timely and accurate information within a digital space, whenever the need arises.

## Our online presence and influence

This year we have been working in partnership with BCHA to support, develop and improve our external communications.

### Key Highlights:

- Development of a quarterly analytics report capturing social media engagement and google analytics
- Creation of a new newsletter templates through MailChimp which now reach over 700 people each week
- Training to staff around social media and confident communications
- Use of Hootsuite to schedule social media content and capture analytics.

## Social Media

### Across all social media platforms:

- We posted **975 times**
- Our posts made **156,000 post impressions** - the number of times a post was visible in timelines or feeds
- Our posts **reached 82,000 people** - the number of people who saw a certain post of your page
- We had **461 new followers**

### Awareness Campaigns

Throughout the year, CAN supported many campaigns, including:

- Stress Awareness Month
- International Women's Day
- Social Prescribing Day
- Brain Awareness Week
- National Day of Volunteering
- Disabled Access Day
- Holocaust Memorial Day
- Carers Rights Day
- Dementia Awareness

### Twitter

- Audience growth of 5.6%
- 134 New followers – from 2,235 to 2,369
- Overall engagement rate rise of 3.6%

### Facebook

- Audience growth of 12%
- 132 new 'friends' from 974 to 1106
- Overall engagement rate rise of 8%

### LinkedIn

- Audience growth of 44%
- 195 new followers from 245 to 440
- Overall engagement rate rise of 7%

## Our website - Google Analytics

We continually review and update our website. Over the course of the year, we had 25,271 people use the website on average there is approximately 2-3000 people each month.

## Most Viewed Webpages

1. Jobs Available- 4824 views
2. Homepage - 23,685 views
3. Volunteering Opportunities - 4477 views

## Radio appearances

Over the past year, CAN has made many Radio appearances to share the work of the organisation and other VCS groups:



## Supporting collaboration and policy

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 collaborative working across our sector along with the Councils and the NHS. We've supported our sector to flourish and nurtured new community groups and charities. We have worked closely with BCP Council in the development of their Empowering Communities - VCS and Volunteering Strategy which outlines a set of priorities and key actions that BCP Council want to attain over the next three years to achieve this vision and create connected communities.

# Priorities for 2023 / 2024

BCP Council are putting out to tender what was historically a grant given to CAN to support our core / essential resources, with much reduced funding. We'll be working to bid for the work and consider the implications of this reduction to the VCS and to how we operate. Having diversified our funding streams, we remain in a strong position for 2023/2024.

**In addition to our core offer and projects – we have identified other key priorities for 2023/2024 that include:**

- Further develop our reach and engagement across Dorset
- Continue to increase of membership by at least 30 new groups per quarter
- Consolidate and develop our advice and support offer
- Respond to emerging needs - extend our free/low cost training and webinar programme
- Further develop our support to members via toolkits/templates and online support
- Further develop our Community Volunteering programme
- Increase levels of young people volunteering
- Develop a program to support people with additional needs to volunteer
- Co-lead with #HelpandKindness VCS Assembly and Governance Board
- Promote and develop VCS Involvement Partners
- Conduct, review, report and plan State of the Sector survey
- Further develop the Wellbeing Collaborative
- Develop Service Finder and CAN digital systems
- Maintain a strong and engaged Board of Trustees

TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE