

Spotlight

Building Community

Featuring: Riverside Community Health Project and Be: Trans Support and Community

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Cover photo: A mother holds her son at a celebration event.

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About this magazine

Connected Voice Magazine is published twice a year. We aim to make sure all information is correct and up to date but we do not accept liability for any mistakes that may inadvertently appear. Views and opinions in this magazine are not necessarily those of Connected Voice.

Images:

As part of our commitment to accessibility, we describe images for those using screen readers. If you have any queries about this magazine email:

connect@connectedvoice.org.uk

Issue 24: Building Community

The Spring 2026 issue of Connected Voice Magazine, 'Building Community' intentionally matches the theme of our 2026 AGM.

We hear from our Deputy Chief Executive Giovanni Spatuzzi, who reflects on why it was important for us to choose this theme and why the VCSE sector is integral to communities across the North East.

For our Newcastle-based Spotlight, we hear from Riverside Community Health Project, about their vital community work in the West End of the city. For our Gateshead Spotlight, we speak to Be:Trans Support and Community about

how they're bringing awareness to issues that the trans community faces, providing safe, facilitated spaces and skilled and qualified peer support for trans+ people aged 18 and above.

Elsewhere, we hear a personal success story of community integration through volunteering and also lots of further insights from the team, including Advocacy, Business Services and Support and Development.

We hope you enjoy this issue and welcome any questions you may have! ●

Building Community

Giovanni Spatuzzi
Deputy Chief Executive



We chose Building Community as the theme for this magazine issue and our 2026 AGM because Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations play a vital role in creating strong, connected communities. Across Newcastle and Gateshead, thousands of mostly small volunteer-led organisations operating in different localities and covering a wide range of themes, support people every day to overcome challenges and feel part of a community.

Connection and Belonging

In a world of increasing isolation and loneliness, with a growing shift online and reduction in public services, VCSE organisations offer opportunities for people to experience connection, belonging and reduce barriers. Community centres, social groups and peer-support organisations such as Riverside Community Health Project or Be Trans Support and Community, as documented in this magazine, provide spaces for people to come together and reduce loneliness and isolation. This has positive emotional and social benefits, improving mental health through a strengthened sense of togetherness.

In 2023, I observed the work of the Men's Pie Club with a group in the Outer West of Newcastle. Over several sessions, as I spoke with beneficiaries, what struck me most, and still resonates with him today, was how the group had created a genuine sense of community. Many of the men talked about feeling part of something, about being able to make friends, and about having a renewed sense of purpose. Several admitted that, if it weren't for the weekly group, they would rarely leave their homes and would see few, if any, people.

Giovanni explores how the VCSE sector builds communities.

Practical Support and Services

Within the communities that VCSE organisations are helping to create, they are providing practical support and services to beneficiaries. In an age of increasing needs and reducing resources, exacerbated by austerity, climate change, and the cost-of-living crisis, we have seen rising demand in areas such as food support, housing provision, and mental health services. VCSE organisations have become an important safety net for many people, complementing and, in many cases, replacing public services in providing practical support.

Participation and Empowerment

A key element of building community is being active within it, through participation in local initiatives.

6 Across Newcastle and Gateshead, an estimated 27,000 plus people volunteer regularly in VCSE organisations and through social action projects.

Local people are shaping their own communities, giving back, and developing their skills, knowledge, and experience in the process.

VCSE organisations are essential to resilient communities, offering connection, practical support, and opportunities for participation. Their work reduces isolation, strengthens wellbeing, and empowers local people, ensuring communities across Newcastle and Gateshead remain supportive, inclusive, and equipped to face growing social, economic and environmental challenges.

Ready to volunteer, step into a trustee role, or grow your community group? Reach out to Connected Voice for free guidance and support on 0191 232 7445 or email us at connect@connectedvoice.org.uk ●

Spotlight: Riverside Community Health Project



Riverside Community Health Project is a community health organisation working to support local residents with their health, family life, welfare, fulfilment and employability.

riversidechp.org.uk

What does your organisation do?

Riverside Community Health Project is a community-based charity working to reduce health inequalities and improve wellbeing in some of Newcastle's most disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

For many local people, Riverside is more than a building – it is a safe, familiar place where they feel listened to and supported. We work with families living in poverty, migrants and refugees, people experiencing poor mental health, and residents facing isolation, long-term health conditions or financial hardship. Many are navigating multiple challenges at once.

Health is shaped by more than medical care. Poverty, language barriers, unemployment and isolation all affect wellbeing. Riverside exists to respond to those wider determinants of health – early, locally and compassionately.

A trusted community hub

Between July and December 2025,

we welcomed over 11,500 visits to our community building. Visitor numbers have risen sharply, reflecting growing reliance on local, open-access support.

66 Coming to Riverside gave me the confidence to believe in myself

Tell us about your key projects

Giving children the best start

Over 2,000 family and early years engagements took place through our baby groups, toddler sessions and stay-and-play activities. For some parents, these sessions are the only social contact they have all week. They build confidence, reduce isolation and support healthy child development. During school holidays, we combine activities with food provision – ensuring children are nourished and families feel connected.

Improving access to health

Through our Your Health Matters pilot, we have contacted 415 Czech, Slovak and Romanian residents and supported 267 appointments with local GP practices. By addressing language and confidence barriers, we help people engage with screening, immunisations and routine care – preventing problems from escalating.



Photo:Smiling young girl with dark hair and a gold necklace, holding a gold balloon animal.

Building skills, confidence and hope

We've been delivering projects to support skill development and employability including UKSPF funded Moving Forward and our Steps Forward project as part of the North East Economic Inactivity

“We have made some new friends by attending the groups which has been really good for myself as I felt quite lonely before attending

Trailblazer. Over 560 attendances at training and employability activities supported residents facing isolation, poor mental health and language barriers. Participants report improved confidence, stronger wellbeing and renewed motivation.

Community Action

Our three-year National Lottery funded Community Action on Need (CAN) project empowers local residents to identify and tackle the issues that matter most to them – from anti-social

behaviour and environmental concerns to community cohesion – by bringing people together, sparking ideas and supporting community-led solutions.

Riverside is rooted in its community. We see daily how early, preventative support changes lives – not through grand interventions, but through dignity, trust and consistent presence.

“Riverside and its staff members have been so supportive of me and my situation. They have supported and helped me every step of the way. I don't know what I would have done without their support.

Visit riversidechp.org.uk to find out more ●

Photos: (left) Two children play with toy bricks at an event outside.

(right) Two women chat at a networking event.



Why Good Governance and Inclusion Matters

Chloe Titterton

Support and Development Manager



Chloe explores how strong governance and inclusive practice help community organisations thrive.

Community organisations sit at the heart of neighbourhood life. They offer connection, stability, and a sense of belonging - especially for those facing disadvantage or isolation. However, behind every thriving community hub sits something less visible yet essential: good governance and a commitment to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI). Together, these principles help organisations stay accountable and responsive to the needs of local people.

Good Governance

Good governance is what keeps a community organisation steady, accountable and able to respond to change. It encompasses clear decision-making structures, transparent policies, safeguarding measures, strong financial oversight and a commitment to learning and improvement. When these systems are in place, communities feel confident engaging with the organisations that serve them.

For example, St Chad's Community Project openly publishes key governance policies including safeguarding, risk management and financial controls. This is so residents know how decisions are made and how their safety is protected. This kind of openness builds trust, which is essential for any community organisation that wants to be truly rooted in the lives of local people.

Governance also helps organisations evolve responsibly. Strategic planning processes, like Riverside Community Health Project's publication of their mission, aims and impact show residents that the organisation is reflective and forward-thinking.

Transparent reporting helps communities understand what is being achieved and how resources are being used.

Strong governance is not just for procedures; it is for relationship building as well. It allows organisations to work collaboratively, share responsibility and build structures that support long-term community resilience.

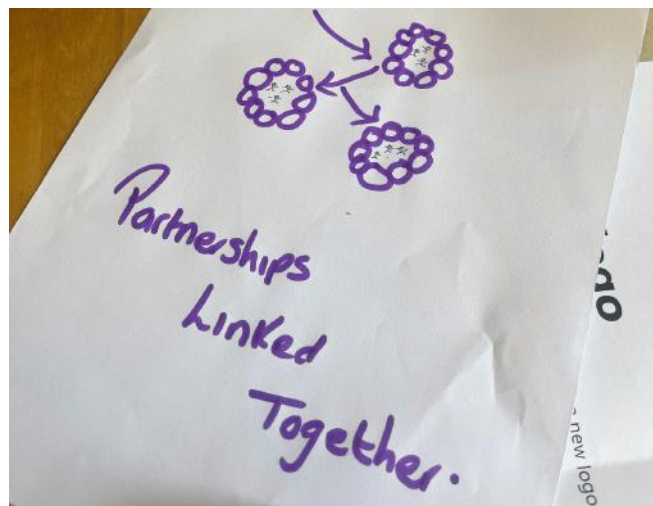
6 Where governance provides structure, Equity Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) brings humanity.

EDI encourages organisations to design services that reflect their community. Riverside's long history of working with women, parents, asylum seekers, and ethnically marginalised communities demonstrates the power of embedding inclusion into everyday practice. Their partnerships and culturally informed support show how EDI can break down barriers and help residents feel seen and valued.

Inclusive practice also builds stronger, more resilient communities. When people feel they belong, they are more likely to participate, volunteer, share their views and shape local change. EDI creates the conditions where neighbours support neighbours and where diverse experiences enrich community life.

Where Governance and EDI Come Together

Partnership working is one of the clearest ways governance and EDI support building stronger communities. It embodies transparency, shared responsibility and inclusion by bringing together different organisations, skills and voices.



Photos: (left) Group working together with Lego

(right) drawing of connecting links with 'Partnerships linked together' written underneath

Gateshead Development Partnership project, is a project funded by The National Lottery Community Fund which was led by St Chad's Community Project. The project is an example of governance and collaboration in action. The partnership used shared benchmarks, data dashboards, staff development and joint planning to support growth across multiple organisations. These structured processes allowed each partner to contribute their strengths while maintaining clarity and accountability. The project's development worker is currently supporting partners in the interim while they review the project's next steps. If you are interested in finding out more please contact bethan@stchadscommunityproject.org.

But the value of partnership isn't just in its structure, it's in its people. By working collectively, organisations ensure that more communities, not just one neighbourhood or one group, benefit from connected services and shared learning. This coordinated approach helps build resilience, reduces duplication and ensures support reaches those who need it most.

Riverside's collaboration with local voluntary and community organisations also illustrates this perfectly. By partnering widely, they have created a network of wrap-around support that brings services directly to residents in a familiar and trusted setting. This model reflects both strong governance (clear processes, joint working, transparent communication) and deep inclusion (meeting people where they are, respecting diverse needs and honouring lived experience).

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6 Governance brings structure and EDI brings belonging. Together, they build communities that are resilient, vibrant and ready to face challenges.

The stories of St Chad's Community Project and Riverside Community Health Project's partnership work across Newcastle and Gateshead show that when organisations lead with accountability, transparency and inclusion. Communities, as well as receiving support, become active participants in shaping the organisation's future ●

The Positive Impact of Cultural Competency

Diane Sandford

Haref and Health Equity Team
Manager



Diane explains how cultural competency strengthens social cohesion across diverse communities.

Cultural competency can have a powerful positive influence on social cohesion by helping individuals and communities understand, respect, and work effectively across cultural differences. In increasingly diverse societies, people from different backgrounds live, work, and learn alongside one another every day. While diversity can bring richness and innovation, it can also create challenges when misunderstandings, stereotypes, or prejudice arise. Cultural competency training provides the tools needed to navigate these differences in a constructive way, strengthening relationships, and promoting unity. The needs of marginalised communities should be acknowledged and included when planning services and agreeing priorities. Assumptions should not be made about what different communities need.

Reducing Prejudice and Discrimination

One of the ways Cultural Competency supports community is by reducing prejudice, assumptions, and discrimination. When people have limited knowledge about cultures other than their own, they may rely on assumptions or misinformation. This can lead to fear, exclusion, or unequal treatment. Cultural Competency training encourages individuals and organisations to reflect on their own bias and learn about the experiences, values, challenges and traditions of ethnically marginalised communities. As understanding grows, negative stereotypes are challenged, and people are more likely to approach differences with openness rather than suspicion. This helps create environments where everyone feels valued and included.

Improving Communication Across Communities

Cultural awareness improves communication across communities. Many conflicts in diverse settings arise not from harmful intentions but from misunderstandings related to language, customs, and cultural norms. For example, differences in communication styles, body language, or social expectations can lead to misinterpretation. Cultural competency training helps people recognise cultural norms and respond respectfully. When communication improves, trust develops, and relationships between groups become stronger, supporting a more cohesive society. Another important impact is the promotion of inclusion and belonging.

“Social cohesion depends on individuals feeling that they are part of the wider community, regardless of their ethnicity, religion, or cultural identity.”

Cultural competency training encourages organisations, workplaces, and public services to become more inclusive by recognising and responding to the needs of ethnically marginalised communities. This might include adapting services, ensuring representation, and creating spaces where different cultural identities are respected and valued. When people feel seen and accepted, they are more likely to participate actively in community life, strengthening collective bonds.



Supporting Equality and Fairness

Cultural competency training plays a role in supporting equality and fairness. Social cohesion cannot thrive where there are significant inequalities or where certain groups face systemic disadvantage. By increasing awareness of cultural differences and historical contexts, training helps services and organisations identify barriers that marginalised groups experience. This can lead to more equitable policies and services, reducing social divisions. Fairness fosters mutual respect and cooperation, which are essential for cohesive communities.

Encouraging Collaboration and Shared Goals

Cultural competency encourages collaboration and shared problem-solving. Diverse communities face common challenges such as poverty, health inequalities, or social isolation. When people from different cultural backgrounds can work together effectively, communities are better equipped to address these issues collectively. Training and awareness supports empathy and cooperation, helping individuals recognise shared interests and common goals rather than focusing solely on differences.

Building Resilience Against Social Tensions

Cultural Competency awareness helps build resilience against social tensions and extremism. When cultural misunderstanding is widespread, divisions can be exploited by those promoting hate or intolerance. Cultural competency strengthens social cohesion by encouraging dialogue, mutual understanding, tools to support and peaceful conflict resolution. Communities that value diversity and inclusion are less likely to resort to riots and protests and more likely to respond to challenges with solidarity.

Photo: Our Haref Training and Development Officer speaking at a Haref Network Event.

Cultural competency and awareness are vital for promoting social cohesion in diverse communities. By reducing prejudice, improving communication, encouraging inclusion, supporting equality, encouraging collaboration, and building resilience, cultural competency helps communities thrive together. When people understand and respect one another's cultural identities, they are more likely to form meaningful connections, creating stronger, more unified communities.

If you would like to find out more about the Haref and Health Equity team and the work we do to support social cohesion, please see our pages on the Connected Voice website and don't hesitate to get in touch. Whether you are interested in becoming a member of the Haref Network or Haref Allies or want to find out more about our Cultural Competency training, we look forward to hearing from you.

Our Cultural Competency training is funded by Newcastle Public Health team and informed by the experiences of people from local communities through the Haref Network. It is free for staff and volunteers designing and delivering services in Newcastle-upon-Tyne who wish to improve their reach of services with ethnically marginalised communities. These multi-agency sessions enable participants to connect with and deliver effective services to people across marginalised communities.

If you do not meet the criteria to access this funded training we can arrange Cultural Competency training for your organisation, please contact us for information and prices ●

Building Connections: Volunteering & Sanctuary in Gateshead

Harley Kuyck- Cohen

Volunteer Development Coordinator
Coordinator (Gateshead)



Nobody chooses to be a refugee. Like many forced to flee persecution, violence or threats their governments cannot prevent, Ariola felt isolated - newly arrived in Gateshead. In 2025, Gateshead Volunteer Centre supported Ariola as she began building a new life in the community. New to the UK with her family, she is an asylum seeker navigating an unfamiliar place and trying to regain stability. For us locals, we know Gateshead is packed full of friendly people, vibrant culture and community. Through our Support into Volunteering service, we helped ensure Ariola found that out too.

The service supports any resident with barriers to volunteering. We spoke with Ariola about her skills, interests and the support she might need. After exploring options together, she chose to volunteer with Peace of Mind CIO in Bensham as her best fit.

At their weekly drop-in, Peace of Mind supports residents, refugees and asylum seekers experiencing poverty. Ariola is now a regular volunteer - helping people access food and essential household items. Organisations like Peace of Mind form part of Gateshead's strong network supporting people seeking sanctuary, alongside groups like Alive Church, The Comfrey Project, Bensham Food Coop and St Chad's Community Project.

Ariola's story is just one example of us connecting people with their community. Working closely with referral partners at Gateshead Council, Jobcentre Plus, College and VCSE organisations - we open unique pathways for people facing barriers.

Harley shares how Gateshead's volunteer networks help newcomers find belonging and purpose.

In 2025, Connected Voice signed Asylum Matters' open letter urging the government to "keep volunteering voluntary" after suggestions a refugee's leave to remain status would become conditional to mandatory volunteering. It's our mission to introduce motivated residents to meaningful roles in our sector.

Opportunities supported range from improving our town centres, history clubs, furniture poverty projects or even oyster ecology monitoring on the coast! As a NAVCA-member Local Infrastructure Organisation, our knowledge of the local voluntary sector helps us broker these opportunities. Strengthening community cohesion, we also support organisations to feel confident recruiting people seeking sanctuary. On 24 March, we invite Gateshead Volunteer Coordinators and Managers to our first network session of the year: Meaningful Opportunities for Refugees and Asylum Seekers. A healthy community is built by bringing together a diverse pool of volunteers. We echo NAVCA's current campaign message: Volunteering doesn't happen by accident ●

“I was new in the city and I wanted to meet new people... I thought this opportunity would help me emotionally.” – Ariola S



Photos: A photo of Ariola, a woman with dark hair, standing in front of a yellow wall, looking towards the camera.

Working with Elected Members

Lisa Goodwin
Chief Executive



Lisa outlines why ongoing dialogue with Councillors is vital for the VCSE sector.

At Connected Voice, we see working with local elected officials as a key part of our VCSE representative role. We regularly meet with Cabinet members in Newcastle City Council and Gateshead Council to ensure they are briefed on VCSE issues and that they understand the support and connections we provide. Many local Councillors are also involved in VCSE organisations in their wards, so we also see them in that capacity, and they refer people to us for support. We have found the relationships we have fostered with local councillors to be mutually beneficial, and as many of them are deeply knowledgeable about the wards they cover, they help us reach more organisations.

As we prepare for all out elections in both Gateshead and Newcastle this May, we have been thinking about how we and the VCSE sector in general work with elected members, and how important it is that we continue our dialogue whatever the future make-up of our local Councils.

We believe we have a duty to ensure that our local Councillors understand the value of VCSE organisations and the issues facing them – especially if they have a senior role in the Council with responsibility for areas of work that impact on us. We respect the democratic process and the mandate that elected councillors have, and we will work hard after May to support and inform new Councillors about the VCSE sector.

Of course, this type of engagement can bring ethical dilemmas. I recently talked to a VCSE organisation who stated they planned not to engage with any future Reform Councillors due to their stance on refugees and asylum seekers. I understand the strength of feeling on this issue. But I also believe that building common ground and understanding has to start with dialogue. Personal views and beliefs should not get in the way of being able to work together for the common good.

Elected officials, whatever their political party or allegiance, have committed to working for people in their ward, so I will be keen to hear their views, even if I don't always agree with them.

A key element of our new strategy is about telling more of stories that show the impact of VCSE organisations and volunteers. Telling those stories will be a vital part of our discussions with new elected members in the coming months.

Registered charities are often naturally cautious about engaging in political activity and political issues, but they are allowed to do this as long as it is in the best interests of the charity, and as long as it is not the sole purpose of the charity. We can provide advice around the do's and don'ts of working with politicians, including how the pre election period works. Please get in touch with our team if this would be helpful for you ●

Beyond the Grant: Empowering Grassroots Action

Richard Maxwell
Finance Manager



Richard highlights the vital support Connected Voice provides to grassroots charities.

Across the North East of England, grassroots voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations have long been the backbone of community development and social change playing a crucial role in supporting local people. From running food banks and youth groups to delivering mental-health support and tackling isolation, these organisations often work on the frontline of community need. However, many operate with limited resources and rely heavily on external funding. In this context, the support provided by organisations such as Connected Voice is vital in helping small organisations access funding and build long-term sustainability.

One of the most significant ways Connected Voice supports grassroots groups is through funding guidance and bid-writing support. Many small charities struggle with the complexity of grant applications or developing a clear funding strategy. Connected Voice provides one-to-one advice, workshops and free training to help organisations become “funding ready,” improve their applications and identify relevant grant opportunities.

Alongside advice and training, Connected Voice as an organisation also help distribute and manage funding programmes, supporting grassroots groups through targeted grant programmes and partnerships. Our VCSE Alliance network in partnership with the North East and North Cumbria ICB have within the past 6 months helped make over £275,000 available to VCSE organisations to develop support programmes for mental health work with young people in Newcastle and Gateshead.

By connecting community groups with statutory partners and each other, the alliance helps ensure grassroots voices are represented in regional health and social policy, these grants encouraging collaboration between organisations and communities to design services that respond directly to local needs.

Beyond direct funding guidance, Connected Voice also provides networking events, governance training and community accountancy services such as Bookkeeping work and Independent Examinations to help organisations manage their finances and operate sustainably.

Our Support and Development team works with local charities on areas such as organisational structure, policies and long-term income generation which in recent years, has helped hundreds of organisations secure significant grant funding and strengthen their resilience in a challenging funding landscape.

The importance of this support cannot be overstated, and initiatives like these demonstrate that financial support for grassroots charities is not just about grants. It also involves building the skills, knowledge and partnerships that allow community organisations to thrive. Connected Voice helps ensure that with the right guidance on funding and infrastructure in place, small charities can continue to deliver life-changing support at the heart of communities ●

Spotlight: Be:Trans Support & Community



Be: Trans Support & Community is a Newcastle-based Charity, founded by trans people, for trans people, established in 2019.
www.be-north.org.uk

What does your organisation do?

Be is a Newcastle-based Charity, founded by trans people, for trans people, established in 2019. We provide safe, facilitated spaces and skilled and qualified peer support for trans+* people aged 18+, both face-to-face and online. Our service user-led model puts trans people at the heart of the support and care they receive.

We raise awareness and promote education about trans people's lives, healthcare and social care needs through our partnership work, research with trans people and with our bespoke training, with the aim of eliminating discrimination and transphobia in all its forms, encouraging support and allyship for our community.

Be has grown not only in strength, but also in numbers over the years and we now have the privilege of being one of the largest LGBT+ charities in the North East.

We know our work is vital for our community, with many facing transphobia discrimination, poor mental health and a lack of basic rights. The Trans Rights Report (TransActual, 2025**) surveyed over 4000 people in the UK and found overwhelmingly that trans people continue to endure a hostile legal and social environment, creating significant barriers to healthcare, housing, support, employment, appropriate ID and social opportunities.

Tell us about your key projects

Our Peer Support Group meet on a Tuesday evening, 6-8PM at One Strawberry Lane. This is our core project and is really well attended with more than 40 people in the room on an average week. Trans + people come along from across the region on a drop-in basis (no sign up needed), to socialise, join in with activities, get support from our peer volunteers and share trans joy and solidarity! From time to time, we invite other safe services and professionals to join us for bespoke advice, healthcare and support and our members access this on a voluntary basis. We were recently visited by Solutions 4 Health and Curious Arts and we're looking forward to brushing up on our makeup skills with Doll Haus in the next few weeks!

Our Monthly Coffee Meet Up happens at Warren's Kitchen in North Shields on the first Sunday of every month 3-5pm.



Photo: Trans Day of Remembrance vigil outside of One Strawberry Lane



Our Health and Wellbeing project has been well established since 2020, and has allowed us to bring healthcare directly to our community. An example of this is bringing on site sexual health screening regularly, and bringing a cervical screening bus to our drop in – allowing transgender and non binary people with a cervix who may usually not attend for screening to meet their basic health needs in a safe, comforting and welcoming space with trusted professionals. Be’s model of trust with its members allows them to feel able to accept support in their health needs. As well as this, we support services to improve their access to trans people by consultation groups.

We believe all people have the right to an active lifestyle, and our sports inclusion programme has allowed access to trans people who may usually face barriers to active lifestyles. From rock climbing to swimming, tennis to weight lifting – it helps us bring fun, health and inclusion together for our community.

How has Connected Voice supported you?

Being a member of Connected Voice means our volunteers can access support and training and also means we get to be part of a wider network of peers in our sector, make connections, find out about funding and guidance, and promote the voices and needs of the people we are privileged to support.

What do people say about your organisation?

We asked our service users for words they would use to describe our service, here is a few of things they said:

“**Lifesaving, Supportive, Community, Friendship, Safety, Important.**”

Professionals were asked how they viewed the service, they said:

“**Be is entirely unique. There is nothing else in the local area that provides peer support to trans people. I would be lost without them to refer to, and I know many of the people they support would be lost without them too. They serve an extremely vulnerable minority group that experiences a huge amount of discrimination and they are the only service to do so in the area. Their work is invaluable.**”

“**It is a trusted place to signpost beneficiaries. I know they will be welcomed, safe and supported greatly. It really helps people find a sense of belonging and security when they have been extremely isolated**”

Visit be-north.org.uk to find out more ●

Strengthening and building community to recover from hate and hostility

Jane Kingston
Head of Advocacy



Jane explores the challenges victims of hate crime face and the support available to them.

Hate crime can be verbal, physical and threats. This can cause damage to property, online harassment. It can be one off incident or repeated incidents over long periods of time (hate relationships). The victim believes they are targeted due to their perceived race, religion, sexual orientation, disability or transgender identity.

Connected Voice has been funded by the Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner since 2017 to support victims of hate crime in Northumbria, North Tyneside, Newcastle, Gateshead, Sunderland and South Tyneside. We advocate for 100 victims per year on average.

The hate crime is not the only thing the victim is facing. The harassment and abuse happen anywhere. Often, they have related problems around housing, transport, employment and health matters.

In the nine years we have seen victims are also affected by housing instability, barriers to accessing support for physical and mental health problems and poverty with more victims needing food banks and energy vouchers. We record the needs people have and notice an increase in mental health concerns and neurodiversity. Over 20% of victims, we support English isn't their first language.

We help victims to understand what a hate crime is, often they don't realise what they experience is a criminal offence and have little to no understanding of how to navigate criminal justice system to report a crime. We make sure victims know their rights.

We help them complain and seek compensation when needed. Some don't want to report the crime, so we help them to find the right support for them to stay safe and recover.

Victims tell us they feel trapped, isolated and helpless. Having support and a voice in this situation is life-changing. Empowerment is key, so we always encourage people to advocate for themselves. We have created [DIY Advocate](#) and 'Know your Rights' training to give victims the tools to help themselves when possible.

“Thank you so much for all the help & support you have given me over the last few years I honestly would not be heard if it were not for you.”

Research we conducted with Durham and Northumbria Universities in 2019 and 2022 called [Improving Responses to Hate Relationships](#) analysed 384 case files and found 44% cases related to long term enduring abuse by perpetrators in local communities. They called this Hate Relationships. The cases were often dismissed and not taken as seriously as one off crime. However, the impact on a victim was significant over several years.

In response to the research recommendations Connected Voice has taken steps to raise awareness of the Hate Relationship concept. We held two conferences in 2023 and 2025 on this topic. We worked with the universities to develop HATE ID an app tool for professionals to quickly identify if a situation is a hate crime, hate relationship or other safeguarding need.



**Photos: Gus , senior advocacy coordinator promoting Hate Crime Advocacy on Spice Radio. (left)
Jane Kingston and other partners taking the Become the Bridge pledge, a new antiracism campaign by the North East Anti-Racism Coalition**

We have held stalls and attended events and drop-ins to raise awareness of the support for victims.

The advocacy service supports the victims, and we use information from cases at a strategic level. Connected Voice attends the local Community Cohesion meetings in each local authority to share data from advocacy cases and to discuss any good practice in estates. We also share information at the Safeguarding Adults Boards.

In summer 2025 we delivered training to frontline staff in social housing providers and

have started to offer this to Connected Voice members and other VCSE organisations in Spring 2026.

The training offer is to help frontline staff to learn how to use the Hate ID App to understand the impact of hate crime, repeated hate relationships, and more.

We expect people who attend to have an increased understanding of:

- The needs of diverse communities
- Community-based tension and strategies to tackle Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)
- The range of hate crimes that exist
- Hate relationships and the impact of repeated abuse

Ability to:

- Look beyond the obvious when managing risk.
- Understand and meet customers' additional needs
- Engage meaningfully with your local ethnically marginalised communities
- Use the Hate ID App to identify hate crimes and explain the support available to report a crime, challenge or complain
- Find solutions with victims of hate crimes and ASB that empower them and help them recover.

If you're interested in finding out more, visit connectedvoice.org.uk/advocacy ●



Photos: Emma, Independent Advocate with Susan Dungworth, Police and Crime Commissioner and Jane Kingston, Head of Advocacy.

Connected Voice

Support and
Development

Expert support services that enable voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations to set up, be sustainable and informed, achieve their objectives and come together.

connect@connectedvoice.org.uk
0191 235 7021

Connected Voice

Advocacy

Free support to individuals to help them be aware of their rights and choices, make informed decisions, advocate for themselves and facilitate their voices being heard.

advocacy@connectedvoice.org.uk
0191 235 7013

Connected Voice

Business
Services

Quality and cost-effective financial support services that meet the growing needs of charities, community organisations and social enterprises.

cbsteam@connectedvoice.org.uk
0191 235 7020

Connected Voice

Haref

Working with communities and organisations throughout Newcastle and Gateshead to reduce health inequalities linked to ethnicity and culture.

haref@connectedvoice.org.uk
0191 235 7022

Connected Voice

Health Equity

Connecting charities and community organisations to health services to improve digital inclusion.

0191 235 7022

www.connectedvoice.org.uk

 @ConnectedVoice.Bsky.Social

 @ConnectedVoiceCharity

 @Connected Voice

Connected Voice

Volunteering

Supporting volunteering across Newcastle and Gateshead through employee volunteering, promoting volunteering opportunities and offering advice.

volunteering@connectedvoice.org.uk
0191 235 7038 (Gateshead Volunteer Centre)
0191 235 7039 (Sector Connector)
0191 211 3940 (Volunteering Newcastle)