



VODA Annual Report April 2023 to March 2024

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Chair's Report: Dr Ray Lowry

I was delighted to take on the role of Chair in February 2024 having been a Trustee for a number of years. It has been an exciting year at VODA, with many things to celebrate. A special mention to the team for achieving the VCQA accreditation for our North Tyneside Volunteer Centre work, highlighting the gold standard service they provide for the VCSE sector across the borough.



The board and staff team have also embarked on a piece of work looking at the VODA strategy and the values of the organisation, which has been really interesting to be involved with. None of our achievements would be possible without the passion and drive of our VODA team, and I would like to thank all of the staff, volunteers, trustees, funders and wider stakeholders for their continued support and look forward to another exciting year ahead.

CEO's Report: Vicky Smith

Another busy year, and one which makes me extremely proud. It really is a privilege to lead the fantastic group of individuals who make up our amazing team, and get to experience first-hand the remarkable work they do in support of our vibrant VCSE sector in North Tyneside. Thank you to all of our funders for supporting our work, in particular NHS North East and North Cumbria ICB and North Tyneside Council.



Our UKSPF delivery has been a real stand out this year, both as lead partner for the Volunteering and Social Action project and as a partner for Community Partnerships in the North West of the borough. The UKSPF work has allowed VODA to showcase its expertise in governance and infrastructure, build on long-standing partnerships and demonstrate the impact of collaboration in delivering excellent outcomes for local residents and groups.

There are many challenges ahead, but I look forward to VODA continuing to be at the heart of supporting organisations to have a voice and find solutions to challenges to enable them to continue their valued work.

Case study: Baby Equipment Loan Service (BELS)

Baby Equipment Loan Service and Toy Library (BELS & TL) is a charitable incorporated organisation based in Wallsend. The charity provides a loan service for essential baby and safety equipment to families in need across North Tyneside, as well as facilitating toddler groups, stay and play sessions and a fantastic Toy Library which allows families to join for a small fee and access over 4000 toys and games.

A LONG RELATIONSHIP OF SUPPORT

The charity (in its previous and current form) is over 30 years old and has benefitted from VODA's support on a range of issues since their inception in 1993.

At VODA everybody is so approachable, supportive and knowledgeable in their role.
BELS Treasurer Carol Dennison

FINANCE & PAYROLL SUPPORT

VODA has provided Payroll and Accounts services for many years now. BELS & TL describes this help as *'lifting a huge burden'* from their Management Committee.

KEY ASSISTANCE FROM VODA

- Advice and guidance when changing status to a charitable incorporated organisation.
- Support with volunteer recruitment and policy formation.

FUNDING ADVICE & GUIDANCE

BELS & TL attends VODA's Funding Fairs and has benefitted from regular guidance from our Funding Advisor. This has enabled them to secure what they described as 'essential' funding streams. These include grants from the Barbour Foundation, William Leech Charity, Awards for All and BBC Children in Need which has donated £10,000 per year for three years, starting in April 2022.

It's brilliant that I can
borrow baby monitors. I could
never afford to buy them.
BELS Service User

2024 AND BEYOND

BELS & TL is looking forward to a busy 2024. VODA will be supporting the charity to:

- Update their policies and procedures.
- Carry out an organisational health check.
- Help win some key funding bids to ensure the charity continues to thrive and help those families most in need.

This guidance is so useful.

Especially for organisations which
do not have the relevant expertise
in house...to be able to call on

VODA to assist is just great.





belsnorthtyneside.org.uk

Supporting the capacity of the voluntary sector

FUNDING SUPPORT



- Delivered 39 funding advice sessions face-toface or via phone, email or Zoom.
- Liaised with funders such as The National Lottery on behalf of groups.

FINANCE SUPPORT

Our finance team has provided professional, responsive services to the North Tyneside voluntary sector, offering expert advice on finance, accounts, and payroll.

They successfully managed the finance aspects of UKSPF projects, as the project lead on the UKSPF Volunteering & Social Action Project - working with the six partners, processing claims, verifying evidence, and managing budgets. They also facilitated grant funding for the UKSPF Community Partnership Programme.

The Payroll Bureau handled salaries, year-end returns, and pension administration for 38 organisations. The team supported 39 organisations with independent examinations and year-end accounts, while

You took the weight of the world off my shoulders and resolved it. I cannot express my gratitude enough to Mark and the team.

Kath Nixon - Out of Sight

continuing to deliver bookkeeping services. They also assisted 10 organisations with QuickBooks setup and support.

GOVERNANCE

- New Governance Advisor Rebecca Williams joined in July 2023.
- Delivered 136 advice sessions to voluntary and community groups across North Tyneside.
- Full-scale review of all policies across VODA.
- Introduction of a governance website blog and video series for ebulletin and social media.
- Re-established face-to-face trustee training, delivering six
 Trustee Roles & Responsibilities sessions during the period, and implemented a quarterly timetable of sessions.
- New initiatives to assist the trustee recruitment process for organisations, including video adverts.



Working with VODA has been incredibly helpful and beneficial.
Rebecca Cooper
NYCFC Secretary

Case Study: New York Community Football Club (NYCFC)

NYCFC is a youth-focused football club based in New York, dedicated to enriching the lives of local youth and improving community spaces. With **VODA's holistic support**, NYCFC has benefited from volunteer recruitment for park maintenance, the creation of a functional website, financial management tools, an organisational health check, and pro bono legal advice.

Supporting the capacity of the voluntary sector

SPIRIT OF NORTH TYNESIDE SECTOR HUB

We were delighted to welcome the North Tyneside Carers' Centre as new Hub tenants in July 2023, enhancing the offering of the Hub.

We use VODA on a regular basis and have found the support, resources and facilities second to none.

The Hub facilities were extended with the addition of the David Bayaird Suite. created in memory of our former trustee. With a capacity of 16, the suite has enabled us to expand our meeting room offerings.

A **new CRM database** has allowed VODA to improve how we store and use data. Streamlining room and training bookings, as well as how we record details of our members and the work we do in the sector. We also undertook a complete overhaul of our membership list and are steadily growing the number of voluntary and community organisations on there.

25 VCSE organisations & groups used our facilities.





the successful enrolment of over 312 students to the online training courses between April 2023 and March 2024. These courses offer the VCSE sector a diverse range of valuable training opportunities specifically designed to benefit those working in the charity sector in North Tyneside. A number of new courses are scheduled for the second half of 2024.

273 students completed Adult Safeguarding Essentials

Very clearly thought through and delivered. It covered all the essentials I wanted to learn about perfect for new trustees but also for volunteers.

MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS



We developed an updated VODA website, with improved functionality, security, visuals, accessibility, mobile view and speed.

> 66 Advice is always sound and trusted. Easy to chat to, very supportive and understanding.

Increased engagement across all channels and provided ad-hoc communications advice and support to the VCSE.



Supporting the capacity of the voluntary sector

Delivered 14 workshops for 130 people

LIVING WELL NORTH TYNESIDE



January 2024 saw the relaunch of a significantly improved Living Well North Tyneside Platform, with improved banners, categories and a streamlined user experience. A new "Things to Do" section was introduced and search functionality was improved.

With 26K users (a 33% increase) and 85K visits (up 14%), the platform now hosts 12 categories, 277 organisations and 463 services. Feedback has been positive, with users praising its clarity and ease of use.

85,000 visits to Living Well North Tyneside Platform

THE NORTH OF TYNE VOLUNTEERING PROJECT

The North of Tyne Volunteering Project seeks to create an area of best practice in volunteering across North Tyneside, Newcastle and Northumberland by providing resources for volunteer-involving organisations and for volunteers.

A key achievement saw the creation of **21 Good Practice Guides** (with more to follow), covering areas such as the Volunteer Management Cycle, Digital Support, and Informal Volunteering. These guides are widely used and support the Organisational Health Checks.

Four workshops have been delivered to help organisations **improve volunteer recruitment and management skills.** Additionally, the **Sector Connector model** first introduced in North Tyneside, has been expanded into Newcastle and Northumberland.

SECTOR CONNECTOR

Sector Connector has enjoyed a highly successful year, brokering support for voluntary and community organisations in North Typoside and connecting them with

organisations in North Tyneside and connecting them with businesses.

Sector Connector workshops offered voluntary groups valuable opportunities to learn from industry experts. Businesses delivered 14 workshops for 130 participants on essential topics. Key Highlights include:

- Five Mental Health First Aid workshops delivered by Morgan Sindall to 56 participants, saving the sector £18,200.
- A session on Artificial Intelligence by Newcastle University to help VCSE organisations explore Al's potential.
- Support on Professional Boundaries for Volunteers by Ethical HR Services.
- Working with Jackdaw Web Design, to offer small VCSE organisations and groups websites for £250.

Sector Connector also secured business support for various projects, including corporate volunteers for community gardens, legal advice on leases, HR, marketing and IT assistance.



Case Study: EE and SPARCS

A team of volunteers from EE helped SPARCS to prepare their allotment for the spring and summer planting season. The volunteers worked on making the site safe, creating paths, improving accessibility and helping to ensure the space was ready for community use.

GOOD NEIGHBOURS

The Good Neighbours project supports North Tyneside residents 18+ who can't complete tasks due to age, health, disability, or other reasons and have no one else to turn to for help. Our volunteers have completed over 1,000 acts of kindness, **enabling residents to remain independent.** Collaboration has been key, especially in gardening support and we're grateful for our dedicated volunteers and community partners.



Case Study: Pam

Pam, a retired secretary, struggled with mobility after a cancer diagnosis in 2022. Unable to manage her shopping, her GP referred her to the Good Neighbours service. Now in remission but still facing health issues, Pam relies on the service for weekly shopping assistance. She praises her volunteer, Allison, and describes the project as a "godsend," providing essential help and care.







21 Buddy Beneficiaries



103 DIY/ Gardening Tasks



1653 Volunteering Hours



1095 Acts of Kindness



ENDING LONELINESS

The Ending Loneliness Partnership, running until July 2023, involved Age UK North Tyneside, Citizens Advice, North Tyneside Carers' Centre and VODA, supported by the National Lottery Community Fund.

I have made new friends since attending and we all support one another in the sessions.



The partnership helped people regain independence, connect with their community and improve wellbeing. In its final year, activities included group wellbeing sessions, carer peer support, gardening, self-care, befriending home visits, coffee mornings and community sessions

in Dudley and Forest Hall. Budgeting and financial support were also provided by Citizens Advice.

MINORITY ETHNIC HEALTH DEVELOPMENT

The project addresses health inequalities in North Tyneside's minority ethnic communities by collaborating with VCSE groups, faith organisations and health partners. Community health conversations have been held on topics like GP access, bereavement, cervical screening and childhood immunisations. These sessions helped raise awareness of services, improve access, and identify barriers. A health awareness event was organised at the Whitley Bay Islamic Cultural Centre and targeted work around cancer screening and prevention has begun. Additionally, cultural awareness training for GP receptionists and admin staff was created for rollout in June 2024.

NT LIFE RECOVERY COLLEGE

NT LIFE Recovery College supports adults in North Tyneside to improve their mental health and wellbeing. In 2023, the College ran 71 courses and 21 Christmas activities, **helping** 193 people with over 6,700 participation hours.

Since launching in 2019, NT LIFE has improved the mental wellbeing of around 500 residents. A survey revealed that 96% found it a supportive environment and over 70% reported needing fewer NHS mental health services, underscoring its positive impact.

that's ever helped me to be honest.

NT LIFE Participant

NT LIFE continues to adapt, offering new activities like the Neurodiversity Support Group and Men's Group.

A new volunteer-made film, available on NT LIFE's Facebook page, shares stories from those benefitting from its services.

Thanks to the continued support from the CNTW Integrated Care Board, funding has been extended until 2027.



BEST START

Best Start has achieved a number of significant milestones this year. We trained **eight new volunteers** with personal parenting experience, enabling them to provide vital peer support to new parents.



Through the delivery of **109 sessions** at our three drop-in locations—Wallsend Library, West Moor Community Centre, and Whitley Bay Big Local, engaging with **393 parents**, Best Start offered crucial infant feeding support, with a particular focus on breastfeeding, to parents.

Alongside our regular support groups, we hosted a family picnic during Breastfeeding Week, attended by 12 parents, 12 children, and two peer support volunteers. We also ran workshops on paediatric first aid, weaning, sleep, crafts and baby massage, helping parents gain valuable skills during this key stage of their child's development.

GROW & EAT

The Grow & Eat project expanded across North Tyneside, **supporting 27 groups to improve outdoor spaces**. Six grants were awarded and 17 seed sowing sessions were held in schools, libraries, and community spaces,



teaching participants to grow mushrooms and build mini planters.

The **Garden Network of North Tyneside** was also formed to share resources and promote community gardening, with plans for a new event, The Great Community Garden Crawl, in Summer 2024.

VOLUNTEER CENTRE



Our biggest highlight of the year was successfully achieving Volunteer Centre Quality Accreditation from the National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA), following a peer-assessed portfolio submission. Accreditation takes place every three years and is the quality mark for organisations in delivering the five local Volunteer Centre functions.

We hosted five successful Volunteer Networks and attended numerous outreach events across North Tyneside. In October, our **Annual Volunteer Fair** in Whitley Bay brought together 15 VSCE organisations to promote opportunities to the public.

394 Volunteers Supported 500 Enquires Handled 142 New Opportunites Promoted

A highlight was helping Live Well with Cancer develop their volunteer policy through an Organisational Health Check. They also secured a grant to enhance their outdoor space through our support.

Case Study: Jessie. Jessie came to The Volunteer Centre seeking a placement in a charity shop. we guided Jessie to available opportunities and the Help Me Be Digital Team assisted with the online application. Now volunteering at the Wallsend Marie Curie shop, Jessie says: "Everyone has been so supportive and helpful".

MICRO-VOLUNTEERING

VODA recognises that volunteering isn't "one size fits all" especially for those unable to commit regularly. That's why we offer microvolunteering workshops, ideal for those with limited time or seeking a flexible approach. Micro-volunteering allows participants to engage in short, social projects that benefit the community. It's a great introduction for individuals who may lack confidence or struggle with mental health, offering a rewarding way to contribute.

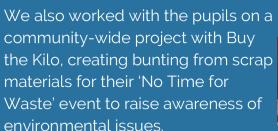
Case Study: Wallsend Jubilee Primary School

We worked with Wallsend Jubilee Primary School's Eco Warriors Club, delivering workshops focused on re-using and recycling. Projects included making bird boxes from milk cartons and creating artwork from bottle tops, which culminated in an exhibition at Wallsend Library. These efforts supported the school's successful Eco-Schools Award application.











Delivered 121 Sessions to 217 Young People

HELP ME BE DIGITAL

The Help Me Be Digital project has had a busy and exciting year supporting people in North Tyneside to feel more digitally included. Offering residents basic one-to-one digital support at community drop-ins, or home visits, demand for the service continues to grow.



Supported

125 People To

Get Online





83 Home Visits 20 Individuals





3 People Supported Into Volunteer Roles



4 GP Drop-Ins



3 Community **Covid Drop-Ins**



Case Study: Audrey

Audrey, from Camperdown, felt isolated due to health issues and lacked digital skills. With support from Help Me Be Digital at home, she learned to use her devices for emails, social media and messaging her family. Audrey now feels more connected, especially with her grandchildren and less isolated.



DISCOVERME

DiscoverMe has delivered

up to six weekly sessions for young people, including Mindful Kitchen, Soothe and Self Care, Neurodivergent Social Group, Creative Writing, Life Skills and Movie Madness. All sessions are co-produced with young people, allowing flexibility based on their needs and interests, with a strong focus on peer support and creating safe, welcoming environments.

DiscoverMe helps young people build confidence, make friends and learn new skills to improve their mental health and resilience.

A young person co-facilitates every session, gaining confidence and skills, alongside one of the 10 DiscoverMe volunteers who help with planning and development. Awareness sessions have also been delivered in local schools and colleges. With two new staff members, we look forward to further developing the project in the coming year.

661 felt accepted, and it was the first time I had felt like this



Supporting organisations and communities to come together

UKSPF VOLUNTEERING & SOCIAL ACTION

VODA, in partnership with six other organisations, is leading a £1 million project to enhance volunteer opportunities across Newcastle, North Tyneside and Northumberland. The Volunteering & Social Action Project aims to improve access to volunteering, particularly for residents with protected characteristics and those who face limited opportunities, by identifying gaps in volunteer provision. The project is funded by the UK Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund with the North of Tyne Combined Authority (now North East Combined Authority) as the lead authority,

The project aims to strengthen the infrastructure, training and governance of volunteer-based organisations, while expanding volunteering opportunities through social action initiatives. It will also support local events and projects across the region, working with young people to develop their own community-focused initiatives.

Progress So Far: As lead partner, VODA has played a key role in the project's success, resulting in 193 new volunteer roles, 74 training sessions and 69 organisational health checks. The project also supported 21 local events and five social action projects across the region.

VODA's individual volunteering and social action contribution









Organisational Health Checks

UKSPF COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

In partnership with North Tyneside Council, VODA is delivering a £1.5 million project, funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), to improve community infrastructure and expand volunteering in Weetslade, Camperdown, and Longbenton. The project aims to build lasting community partnerships and enhance local services through grant funding.

With £1.26 million available, VCSE organisations are supported in delivering activities and creating volunteering opportunities. A North West Community Forum unites organisations and grant recipients, ensuring continued investment and addressing service gaps. So far, £400k has been awarded to 23 groups for various community projects.

Case Study: New Age Kurlers

New Age Kurlers received a small grant of £919. The group used the funding to purchase a ramp, so anyone could have a go at curling. regardless of their physical ability. They have also been able to subsidise the membership and purchase a practice mat.



Supporting organisations and communities to come together

MENTAL HEALTH ALLIANCE

The North Tyneside Mental Health Alliance has seen substantial growth, expanding to include 40 VCSE members. Interest remains high, with new members regularly joining. Engagement through our newsletter is thriving, reaching nearly 100 subscribers, with feedback showing it is a valuable resource for the sector.

We work with many individuals in crisis, and this training will become a valuable asset to support them more effectively.

Our funded training has been well-received, with 172 participants attending 14 sessions. Members have highlighted how this training has helped them better support both their teams and the individuals they serve.

The Alliance has fostered stronger connections between organisations, leading to collaborative bids and improved service delivery. Our first Cross Sector Networking Event in September 2023, which attracted 58 delegates, has paved the way for improved coordination between VCSEs and statutory services. The mission is for barriers which individuals face in accessing mental health support.





The Alliance continues to serve as a safe space for peer support, where members can collaborate and share best practices. This collaborative environment has been instrumental in improving mental health services in North Tyneside.

A Impact Study by Barefoot Research and supporting video from Canny Productions highlighted the project's achievements and its ongoing potential to support the Integrated Care Board's Transformation Plan.

Informative, inspirational and enjoyable. I go away now feeling able and better equipped to share information with colleagues and advise patients of services in local area.

The Mental Health Alliance is now fully established and ready to continue with the mission of realising positive change for service users and transformational working in North Tyneside.

Representation

We facilitated, attended and contributed to a wide range of strategic meetings and events, speaking in the best interests of the VCSE sector in North Tyneside:

- Better Together Partnership
- Children & Young People's Mental Health System
- Community Mental Health Transformation Group
- Ending Loneliness Partnership
- Future Care Board
- Heritage Action Zone Cultural Consortium
- Living Well North Tyneside Board
- Living Well North Tyneside Partnership
- Mental Health Alliance
- NENC ICS Digital Steering Group
- North East Funders Network
- North of Tyne Volunteering Partnership
- North Tyneside Business Forum
- North Tyneside Cabinet
- North Tyneside Cultural and Wellbeing Steering Group
- North Tyneside Mental Health Providers Forum
- North Tyneside Strategic Partnership
- North Tyneside Volunteers Network
- Social Prescribing Providers Forum
- UKSPF North Tyneside Community Partnership
- UKSPF Volunteering & Social Action Project
- Wallsend High Street Transformation Board

Emerging Work & Team Green

SETTLE AT HOME

The Settle at Home project, a partnership between VODA, Helpforce, North Tyneside Council and Northumbria Healthcare Trust, will help residents settle back home after a hospital stay. Volunteers will be recruited and trained to visit patients on the day of discharge or the day after, offering support, advice and help with practical tasks.

MENTAL HEALTH ALLIANCE PEER SUPPORT

Service user engagement, led by Healthwatch North Tyneside, revealed a significant gap in peer support and group activities for mental health, particularly outside traditional working hours. This initiative will allow the Mental Health Alliance to show how it can attract funding to the VCSE sector, working with organisations and individuals with lived experience to create co-produced solutions.

TEAM GREEN

To reflect our ambition to be a more environmentally conscious and sustainable organisation, VODA created the Team Green working group. The group looked at identifying steps VODA could take to reduce our carbon footprint and encourage staff to consider the environmental impact of their actions as well as investigating any potential accreditation and identifying barriers to overcome to achieve them.



New Environment & Sustainability Policies



Staff Environmental Survey



Promoted Greener Choices



New Recycling Initiative

Our Trustees

VODA is governed by an elected Board of Trustees that have overall control of the charity, its property and funds. VODA's Trustees meet on a bi-monthly basis to shape the charity's vision, ensuring we have a clear strategy and sufficient funds to deliver our objectives. The active contribution of Trustees is essential to the continuing success of VODA. We are grateful for their support.

- Ray Lowry (Chair) since February 2024
- Jess Evans (Chair) stood down February 2024
- Andy Burtenshaw (Vice Chair)
- Julie Eastlake (Treasurer)
- Peter Thomas
- Richard Hart
- Phil Hornby
- Jackie Latham
- Laura Lowther
- Ruth Connorton
- Lynne Canessa



Our Staff Team



STAFF EMPLOYED AT VODA DURING THIS PERIOD

Alex Henry

Alexandra Woolley

Ali Donkin

Alice Holliday

Alla Manokhina

Claire Howard

Colin Bell

Elizabeth Fry

Emma Bradwell

Frank Gillender

Hannah Barugh

Ian Dodds

Jen Ainsley

Jen Hewitt

Jessica Shaw

Jillian Lamb

Jo Woolley

Juliana Tan

Julie Bishop

Katie Allen

Keir Waugh

Keith Hardy

Kirsty Christofi

Koli Begum

Lauren Amis

Leah O'Sullivan

Lynsey Finlayson

Mark Thompson

Rebecca Williams

Sarah Bell

Suzy Forbes

Vicky Batsioudi

Vicky Smith

Victoria Logan-Coulsey



Income and Expenditure

TOTAL INCOME £997,117

Unrestricted Income £174,898

Restricted Income £822,219

TOTAL EXPENDITURE £992,095

Unrestricted Expenditure £105,132

Restricted Expenditure £886,963

TOTAL NET INCOME £5,022

Unrestricted Surplus £56,940

Restricted
Deficit
£51,918

Summary of VODA's accounts April 2023 to March 2024. A full copy is available on request.

TOTAL FUNDS c/fwd £1,058,096

Unrestricted

£391,986

Restricted

£666,110

Our Funders

We are grateful to the following funders who have supported our work during this period.

- North Tyneside Council
- The Rothley Trust
- Sir James Knott Trust
- North East and North Cumbria ICB (Integrated Care Board)
- Community Foundation
- National Lottery Community Fund
- Historic England
- Barnados
- North of Tyne Combined Authority

 (now North East Combined Authority)





North Tyneside Voluntary Organisations Development Agency (VODA)

Spirit of North Tyneside Wing,

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Registered Charity Number: 1075060

Company Limited by Guarantee: Registered Number 3703221

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