

Spotlight

Collaboration

Featuring:

Walker Workers and Best of Bensham

Pages 6 and 12

Also in this issue

Page 6

Stories from the Spirit of Christmas Appeal

Page 14

Funding: Making a success of a partnership approach

Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Collaboration: Introduction by Lisa Goodwin, Chief Executive | 3 |
| Spotlight: Walker Workers | 4 |
| Spirit of Christmas Appeal | 6 |
| Our Values: We connect people | 10 |
| Researching Health Inequalities in the Age of COVID-19 | 11 |
| Spotlight: Best of Bensham | 12 |
| Funding: Making success of a partnership approach | 14 |
| Funding Success: Gateshead Young Women's Outreach Project | 15 |
| Improving Health and Wellbeing Through Collaboration | 16 |
| Working in Partnership to Enhance Advocacy Services | 18 |
| Supporting People Affected by Brain Injuries | 20 |
| Connected Voice Business Services | 21 |

About this magazine

The Connected Voice magazine is published four times a year by Connected Voice. 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.

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Cover photo: Spirit of
Christmas Appeal

Issue 6: Collaboration

Welcome to the Spring 2021 edition of Connected Voice Magazine. Another digital-only version indicates that we still have a way to go before restrictions are lifted but there is now a pathway in place and we hope to see you again soon once it is safe to do so.

Collaboration has been the key to responding quickly throughout the COVID-19 crisis. A 'highlights' piece about the Spirit of Christmas Appeal is a great example. Collaboration is also something that successful organisations have tapped into for many years prior to the pandemic. We shine a spotlight on Best of Bensham and Walker Workers to ask them what they think makes a successful partnership or collaborative project. Jack Summerside's funding pages expand on this subject with a funder's perspective from

Ballinger Charitable Trust and National Lottery Community Fund.

There's also some brilliant new partnership projects on the horizon from our own Connected Voice teams, with vital research into health inequalities from Haref and a new Advocacy service that will offer enhanced support for people affected by brain injuries. Meanwhile, Jane Kingston looks back on the success of a five year Advocacy partnership project supporting Families through Crisis.

On the subject of health and wellbeing, you can also read about Collaborative Newcastle and Gateshead Cares - two new statutory health partnerships that seek to create a more joined-up service by pooling resources and working directly with voluntary and community organisations ●

Collaboration - here to stay?

Lisa Goodwin
Chief Executive



This edition focuses on partnership working and collaboration, two things we have seen thriving and appearing in all possible forms over the past year of the pandemic. I would say we have seen more positive supportive and genuine partnership working over the past year in our own sector than we have in the previous decade.

In recent editions of this magazine we have showcased some of the many organisations working together across Newcastle and Gateshead to support people in need. And we have seen a real desire from both the public and private sectors to work more closely with VCSE partners, and to involve them in their plans, acknowledging their reach and local knowledge.

Will this collaborative approach continue as we move out of the pandemic? I think so. Partly because economically we have no alternative. The budget which was recently announced did little to address the serious financial issues that many VCSE organisations face as a result of COVID-19. The government has ignored the financial needs of charities while continuing to support other organisations. Some charities spent their reserves on meeting needs which they expected to be short-term, and here we are a year on with little change. Many did not furlough staff because the need for their work was increasing, not disappearing, and while many did benefit from emergency grants from responsive and supportive funders, these grants are now mostly coming to an end. Not all organisations have suffered financially because of the pandemic and we are happily supporting a small number of organisations with growth. As a sector we tend to survive on very little money anyway, so the pandemic won't be the end for us all, but it

Will the collaborative approach we have seen throughout the pandemic continue?

has certainly brought into sharper focus the need to work together to support our beneficiaries.

“The pandemic has brought into sharper focus the need to work together to support our beneficiaries

Money aside, I believe the closer collaborative working will continue for other reasons too. Firstly – we have the means to work together so much more easily than a year ago. We can arrange quick virtual meetings and talk ideas through together at five minutes notice. We have snazzy file sharing and collaborative working tools which help us to plan and to visualize things without taking a week to arrange a meeting, and we are all slowly growing in confidence with our use of digital.

Secondly, we have the leadership of public sector organisations who, after many years of discussions about closer working, have taken the plunge and made firm commitments to do this via Collaborative Newcastle and Gateshead Cares (see p16 for details). We look forward to being part of this work as it moves forward.

And lastly, we will continue to work more closely with others because we know it has a positive impact. At Connected Voice, when the pandemic hit we forgot our rivalries and differences and we shared information and vulnerabilities like never before. And in doing so we helped more people, and we built new relationships based on trust. We are already seeing the positive impacts of those relationships this year. I hope you are too. Here's to collaboration for good ●

Spotlight: Walker Workers

Will Benson
Kids Kabin

Walker Workers is a partnership that strives to run activities, share information and good practice to benefit children and young people in Walker, Newcastle.

Will Benson from Kids Kabin, a member organisation of Walker Workers, reflects on the history of the partnership and shares some tips around what makes it successful.

“So, what’s the youth strategy for Walker?” I remember it clearly. It was 1999, an elderly parishioner from Walker Parish Church, Joe, was looking around the little Kids Kabin shop unit and he asked me that question – I was unable to answer. This has stayed with me ever since.

We had a voluntary sector youth forum, a citywide network run by NCVS (now Connected Voice). This provided information, advice and training for the sector. The city council had more capacity than it does today – we had a ward coordinator and local authority play and youth workers.

However, there was nothing specific linking organisations working with children and young people in Walker - let alone a ‘Walker Youth Strategy.’

Then, when we started the Walker Workers in 2001, we weren’t really trying to create a partnership group at all. It started with staff from Kids Kabin, Walker YMCA and the Bostey Youth Centre meeting monthly for a cup of tea and a catch up. As we spoke about youth work challenges, responses and ideas, we began to realise the value

of partnership. We started to plan small collaborative events in Walker Park; we supported the annual fireworks and bonfire night. These events grew slowly over time. Now, the Walker Workers run the annual Walker Outdoor Week in the summer holidays, attracting between 200 and 300 young people each year. In addition, organisations share their programmes and practice, set up new links and networks and provide mutual support. As the Walker Workers grew, it attracted more partners, including schools, local churches and many others.

“The strength of the partnership has been particularly apparent during COVID-19... Walker Workers, supported by many inspiring and committed partners, responded quickly, developing a coordinated response

“When we started the Walker Workers in 2001, we weren’t really trying to create a partnership group at all. It started with staff from Kids Kabin, Walker YMCA and the Bostey Youth Centre meeting monthly for a cup of tea and a catch up

The strength of the partnership has been particularly apparent during COVID-19. In March 2020, at the start of the lockdown, many of us were paralysed with uncertainty. However, the Walker Workers, supported by many inspiring and committed partners, responded quickly, developing a coordinated response, linking people to emergency food support and other help. Following this, partners immediately started developing positive activities for hundreds of children and young people stuck in lockdown.



Photo courtesy of Walker Workers

The Walker Workers partnership is now as strong as it ever has been. The group meets monthly and has a consistent attendance of between 10 and 20 partners, with over 40 organisations involved throughout the course of a year. However, there have been many challenges over the last 20 years. Attendance has waxed and waned. On occasions, two people have sat together wondering if anyone else would come to a meeting. We have planned events that have had to be cancelled due to lack of good coordination or because a key partner pulled out at the last minute.

“The group meets monthly and has a consistent attendance of between 10 and 20 organisations, with over 40 organisations involved throughout the course of a year

Fortunately, these occasions have been rare. We have recently been asked what we think are the most important ingredients of a good partnership. From our perspective, we consider these are:

- Having simple clear objectives – such as ‘running activities

together to benefit children and young people in Walker’ and ‘sharing information and good practice’

- Welcoming every organisation working in an area to take part if they want
- Having regular meetings, setting the agenda in advance, having well organised meetings and agreeing and sharing actions – and sharing the role of chair and note taker
- Having a core of long-term partners who will keep the direction and the objectives of the group over the long term
- Having a ‘flat’ organisational structure – with no lead organisation, no ‘chairperson’ but rather enabling everyone to take part equally and to contribute what they can.
- Setting up short term subgroups who can work on a project and bring it to the wider group for agreement.

In conclusion, we certainly haven’t yet worked out the definitive ‘Youth Strategy for Walker’ but we have found something that does work. The Walker Workers has a strong culture of mutual respect and support. The partnership covers a geographical area which people can understand – it’s not too big. We’ve survived for 20 years. And we still have lots of work to do. For example, we want to strengthen our work with local schools and build partnerships across sectors, with businesses and with partners promoting employability and with organisations working with our elderly community. So perhaps instead of looking for the elusive ‘Youth Strategy’, we can start thinking about the part we can play in creating a much bigger and wider Community Strategy for Walker ●

Spirit of Christmas Appeal

Giovanni Spatuzzi
Strategic Partnerships
& Operations Manager



Stories and feedback from the Spirit of Christmas Appeal that supported the work of 47 organisations across Newcastle and Gateshead over the festive period



Encouraged by the success of CityLife Fund Appeal, which raised £50,000 plus for charities and community organisations in Newcastle during the summer of 2020, Connected Voice developed and led on the Spirit of Christmas Appeal, collaborating with Newcastle City Council and Gateshead Council.

The Spirit of Christmas Appeal raised over £63,000 between November and December 2020. This was thanks to donations from 160 local businesses and residents through Connected Voice's Virgin Money Donate Page. Before Christmas, Connected Voice distributed all the money raised to 47 charities and community

In Newcastle 19 organisations received over £23,000 to support their projects. In Gateshead 18 organisations received over £24,000, and 10 organisations working across Newcastle and Gateshead received just under £16,000. Grants ranged from £165 to £3,000.

The largest donors to the Appeal were Northern Power and Gas, Fokhrul Islam, Sleepstation, Unison Newcastle City Branch, and Wilmot Dixon Construction Ltd, which we would like to thank once again for their generosity, and to everyone else who donated.

The article examines organisations experience of the application process, what they spent the money on, and the positive difference the Appeal made to people.

“The money helped organisations to deliver their vital work during the festive season to support those people and families most in need, at a time when those needs have never been greater

organisations across Newcastle and Gateshead. The money helped organisations to deliver their vital work during the festive season to support those people and families most in need, at a time when those needs have never been greater.

Application Process

Influenced by the Institute for Voluntary Action Research (IVAR) recommendations to funders on changing their approach to grant making for local small and medium sized organisations. Connected Voice adopted an application process approach that was light touch, focused on urgency, and balanced scrutiny with trust. This approach worked, as reflected by



Above: Contents of one of the three age-appropriate activity packs



Right: Festive helpers distribute gifts

feedback from organisations who overwhelming said the guidelines and application form were easy to understand and straightforward to complete. On decision-making and receiving money, organisations found this was fast and efficient. And, the monitoring, light touch.

“It was refreshing to see that Connected Voice had chosen a light touch approach to the application and feedback process whilst still maintaining a level of accountability for funds received. The Application form itself was simple to complete and didn’t require a great deal of time and effort. The turnaround time between submission and outcome was the fastest I’ve ever experienced and allowed us to respond to the need rapidly.”
Denton Youth & Community Project

“The turnaround time between submission and outcome was the fastest I’ve ever experienced and allowed us to respond to the need rapidly”

“We found that the process for applying was light touch which

made it really easy for us to apply. The lead up to Christmas is an extremely busy time for our project especially in the current climate, if the application for funds had of been time consuming then we would have really struggled before Christmas to complete an application. We didn’t have long to wait after submitting the application before receiving a decision and the grant was paid to us really quickly, which meant we were able to begin our project almost immediately.” St Chads Community Project.

Projects Supported

The Appeal benefited around 7,000 people across Newcastle and Gateshead. Projects ranged from:

- Delivery of afternoon tea to isolated older people
- Distributing Christmas food dinner hampers to disadvantaged families
- Refurbishment and distribution of bikes to children and vulnerable adults
- Mixed activity packs to keep children and young people



- occupied over the festive break
- Festive gift bag cards, phone top ups, and food for people seeking asylum
 - Gift vouchers for parents / carers of children with disabilities suffering financial hardship
 - Presents for domestic violence survivors and their children
 - Toiletry vouchers and practical gifts for neonatal families
 - Food and hamper vouchers for vulnerable veterans

"There were deliveries to 60 Syrian families across a four week period (4-6 people in each household). There were 30 food parcels distributed to vulnerable families (2-6 family members) referred by Gateshead's Children's Centre. Carr Hill school referred 48 families (2-6 family members) and a further 20 households known to us who usually access our Fareshare food delivery service. In total this would mean 158 families received food parcels with an average of 4 people in each household equals 632 people!" Gateshead Community Organisation



"The funds were spent on supplementing our food pack support for families and vulnerable individuals specifically through our Christmas deliveries. These took place on 21st and 22nd December 2020. 4.36 tones food (comprising 3 elements for each household relative to the size of that household - food staples pack, seasonal vegetable pack and Christmas Luxuries Pack). Minimum 300 gifts delivered (these were age specific where children were in households and in some cases for large families also included board games etc.) Minimum 502 people supported. 105 voluntary hours donated in the preparation and delivery of



Above: Packs ready to send out

packs, working alongside our staff teams." Building Futures East

Positive Difference Made

From reading organisations feedback, the one thing that struck me, was how many said that because of the Appeal the services and presents they provided to their beneficiaries put a smile on their faces. Furthermore, in many cases, provided people and families with toys, food and essential supplies, as they often had nothing. After an extremely challenging and difficult year, the aim of the Appeal was to bring a bit of cheer in to people's lives and raise their spirits. Rather than me documenting all the differences the Appeal made, I thought it would be more powerful to leave you with a choice of quotes and testimonials from beneficiaries, volunteers and staff:

"I need to express my gratitude, my thanks and my wishes for you. I can honestly say without you I would have gotten to a point of no return mentally. This is how much you pushed us through a difficult time, all the country was facing. I have been through many difficult times in my life especially as a parent, but this was one of the hardest. Having thoughts of not being able to feed your children is a situation I pray no one has to go through but because you were there, I had a lifeline and a hope. You have never disappointed us.

“Because you were there, I had a lifeline and a hope

My children thank you, I thank you. You were there for us when no one was. When my children smiled every time they played with your toys or ate your food all



Above: Poppy, Millie and Bradley at home putting their packs to use

A lady in Dunston receives her pack



my prayers went to you all at St Chads." St Chads Community Centre

"The feedback to Singing Hinnies is very positive, participants are warm and receptive and show their appreciation of the 'effort' that the musicians put in to providing live music and an overall morale boost when particularly vulnerable older people can become isolated and lonely. Tommy Appleby was visited on his 95th birthday. He has recently returned from hospice, manages severe pain, has limited mobility and recently returned to hospital to have an eyeball removed. Yet Tommy overcomes these complex and difficult health conditions to stand on his doorstep and sing Silent Night!" Equal Arts

“We have tried to get support for a week now and the thought of having nothing on Christmas day broke my heart. I cannot thank you enough

"The looks on the children's faces who received the bikes were a joy to see, with several asking if they were really allowed to keep them! One child literally jumped with joy. Some have even been able to, for the first time; use their own bike during our PE lessons. I'm sure you can imagine their joy and pride at this. This morning Joe and I watched with delight as a family we gave the bike to yesterday arrived at school, on time (unusual for them) very eager to get into school." Recyke y Bike

“The looks on the children's faces who received the bikes were a joy to see, with several asking if they were really allowed to keep them!

"We have tried to get support for a week now and the thought of having nothing on Christmas day broke my heart. I cannot thank you enough for the support and hope that you have provided me and my family." Walking with the Wounded ●

Our Values: We connect people

Amy McKie
Marketing and
Communications Officer



Learn more: visit our website
www.connectedvoice.org.uk

Over the last four issues of Connected Voice we have been exploring how our values are reflected in the work that we do. This time, under the theme of collaboration, we are focusing on how we connect people so we can work together to improve the quality of life across the region.

We connect people.

At the heart of voluntary and community action for 90 years, we are immersed and rooted in the North East.

We work collectively and inclusively to connect, grow and strengthen our society. We are warm and approachable, and we create opportunities to exchange ideas, learn from and empower one another.

Since inception, our organisation has existed to support people, communities and organisations in the North East and work towards a fairer future for all. This is no small undertaking and our achievements to date would not have been possible without the combined efforts of countless individuals, groups and organisations who share our vision.

'Collaboration' of course means working in partnership but it also extends to the informal connections we make that enable us to share ideas, set common goals and campaign together. We have a long history of bringing people together through events and networks but this past year we have had to think creatively about how we connect people whilst keeping everyone safe.

Our online platforms – social media channels, the website and bulletins – have been vital for keeping in touch, and thanks to digital technologies, we've still been able to run virtual versions of our events and training. It's helped us to not only survive but thrive, as we've reached out to more people than ever before.

There's some great examples of collaborative working in this issue of Connected Voice. We think it's important that charities and groups have the chance to showcase their hard work, which so often goes unnoticed. At the same time, you might learn about a project or idea that you'd like to be involved with so why not make a brew and read about what's been happening in our local area?

We're also inviting everyone to connect with us online, through social media and at our virtual events. We may not be able to meet in person just yet but our connections are stronger than ever and our plans to support our local communities are just as ambitious ●

Researching Health Inequalities in the age of COVID-19

Vicki Harris
Haref Coordinator



A new research partnership will help to tackle health inequalities for disadvantaged communities

Haref is delighted to have been awarded funding from the National Institute for Health Research to deliver our research project: 'Towards fairer health for disadvantaged communities, including those of Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds'. We are working in partnership with Newcastle University, Riverside Community Health Project, and the West End Family Health hub.

Our project starts in March 2021, and will be delivered over 12 months. We will be working with local people in the west end of Newcastle to:

1. Look at how health messages got through during the first pandemic phase
2. Examine the extent to which that information could be acted upon
3. Identify effective ways to get people the information they need for: illness prevention; best possible health outcomes; using NHS primary care
4. Work with primary care commissioners and providers to identify ways of translating findings into action.

We have already seen evidence showing increasing health inequalities for people in BAME communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 has had a disproportionately devastating impact on communities in the west end. We are now

in our third lockdown, and there have been over 64 changes to lockdown rules so far. Different resources have been developed and cascaded locally and nationally.

Our research will be delivered through:

- A literature and policy review
- A Haref Network survey
- Community and practitioner focus groups
- Practitioner co-production workshops
- Community engagement and networking

As the pandemic continues to affect us all, the project has had its start date delayed and all engagement, and networking will be developed online. We will think carefully about how to be as inclusive as possible. However, we are really keen to start this work now, as it is a year since the first lockdown. The sooner we can start looking at how the pandemic is affecting people's access to health information and services, the sooner we can report our findings to the policy community and local commissioners and providers.

An initial scoping survey is being shared through Connected Voice bulletins and social media in the very near future, so please keep a look out, complete and share it to help with this important research.

For further information about this work contact vicki.harris@connectedvoice.org.uk ●

Spotlight: Best of Bensham Collaborative

Jayne Hopkins
Project Coordinator



The Best of Bensham Collaborative is an initiative to create better support networks between organisations and with residents in the Saltwell and Lobley Hill & Bensham wards of Gateshead.

Email: BestofBensham@outlook.com

The Best of Bensham Collaborative has two main objectives:

- to encourage genuine collaboration between local organisations and,**
- to involve local residents in co-designing and co-delivering the support and activities they need or want.**

The Collaborative is funded between April 2019 and March 2021 by Gateshead Council's Innovation and Development Fund and supported by a development grant from National Lottery Community Fund (Partnerships Fund).

From April 2019, good progress was made towards the Collaborative's objectives, including:

- Asset mapping with Best of Bensham Collaborative members to establish joint priorities.
- A 'Memorandum of Understanding' agreed between the Executive Group (Bensham & Saltwell Alive) and the Collaborative members.
- Appointment of a part-time community development and project support workers
- Recruitment of additional locally based organisations to the Collaborative
- Increased community/resident engagement and activities

While 2020 has been a challenging year, the Collaborative has made significant progress.

Initially, membership was nine organisations but this increased during 2020 to 30 organisations. New members include two churches; a representative from the Jewish Community; an organisation that supports refugees and asylum seekers; and three Bensham residents who are all involved in running community projects. Between them the member organisations provide support to people of all ages, genders, ethnicity and cultures.

The Collaborative has begun to work more closely to support Bensham residents where required. Member organisations have invested time and effort developing the relationships between one another so that cross-referrals can be made more easily. We have also built trust with local people. For example, through youth work sessions we have grown relationships with parents, and have been able to refer families into the support they need.

The Collaborative and all its members have learned a lot in the past year. For most, the recognition that it is possible to work more flexibly and remotely has been a positive one and has enabled support to continue to people that need it, albeit in different forms.

We have not been able to operate normally. Instead, we have all made the best use possible of online and digital means to communicate with each other and local people. Examples include:

The Collaborative group has met monthly to update and communicate by Zoom.

We held six online development sessions: four on Asset Based Approaches, one to develop website content and one to discuss next steps for the Collaborative and its community support.

“ The most important learning has been that relationships matter.

The most important learning has been that relationships matter. We can't know if COVID-19 has driven these closer relationships, but they have strengthened during the past year. The Collaborative has developed a sense of shared purpose, formally through the 'Memorandum of Understanding' and informally by creating a culture of generosity in which members have shared buildings, other resources, information, ideas and support.

The Collaborative has delivered a number of activities through lockdown, in different ways than originally planned, including:

Support for young people through creative activities and pastoral support, using Zoom, social media and detached youth work.

Created and distributed a community newsletter and activity pack to over 300 households in Bensham

Set up a monthly e-newsletter for the Collaborative membership and their wider networks



Supported Dingy Butterflies to run the 10x10 Creative Gateshead - Ten artists working with ten member organisations of the Collaborative

Established a weekly 'Meals at Home' service delivering to vulnerable/shielding households

A food cooperative for residents and tenants in Bensham Court a Supported Housing project

Supported community activity, including Brighton Avenue Gardeners, Peace of Mind family activities and activities for young Jewish women with disabilities.

Holiday Hunger programmes: Alive Wires Supper Club, football coaching and a cooking activity for Jewish girls.

Improved communications and our presence in the community through social media

Community engagement, networking and the recruitment and active use of local volunteers in a number of roles.

In addition, we have attracted additional funds for Collaborative activities, including DfE funding, various awards from local funders, NLCF (A4A) Covid Support fund and DMCS funding. The total additional funding secured is around £55,000. This success has been due mainly to demonstrating genuinely collaborative working.

Next steps

The Collaborative aspires to establish more co-production in the Bensham area by nurturing relationships with volunteers, local people and organisations - community-based and statutory services. To achieve co-production in Bensham there are a number of opportunities and resources to draw on.

A proposed Community Hub would bring local organisations into direct and regular contact with staff from Council, NHS and Housing Services. This would enable better joint working, communication and make it easier for people in the community to influence the way both local and Borough systems work.

We could co-produce a local offer that works for everyone ●

Funding: Making a success of a partnership approach

Jack Summerside
Support and Development
Officer



Jack interviews two different types of funder to find out what they are looking for in a partnership bid

As the funding environment becomes more competitive, many organisations are considering partnerships with others - both as a way of strengthening their bids, and of making the greatest impact on the communities and issues they care about.

We spoke to two quite different types of funder to find out directly what they view as the hallmarks of a successful partnership bid, or the things that make them more cautious. The Ballinger Charitable Trust; a relatively small North-East focused charitable trust with a relatively flexible set of criteria (albeit with a clear focus on young people and older people in its criteria), and the National Lottery Community Fund; UK-wide, and perhaps the largest and best known funder of VCSE activity, with specific national criteria and targets.

Ballinger doesn't specifically call for partnership bids, but is very open to considering them when they arrive. NLCF has specific elements of its Reaching Communities Fund (bids over £10 000) and in its specific Partnerships programme. Although they are very different types of funder, there was consensus on the things they told us they see as important in a partnership bid.

The top ten things funders will look for in a partnership funding bid:

1. What is the strength of the relationship between the organisations, and between the personalities involved?
2. Do the partner organisations need to spend some time building that relationship before they can be considered fundable?
3. Are the partners trying to shoe-horn working too closely together across the range of their activities, when a partnership based on a particular project would be more suitable?
4. Are the partners aligned together in a meaningful way either across their values, on a broad common cause, or on a project or specific output?
5. Funders may well fund different projects in a similar theme, or geographical area – so is there a real need for this partnership?
6. Is there a real sense that each partner will be able to contribute to collaborative working?
7. Is there anything that causes the funder to anticipate there might be significant changes to any of the partner agencies that might de-stabilise it?
8. What might be the key factors that might 'unsettle' the respective capacity of partners to deliver their share of project, and what might the contingency plans be?
9. Does the partnership look put together to please the funder, or does it really present a convincing case that it would be more effective operationally?
10. Clarity on the ways of working. Funders don't necessarily expect there to be a lead partner, but will want to know why a

particular structure has been chosen? This could be something as simple as a list of the heads of agreement, a Memorandum of Understanding, or a flow diagram of responsibilities. More complex partnerships might require something more detailed and formal

Finding the right potential partner organisation can be a challenge. Contact us about your idea and we can advise on organisations working in your local area, or about that particular topic.

Get in touch

Our Support and Development team is on hand to help your organisation. We offer a range of services, from funding advice to governance, legal structures, policies and procedures, and all aspects of organisational development ●

Email: connect@connectedvoice.org.uk

Visit: www.connectedvoice.org.uk/services/support-and-development

Funding Success: Gateshead Young Women's Outreach Project

In each edition of Connected Magazine we feature an organisation that has had success with funding as a result of the input of our one or more of the staff in our Support and Development Team. This time we're looking at Gateshead Young Women's Outreach Project.

Joanne Jopling, their CEO told us:

"We were thrilled at securing just under £49,000 from the National Lottery Community Fund as a result of the hard work of Chris Avanti from Connected Voice."

Connected Voice was able to give intensive support to a number of key organisations across Gateshead and Newcastle at the height of the first lockdown. This involved Connected Voice team members directly contacting these key agencies and finding out more about their current funding situation, and identifying and prioritising those organisations most at-risk of cash-flow and funding problems. Chris Avanti, who worked with YWOP describes the process as: Getting an overview of immediate needs; focusing on the key activity areas where there

was a risk of shortfall; quickly analysing cash-flow and sustainability, and spotting areas where an organisation would otherwise have to dip into their reserves.

Joanne added:

"Chris nudged us a bit – workload was so demanding at the time that we perhaps didn't feel we had the time or resources to put together a bid. We were really impressed at how Connected Voice was able to 'get under the skin' of our work and understand exactly what we are about, and convey that in helping us put our bid together. This wasn't like getting someone in to write a bid for us, it was a real partnership approach"

If you'd like advice and support about any aspect of funding, get in touch with us.

Email connect@connectedvoice.org.uk ●

“We were really impressed at how Connected Voice was able to 'get under the skin; of our work and understand exactly what we are about

Improving Health & Wellbeing Through Collaboration

Giovanni Spatuzzi
Strategic Partnerships
& Operations Manager



Giovanni explains the two new health partnerships in our region called Collaborative Newcastle and Gateshead Cares

Over the last two years, key health and community organisations have formed two partnerships in Newcastle and Gateshead that focus on working together to improve people's health and wellbeing.

Both partnerships exist to create a more joined-up approach, enabling a focus on prevention, providing a seamless system of advice, care, treatment and support to people of all ages, and to work collectively to tackle societal challenges. A key element of this new approach is the aligning and potential pooling of budgets across health and care statutory organisations, which will offer additional opportunities for Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) delivery.

“ Pooling of budgets across health and care statutory organisations will offer additional opportunities for VCSE delivery

During COVID-19, this partnership working has been invaluable for sharing intelligence, focusing available capacity and resources across systems, empowering staff to respond quickly to the challenges posed by the pandemic, and leveraging additional resources into the systems to support local people.

For example, Collaborative Newcastle developed an 'Integrated Covid Hub North East' to undertake 80,000 tests per day. It includes an 'innovation lab' to research and advance the science around

COVID-19 testing and a COVID-19 coordination and response centre to support local authorities in the public health response. The partnership enabled a fast response to a health crisis, as well as creating 1,100 high quality jobs.

Within days of the first outbreak of COVID-19 in the UK, the partnership also created a support system for care homes which included daily calls and a digital reporting system so they could continually monitor and improve prevention and control measures. In Gateshead, a similar system was used to give advice and updates. Managing a flexible workforce also allowed Community Nurses to be redeployed, bridging the service between GPs and care homes, and for Community Health Assistance to support care homes with staff shortages.

Social Prescribing is another area where these partnerships in Newcastle and Gateshead are helping to tackle the indirect health effects of the pandemic; through a joined-up approach, health practitioners are working alongside charities and community organisations to help tackle the effects of social isolation and being physically inactive.

“This model enables people to take greater control of their own physical and mental health, by selecting and accessing the support that works best for them. The aim is always to end up better equipped to deal with, or avoid, similar issues and challenges in the future.”

Julia Perry, Head of Community and Wellbeing Services, Mental Health Concern

Connected Voice and Blue Stone Collaborative are working closely on VCSE representation. Blue Stone's role relates solely to engagement in system transformation, while Connected Voice's role is to represent the VCSE sector.

Aims of the partnerships and who is involved

Collaborative Newcastle

Through new ways of joint working across the city, Collaborative Newcastle aims to reduce inequality and provide better opportunities for all. The partnership consists of:

Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Newcastle City Council, Newcastle Gateshead NHS Clinical Commissioning Group, and Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne & Wear NHS Foundation Trust – working closely with Newcastle GP Services, the GP Federation for Newcastle, Primary Care Networks and the VCSE sector (represented by Blue Stone Collaborative and Connected Voice).

Working increasingly as a single leadership team and supported by a signed legally binding Collaboration Agreement the four priorities for 2021 are:

COVID-19 response – minimise the health and economic impact of COVID-19 across Newcastle through changing behaviours; expanding testing; protecting vulnerable; localising track and trace; and, COVID-19 vaccination.

Collaborative service transformation – jointly redesign and deliver key health and care services, focusing on children and families; positive mental health and wellbeing; and, development of an integrated health and wellbeing hub.

Championing communities – support local neighbourhoods to lead improvements in their health and wellbeing, building on local assets including the VCSE sector.

Duplication to personalisation – using data and empowering people from cross-organisational teams to deliver better personalised care and reduce inequalities.

Gateshead Health & Care System (Gateshead Cares)

Gateshead Cares works together across the borough to promote a placed-based approach that aims to reduce levels of inequality and shift the balance of services to more community support with a focus on prevention. Gateshead Cares consists of: Gateshead Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, Gateshead Council, Newcastle Gateshead NHS Clinical Commissioning Group, Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne & Wear NHS Foundation Trust, Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Gateshead primary care and the VCSE sector (represented by Blue Stone Collaborative and Connected Voice).

Gateshead Cares is completing its legally binding Alliance agreement, and has agreed five key programmes of work as part of the Agreement:

Giving children and young people the best start in life including the transition to adulthood by reviewing the special educational needs and disability (SEND) service.

Reviewing the older persons care home model including wrap around support from health and social care professionals.

Delivering a coordinated, sustainable strength and pathway of **one to one support** and classes for frailer older adults.

Delivering mental health transformation.

Development of Primary Care Networks.

As a representative of the VCSE sector for these partnerships, we will continue to share updates through our website and email bulletins. In the meantime, if you would like to know more about Collaborative Newcastle and Gateshead Cares, please visit:

www.collaborativenewcastle.org
Twitter: @CollabNewcastle

www.gateshead.gov.uk/article/13367/The-Gateshead-health-and-care-system

If you would like to know more about Connected Voice's role in either partnership, please contact Giovanni Spatuzzi ●

Working in Partnership to Enhance Advocacy Services

At Connected Voice Advocacy we have a long history of working successfully in partnership with other organisations. We welcome new opportunities to join with other like-minded organisations to share our specialist skills and expertise to provide innovative services which meet the needs of our service-users.

By pulling together our resources, we not only provide services which meet the needs of our combined service-users, but can also achieve economies of scale. This ensures that all parties can target their resources to those most in need. Working collaboratively can also strengthen our chances of attracting funding. Here is an example of a partnership project we are involved in and details of an exciting new partnership we are currently developing.

Jane Kingston
Connected Voice Advocacy
Manager



Families through Crisis

Five years ago Connected Voice Advocacy collaborated with two key charities in the region to find a new way to address a significant problem for residents across Newcastle caused by the Government's policy of Austerity and Welfare Reform. The Families through Crisis (FtC) project was created in June 2016 by North East Law Centre, Changing Lives and Connected Voice Advocacy with funding from the National Lottery Community Fund's Help through Crisis programme. The aim of the project is to provide information, advice and practical assistance to families in Newcastle experiencing a crisis and hardship who would not ordinarily engage with support services. The project has managed to reach over 2,000 adults and children during the five years.

Austerity and Welfare Reform has had an impact on local families in many ways. This project found that families have fewer resources to meet their basic needs and often they need help to navigate the systems to challenge a reduction in their benefits or other income. The four key areas that this project focused support to families on were Benefits, Housing, Relationships and Health.

“By having three key agencies working around families in a proactive way, we demonstrated that they received a seamless level of support”

This project attempted something different using a three pronged approach and now has a tried and tested pathway to meaningful holistic support. By having three key agencies working around families in a proactive way, we demonstrated that they received a seamless level of support. This approach went beyond partnership working. The three organisations developed shared systems for recording project outcomes, shared tools to deliver the project, commissioned an evaluation together, and set up a steering group to oversee the journey the project was taking. For the families, this felt like a one-stop-shop to avoid them getting into further crisis. The partners worked together to brand and promote the service and the staff delivering the service worked collaboratively with each family. Each of the partners learnt from each other's approaches and expertise.

The project has its own unique identity outside of the lead organisations. Local hubs were selected across the city to host the project. Riverside Community Health Project and West End Women and Girls project and others provided safe and familiar environments for families to find out about and access the FtC project. The FtC staff would attend outreach drop-in services on a weekly basis to ensure the support was reaching people where and when they needed it.

The concept behind this approach is that families enter the project when they want specialist welfare rights and debt advice which is triaged and delivered by the North East Law Centre. Taking the family beyond a transactional approach to advice and support, they were given a secondary level of service from Connected Voice Advocacy and Changing Lives, depending on their needs. The team used strength based assessment tools with the families to identify their own circle of support and together they identified where an advocate or support worker could lead the family to resolve wider issues such as housing, health and relationship issues.

Families received a variety of help from the project which included changing GPs, getting access to the Community Mental Health Service and accessing special needs support in schools. The project had a crisis fund which provided families with urgent practical help like food vouchers, assistance to get school uniforms and access to Halal products. This part of the project was particularly relevant during the COVID-19 pandemic and for supporting people with No Recourse to Public Funds, those fleeing domestic abuse and those unable to claim Universal Credit, such as the self-employed.

The project utilised the Connected Voice Advocacy tools for self-advocacy, enabling people to speak up for themselves and assert themselves to access services they need. The DIY Advocate app and Self Advocacy workbook were adapted to suit the FtC project. This was introduced to help families to work through issues and find their own solutions. Using the resources they had within their own social networks, or finding external services to help, they were able to set achievable goals and felt empowered to make positive changes in their own lives.

The project has been independently evaluated (see the full report on our website). The three

“The three partners are working together to find new funding... With the COVID-19 pandemic, the city has many more families in financial crisis.”

partners are working together to find new funding opportunities to carry on the legacy of this project. With the COVID-19 pandemic, the city has many more families in financial crisis and the demands for this unique approach to provide holistic support are on the rise. We want to continue with the legacy of the last five years and provide much needed assistance to families in Newcastle.

Jane Kingston from Connected Voice Advocacy said:

“We dedicated time and energy to create a strong and powerful partnership. This project has delivered outcomes in a unique way, through providing holistic and long term support for families. I have seen trust being built between all partners and service users which has led to transformation within people who needed help to move away from crisis point. We really hope this work can continue as families are facing deeper levels of financial and health crisis in the pandemic.”

Michael Fawole from North East Law Centre said:

“The Families through Crisis project has enabled North East Law Centre to enhance our understanding of the support requirements of people in crisis. The three partner organisations have worked well together and have been strengthened by our respective experiences of delivering the project, with some outstanding outcomes for our project beneficiaries. We have also been supported by equally committed community based delivery partners, and we are all committed to continuing the partnership beyond June 2021.”

Charlotte Hunter from Changing Lives said:

“Our unique partnership approach enables us to provide a seamless and efficient service to the people we support when they need it most. We are able to tap into the resources of our respective organisations which provides a truly holistic support plan”.

For more details about the project: www.connectedvoice.org.uk/services/advocacy/families-through-crisis

Supporting People Affected by Brain Injuries

Melissa Girling
Advocacy Information
Officer



A new partnership with Headway offers enhanced support people affected by brain injury

We are currently working together with Headway groups and branches across the North East to develop a new specialist advocacy service which meets the needs of Headway members. Headway is a charity set up to give help and support to people affected by brain injury. Our colleagues at the Darlington branch of Headway identified a vital gap in advocacy provision for their members. Together we have explored ways to address significant levels of unmet need.

This project is an exciting opportunity to provide Headway members across the whole of the North-East with exclusive access to specialist Independent Advocacy which would support them to:

- Understand their rights and available choices
- Make informed decisions about their lives and have them acted upon wherever possible
- Have their voices heard
- Advocate for themselves where possible

Connected Voice Advocacy has extensive experience in providing a specialist Neurological Advocacy Service. We ran the service from 2015 to 2019, funded by Big Lottery Fund. The service was evaluated over two years by an independent evaluator who wrote a detailed and highly positive report, as well as supporting service-users to make a film about the service (Fighting for your Rights available to view on our website at www.connectedvoice.org.uk/services/advocacy/how-will-advocate-help)

We are keen to secure funding for this innovative service which will ensure that:

- Service-users will be provided with skilled, expert, holistic neurological advocacy support specific to the needs of the client group.
- Advocates will provide advocacy support to tackle all issues that Headway members are struggling with (not just those covered by statutory advocacy roles under the Mental Health, Mental Capacity and Care Acts).
- Headway will have a swift and exclusive referral pathway to access holistic, bespoke advocacy for their members only.

Brian Kenny, Headway North East Network Support Manager, said:

“This could be a fantastic project which may benefit the whole region.”

Jane Kingston, Manager of Connected Voice Advocacy, said:

“At Connected Voice we always welcome ways to deliver our services in partnership with others. There is so much added value in working together and this new opportunity with Headway will enable us to deliver much needed advocacy to people across the region. Together we are stronger and I look forward to seeing this partnership develop”

“ This could be a fantastic project which may benefit the whole region

Connected Voice Business Services

Michelle Wright
Connected Voice Business
Services Assistant Manager



Over the years we have found that working in collaboration with organisations is a much more efficient way for us to deliver our services especially to smaller organisations. It means we can offer the required level of support at an affordable rate.

One of our services that really benefits from working collaboratively is bookkeeping because the trustees and managers of an organisation are always up to date with their financial position. We offer a complete bookkeeping service to 10 organisations, working closely with them to ensure they are aware of how they are providing information and where they are using their funds.

More recently, we have worked in collaboration with organisations to move their systems over to cloud based accounting packages such as QuickBooks. We assist with setting up the system correctly and in line with the existing financial structure of the organisation, and then train nominated members of the organisation so they understand everything they need, from the basics right up to advanced reporting and budgeting features. We are on hand to offer support and guidance when needed and go through quarter end procedures so that management reports can be produced for board reports.

We also work in partnership with the Connected Voice Support and Development team to deliver policy development services, and to identify areas where our customers could benefit from their support. Providing a joined-up service ensures that our customers

Michelle explains how collaboration is the key to Business Services' effective and personal support

are getting the most from our teams and are fully supported through the development of their organisations.

Supporting organisations with their Payroll and Auto-Enrolment during the pandemic

We provide a fully managed payroll service with guidance on all government support schemes that are being released to support employers during COVID-19. Our customers have found this to be a huge advantage when the situation changes so quickly and understanding the legislation would otherwise consume a lot of time and resources.

We want to be able to support more organisations during this difficult time so we currently have an offer with our payroll service, if you sign up in April 2021:

Half price payroll fees for the first three months for new customers joining in April 2021

“ Connected Voice Business Services have really helped with our payroll and pension. We would be lost without them. Great value and excellent quality

If you need support with your organisation's financial management, please contact Business Services on 0191 235 7020 or email sally.adams@connectedvoice.org.uk ●

Contact us

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 232 7445 (opt1)

Connected Voice

Business
Services

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

cbs@connectedvoice.org.uk
0191 232 7445 (opt3)

Connected Voice

Advocacy

Free professional 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

Haref

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

haref@connectedvoice.org.uk
0191 232 7445 (opt1)

0191 232 7445

connect@connectedvoice.org.uk

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Connected Voice is a registered charity (number 1125877) and company limited by guarantee (number 6681475) registered in England and Wales. Our registered office is as above.