

Spotlight

Meaningful Inclusion

Featuring:

Nourish Food School and Gateshead Coordination Team

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Special feature from Difference North East

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In-kind support - interviews with Suitability CIC and Success4All

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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: people cooking together in the kitchen of Nourish Food School CIC

Issue 10: Meaningful inclusion

Welcome to the Spring 2022 edition of Connected Voice Magazine. This issue explores the different aspects of meaningful inclusion, and what it means to different people and organisations.

An insightful piece from Richard at Difference North East highlights how we can change our approach to service design to be more inclusive and promote disability equality.

In our 'Spotlight' features, we hear about the impact of Nourish Food School CIC, which aims to improve people's physical and mental wellbeing through positive relationships with food. Gateshead Coordination Team talks us through their model for meaningful

inclusion in local communities through learning.

Giovanni from our Support and Development team shares tips on increasing your board diversity by recruiting trustees with lived experience, and Jack meets with two local organisations, Suitability and Success4All which have both made the most of in-kind support to grow their services.

Advocacy Manager, Jane, asks if the language we use can make our services more inclusive and Carrie from our Haref team catches up with Haref Network member, Kuveri, to unpick the concept of meaningful inclusion in research and ask if there's more we could be doing ●

Meaningful Inclusion

Lisa Goodwin
Chief Executive



We all know inclusion means different things to different people. So we wondered if having it as a theme for this magazine would work – would the various articles be too diverse to feel like a theme at all? But, actually, the diversity of contributions in this edition demonstrates exactly what we wanted to convey - that meaningful inclusion takes many different forms, and a huge amount of thought and effort.

Traditionally, voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations have been recognised as more inclusive than the private or public sectors. We tend to be seen as person-centred and more welcoming in our service provision. Many of us choose to work or volunteer with charities because we identify with those values of inclusion and embracing diversity. But we shouldn't be complacent. We know from recent research that there is a serious lack of diversity in our sector from our boards and leadership teams to our volunteers and staff. Were we so focused on our individual missions that we forgot about looking wider for input and involvement?

For many years we saw a drive to 'professionalise' the VCSE sector – with organisations being told that having professionals on their board would help them in terms of effectiveness. There are great benefits to be gained from having people with areas of expertise such as HR or legal on boards. However, it feels to me that perhaps that drive to professionalise has meant that some organisations have lost focus on bringing a voice from their beneficiaries or their wider communities. We have included a piece in this edition on recruiting trustees with lived

while it is really important have positive public statements on equity, diversity and inclusivity, and, to be welcoming to a broad range of people, it is also crucial that we go beyond that.

experience, and I'm really pleased to say we've had a much higher level of enquiries recently about EDI support in general. Organisations are responding to the calls to action of campaigns like #CharitySoWhite by thinking more about how they can be more inclusive. Engagement in our events on diversity and inclusion has increased, and I have had a lot of discussions recently with fellow Chief Execs about approaches to creating more inclusive workplaces and services.

It is easy to signal your intentions around inclusion and embracing diversity. Lots of organisations these days have positive statements on equity, diversity and inclusivity, and, while it is really important to make those public statements and be welcoming to a broad range of people, it is also crucial that we go beyond that. We live in an age where we can create an image on social media that paints us as open and inclusive, while in reality we have done nothing more practical to broaden reach or welcome different perspectives. Real inclusion is hard work. Because if you are really going to create a culture and environment that recognises, appreciates, and effectively utilises the talents, skills, and perspectives of everyone who you involve, you will be doing a lot of work. In this edition we have shared some challenges from our members on inclusion, and some examples of positive inclusion within their work. We are in a privileged position here at Connected Voice in terms of the range of organisations we are in contact with every week – it is not all about providing support – we learn a lot from them. I hope they provide some inspiration as well as some practical examples of achievable things we can all do to support inclusion in our work ●

Anticipate, Respect and Celebrate

Richard Boggie, Development Manager at Difference North East, reflects on meaningful inclusion and disability equality

Richard Boggie
Development
Manager, Difference
North East

Difference fights for equality for disabled people and an end to discrimination on the grounds of disability. They collect everyday experiences of disabled people and use these to shape their campaigns to make real change.

We're all familiar with the concept of inclusion but I wonder how many of us have ever paused to think about what it really means. Or to ask how our intention to be inclusive is meaningful and not tokenistic?

A good starting point is to ask yourself why? Why is my organisation wanting to be 'inclusive'? You might answer this with 'because it's the right thing to do' but again ask why? If we are clear about the purpose, the end that we're aiming for, then it will be

easier to assess how meaningful/ effective the inclusion has been.

One of the answers you are likely to come up with is 'equality' – being inclusive helps your organisation to be fairer, to deliver services more equally and to meet your obligations under charity, equality, and human rights laws.

I find this simple image helpful when thinking about the relationship between equality, diversity, and inclusion.

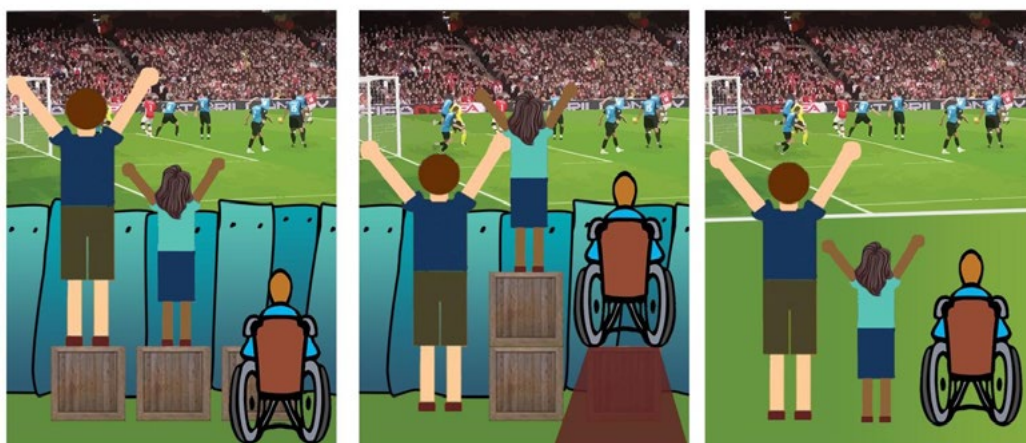


Image caption: Three people watch a football match over a fence. In the first instance they each have a box, useless to the wheelchair, the other 2 stand on the boxes to see over the fence.

In the next image, the person who would not otherwise be able to see over the high fence, has two boxes to stand on and the wheelchair user has use of a ramp, whilst the person who can see over the fence anyway, still can. Now everyone can see over the fence.

The final image removes the fence completely so everybody has access from the start.

“Inclusion is not about treating everyone the same. It’s about recognising diversity

Inclusion is not about treating everyone the same. It’s about recognising diversity – in this case, people are different heights and that’s part of being human. Inclusive practices, like a ramp, help deliver the same quality of experience, help deliver equality. Removal of the barrier altogether makes life easier and more inclusive for everyone. Inclusive cultures therefore anticipate, respect, and celebrate difference.

The next step is thinking about how we can remove systemic barriers to participation for disabled people.

Much of our work at Difference is about inclusion. Here are a few examples.

Digital Inclusion

Working as a member of the [Better ConNEcted](#) campaign, we’ve looked at a whole range of factors that affect whether people are included or excluded from the online world, like:

- Availability / affordability of equipment
- Access to and affordability of broadband services
- IT skills
- User confidence
- Accessibility of online content and systems

Any one of these issues can lead to someone being digitally excluded and have a huge impact on their ability to access essential goods, services, and information.

Difference’s contribution to this work has primarily been to focus on accessibility training, developing and delivering two [digital accessibility workshops](#) mainly in the VCSE sector.

Social Inclusion

We’re also an organisation that carries out research. We’re currently [looking into issues of social inclusion](#), finding out from disabled people [what stops them from going out](#). We

hope the findings will help inform understanding of the barriers that still exist for many people. For example, at a recent focus group, we learned that some of the factors affecting people include inaccessible transport systems, anxiety around COVID-19, sensory overload, fatigue and changes to social care funding and benefits meaning that people don’t have access to the personal support they need.

Employment

Meaningful inclusion is also at the heart of one of our key strategic aims – to improve the North East’s employment culture for disabled people. In June we’re hosting a [‘Disability and Employment Summit’](#) in Newcastle where we will bring together policy-makers, academics, employers and disabled people. Together we want to share ideas about, and experiences of the barriers that disabled people face that often exclude them from work, or hamper their progression. Then we’ll envision a more inclusive North East jobs market and examine what steps are needed to reach that goal.

“If you want your own organisation to foster an inclusive culture then it has to be part of everything you do, from the

Inclusion is the foundation of all our work. Similarly, if you want your own organisation to foster an inclusive culture then it has to be part of everything you do, from the outset. It’s not enough to develop a product or a service and then think ‘oh, we’d better make this accessible as well’. Nor can you assume that all blind people want X, or all wheelchair users want Y. We’re all complex individuals with intersecting characteristics. So being inclusive demands openness and flexibility. We need to change the way we do things, not expect people to change for us.

Do you want to challenge ableism and broaden representations of disability in your work? You can support us in making the North-East a fairer, more equal place for disabled people to live, work, and study by [joining our Allies Network](#).

For more information about Difference North East, please visit our website www.differencenortheast.org.uk ●

Spotlight: Nourish Food School CIC

Joanna Lacey
Managing Director



A Newcastle-based community interest company shaping great food behaviours and experiences through cookery class, food education and events.

What does your organisation do?

Nourish Food School CIC aims to shape a world where food is a positive part of everyday life for everyone. A world where cooking and eating is associated with enjoyment, achievement and great memories that positively influence future food behaviours to enable long term physical and emotional wellbeing.

Nourish Food School launched as a cookery school CIC in September 2021 although since 2010 was part of social enterprise Food Nation. As the demand for food education was growing - the cookery school arm of Food Nation was given a new home at Nourish to provide a new platform to develop, grow, reach its potential and most importantly make as much difference to local communities as possible.

Nourish believes that enabling a positive relationship with food is so much more than teaching nutrition and typical "healthy eating" messages. Food experiences create opportunities to nourish physical health, mental health, and even the

health of a community or workplace.

Working primarily across Newcastle with an outreach model enables pop-up kitchens to appear in just about any space allowing Nourish to work with children, young people and adults from all backgrounds.

The impact of COVID on lower income families has been huge in relation to food access. We're seeing the increased need and demand for lower cost cooking know-how and skills that support people to make the most of ingredients provided through our fabulous network of food banks and pantries.

We would love to ensure free access to what we do for people likely to experience food-related ill health and who may not have the financial means to pay. This is where access to grant funding and the reinvestment of profits from the sale of services helps us to achieve our social mission.

Tell us about your key projects?

Much of what we do is working with people who are at risk of, or who are already experiencing, food-related ill health. We're not solely looking at health concerns such as obesity, although this is a major concern that Nourish aims to tackle. Food-related ill health might be physical as a result of Type II diabetes, heart disease, the physical impacts of obesity and malnutrition. It is also about low emotional and mental health that is impacted by food behaviours - such as eating disorders, anxiety, stress, depression.

“Everyone has a relationship with food. The more positive that relationship can be from as early age as possible then surely the greater chance there is for improved health across whole communities. These are the skills, behaviours and relationships that will then be passed from one generation to the next and can create healthier communities long into the future” Joanna Lacey



Photos courtesy of Nourish Food School CIC: Two young girls cooking in the Kids' Cook Club and Joanna Lacey teaches a cookery class



“Before our fridge was empty and freezer was full [of frozen ready meals] but now the fridge is full and it's bright and colourful which is a big change. I thought cooking from a jar was quick and easy but it's really no difference to cook it from scratch

Family from Byker

- We are passionate about working in collaboration and since September we have been working with some great people!
- Our work with Crisis Skylight Newcastle sees us delivering a cooking skills programme that increases the skills of people newly renting accommodation (sometimes for the first time).
- Our Food Skills in Catering workshops with the charity 'J.E.T. Jobs, Education and Training' see us developing food and language skills and increasing employability skills.
- Our partnership with FareShare North East is going to be bringing brand new cookery workshops for FareShare Community Members starting in summer 2022.

We're now starting to re-establish the 'Jamie's Ministry of Food' cookery course in 2022. This Jamie Oliver cookery course is about understanding the basic principles of cooking and nutrition, and it aims to positively influence the way people shop, cook and eat at home to support food budget management, physical health and emotional wellbeing. We are keen to connect with link workers and healthcare professionals across the city to support those who need it most - whilst also welcoming the general public too.

Over the next year we aim to continue growing our partnerships and find new spaces to deliver from. As we attract new funding, sponsorship and increase commercial revenue streams we'll be looking to expand the reach of our basic cookery courses; support food banks and pantries to integrate practical cooking skills into their services and; develop new projects that will establish positive relationships with food for young people.

What do people say about your organisation?

"I've cooked for years but you teach me something new every time I come here. Being here isn't just about cooking but getting a chance to actually chat with people, get to know people better is just as good. It's much easier to talk in a group when you are doing something together like cooking" - participant in recovery from addiction

"I just wanna thank you for giving my cooking the kick start it needed. I've knocked up about 5 different dishes from scratch now using the basics you taught me. Can't believe I actually find it fun. Got 8 portions a few times too and using so much veg" - Cookery Class participant referred through GP services

How has Connected Voice supported you?

Connected Voice has been a huge support as we transitioned into the new CIC Nourish Food School. Having people who put the time in to understand every aspect of what you want to do and are able to ask questions and be that critical friend has helped shape what Nourish is today and continues to evolve into. Any question we have, no matter how big or small, gets a well thought through response that helps guide us and set us off in the right direction ●

Recruiting Trustees with Lived Experience

Giovanni Spatuzzi
Strategic Partnerships and
Operations Manager



Giovanni shares tips around ensuring you have a diverse and representative board of trustees

In recent years there's rightly been a drive in the charity sector to recruit trustees with lived experience to improve an organisation's decision making and ultimately the services it delivers to people it serves.

Put simply, lived experience is having experience of the issue that a charity works on. It means having people with experience of homelessness on the board of your charity for homeless people. It means having people who have been refugees in a humanitarian charity. It means having trustees with disabilities at a disability charity.

Benefits of having trustees with lived experience

The Centre for Charity Effectiveness, Bayes Business School argues that whilst there may be barriers and adjustments to be made, by actively recruiting trustees with lived experience on your board you can ensure:

- Greater accountability, legitimacy and credibility to your community and wider society
- Insight into the needs and challenges you're hoping to tackle
- New perspectives and informed voices to bring richness and reality to board discussions and ensure better decision making
- Opportunities for people to learn, grow and develop their knowledge and experience of governance that can be applied elsewhere in the future

Top tips to recruit trustees with lived experience

The big question for many charities is how do we recruit trustees with lived experience?

1. Learn about unconscious bias, privilege and the patriarchy
2. Introduce blind applications for your recruitment process
3. Think about the sort of language that you use in your adverts, social media, reports etc. are they gender neutral, ableist, excluding...
4. Challenge your assumptions about education levels
5. Actively seek out places to advertise roles that will attract more diverse potential appointees by thinking beyond traditional methods. Consider advertising in local places of worship, local radio shows for ethnic minorities etc.
6. Make sure you ask everyone the same core set of interview questions
7. Set yourself a target to achieve a more inclusive board. For instance, that you want there to be a gender balance, at least one-fourth of people from an ethnically minoritised background and one-fourth from your client's demographic/with lived experience of your charity's cause. This can be intentionally aspirational to keep you focused
8. Training in Equity, Diversity and Inclusion for your board, staff and core volunteers

Having a diverse, fully representative board, including people with lived experience is an essential part of great governance.

Spotlight: Gateshead Coordination Team

Richard Gibbons
Coordinator
Andy Crosbie
Local Associate

Gateshead Coordination Team (a working title that is set to change) is a group that runs 'system change experiments' with a focus on learning.

What does your group do?

The Gateshead Coordination Team (GCT) is a group that draws upon the varied experiences of people working across the Gateshead area from different sectors, organisations, and local communities to run 'system change experiments' where the focus is on learning rather than any specific outputs or outcomes. Our funding is provided by the Lankelly Chase Foundation who also act as part of the team itself. We adopt a wide range of approaches with the aim to better see and unpack systemic inequalities that are impacting people. One of the important cornerstones of our approach is to work in collaboration with people in local communities and to put them at the heart of those endeavours; striving together to find solutions to the problems they feel are most important.

often leads to another thing happening in someone's life). We then transformed that nuanced, contextual information into 'system maps'. These maps illustrate the complexity of issues people often face and how these underpin different challenges and obstacles in people's lives. This is an ongoing project that is developed and progressed by people with lived experience of such issues, and is a collaboration between six different local grassroots charities.

Gateshead Futures – This is a regular online learning and reflection session to give people the space to discuss things they don't have space to discuss

“**What are the things that people really want to talk about? What happens if you bring together people from an area for shared reflection free from agenda?**

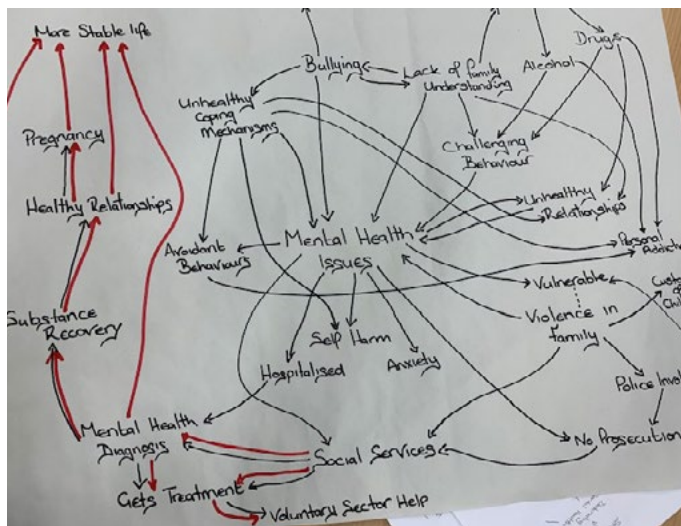
Tell us about your key projects?

Gateshead System Mapping Inquiry – This has gathered over 110 detailed stories from residents of Gateshead to capture causality (how one thing

elsewhere, involving people from 40+ organisations. What are the things that people really want to talk about? What happens if you bring together people from an area for shared reflection free from agenda? This space looks to create a cohesive setting to develop relationships and insights that more traditional settings often cannot.

“**[Gateshead System Mapping Inquiry] is developed and progressed by people with lived experience of such issues, and is a collaboration between six different local grassroots charities**

The Teams and Dunston Initiative – A partnership with the Ballinger Trust and the National Lottery Community Fund, allocating 200K to the neighbourhoods of Teams



Images above courtesy of Gateshead Coordination Team

Top left: an example small system map

Top right: Link Worker's and participants starting to build a big system map from the stories

and Dunston for local people to decide to use as they see fit. We recruited a local community member to initiate conversations and try to unearth what matters to the people in these communities. By listening to people and including them in the process, we hope to better understand how we can create more power and agency in a local community through funding that helps people to realise their own ideas.

Community Bridgebuilders – We have recently developed a new role to fund 7 local community members to work as part of the Gateshead Coordination Team. These are individuals that are already active within their different communities, providing support for the kind of every day issues

life for everyone. The role of a Bridgebuilder therefore involves tuning in to this and helping to make it happen.

How has Connected Voice supported you?

The GCT currently has 10 active participants (that will soon increase to 17), and one of those is Connected Voice's Lisa Goodwin. Lisa's experience and insight is helping to evolve the work and connect it to wider networks that are also striving to promote meaningfully inclusive approaches to systemic change.

What do people say about your organisation?

"It was an insightful exercise that helps me personally, and can have a great positive effect on the community in general. It would be a pleasure to be part of this programme and to support, in my capacity, the community."

"It was a very eye-opening and amazing four days. I'm happy to be part of this fantastic group" ●

“We believe that communities that face barriers, disadvantage and marginalisation, should be involved in making change and taking action

that people often struggle with. We believe that communities that face barriers, disadvantage and marginalisation, should be involved in making change and taking action towards a better

“The workshops were amazing. I met some fab people and learned a lot

Connected Voice Haref on Meaningful Inclusion in Research

Haref Engagement Officer, Carrie Rosenthal talks to Haref Network member Kuveri Katjangua about meaningful inclusion

Meaningful inclusion is at the heart of Connected Voice Haref. The Haref Network brings ethnically minoritised communities and organisations across Newcastle and Gateshead together to discuss health inequalities and share ideas. The Network drives the agenda of Haref by identifying the issues we need to focus on and by influencing how health services are developed and delivered.

To highlight how this works in practice, Haref Engagement Officer Carrie Rosenthal met with Haref Network member Kuveri Katjangua talk about his involvement with Haref and what he believes meaningful inclusion looks like.

Kuveri has been a trustee at Riverside Community Health Project for two years and has been involved in two Haref research projects.

Our conversation started with Kuveri's thoughts

on how we differentiate between inclusion and meaningful inclusion.

“ Meaningful inclusion is not just inclusion as a token

‘When you say inclusion it’s one word but meaningful calls for a deeper reflection. I think meaningful inclusion is not just inclusion as a token because you have to show that you included people but when you intend to really add value from that inclusion. Those to be included, you regard them as valid reliable partners that you need to drive the agenda forward, and without them you will not be able to be successful.’

Kuveri chose to become involved in the Haref Research Projects and become a trustee and Riverside CHP because he sees himself as a



Colourful artwork by Jean from the Peer Research Report on Mental Health in Our Communities

change agent. Kuveri wants to help the greater community through his involvement and he spoke about meaningful inclusion in his work with Haref.

'In the two projects I have been involved in, I have seen meaningful inclusion. In the peer research, the methodology chosen was a demonstration of meaningful inclusion in that the participants and the community members are designing the research. On the COVID-19 research project it's also the same in that you let the affected, impacted community be involved in generating data. Because inclusion is not only a numbers game but also has more to do with perceptions and feelings, it builds capital for future engagement as well.'

Kuveri also spoke with affection and passion about his trustee position at Riverside CHP

'I came as a service user and attended some training and then I felt 'this place is welcoming. It's comfortable. How about if I can contribute at a higher level?' I asked if there was a volunteering opportunity. It's a good open-minded team. Quite professional and passionate. It was a learning curve for me. Both serving as a trustee and also in a culture that I'm not familiar with. But in terms of my contribution, I feel valued. Our interactions are

also shaping the direction of the organisation so there is meaningful inclusion there, yes.'

Kuveri and I talked about the importance of meaningful inclusion and the risks involved in not having meaningful inclusion be a part of ones work.

“If you have diversity in terms of ideas and demographics you can learn from each other or see things from other perspectives

'So you may do all of these good things but [if a] portion of the community is left out, it impacts the rest of the things that you have done correctly so I think that's the value of meaningful inclusion. If you have diversity in terms of ideas and demographics you can learn from each other or see things from other perspectives. [It also means that you won't] do the same thing over and over and wonder 'why am I not succeeding?' It's not about transactions, you need to build trust because we need each other....Without inclusion there becomes the risk that you never know what you don't know.'

Kuveri had some great ideas for improving meaningful inclusion when people first arrive to the North East of England. He spoke about people who are more settled here acting as community champions for new arrivals and facilitating inclusion in communities.

'How do we position ourselves to start involving people right away in the UK and North East? I know we are a City of Sanctuary but how do we involve them and start to engage with them from the first 3-6 months. Because people dream and they have expectations and if they are not engaged they tend to slip down...First it's a question of trust - using those who are already settled for a period of time, who are engaged more, engage them to become community champions because they are already close to their communities there is that level of trust.'

Kuveri had some ideas that we could bring to Connected Voice Haref too - to increase our outreach events when it is safer to do so and to try to work with organisations with less formalised structures ●



Cover image of the report - read the full report at www.connectedvoice.org.uk

Advocacy and Inclusion

Jane Kingston
Connected Voice
Advocacy Manager



Jane's blog about what we should call people who use our services generated lots of interest and debate within our organisation and more widely across the sector

Are labels de-humanising to the people who use our services?

Much has already been written on the dangers of giving people a label. Implicit in a label can be judgement, bias, stigma, and power imbalance. It can strip people of individual identity. So all of this can happen without intent, due to the complexity of language and how meaning is found in interpretation.

This is why Connected Voice Advocacy is taking the label discussion seriously and rethinking how we communicate in written and spoken formats about the people we work with.

Our 'Shoulder to Shoulder' strapline was originally chosen carefully to represent the partnership approach and shared power between an advocate and a person they advocate for.

I was recently in a room with advocacy leaders from across the sector and we were addressed by two people who have used advocacy for many years. They spoke candidly about how it made them feel when they were described as 'partners', 'clients' or 'service users'. All these terms are open to misinterpretation and can lead to people feeling de-humanised. It can also sound possessive when a professional

refers to someone as 'my client' and detracts from the power that the person themselves holds in the instructed advocacy relationship.

The advocacy sector is embedded in person centred practice so it is interesting to reflect on how over time advocacy service providers have slipped into the trap of adopting these commonly used labels. We can speculate why, perhaps with the professionalising of advocacy over the years as it became written into legislation, and with local government contracts and the commissioning process, organisations have had to adopt and conform to the data gathering language. Applications and monitoring forms frequently ask for statistics and data on the people we work with referencing the terminology 'service users' or 'client'.

I have also heard advocates defend the use of labels, stating that they help to put the advocate on a level footing with other professionals so that they can be taken more seriously by professional peers, and therefore to achieve a better outcome for the person they are advocating for.

Often it is a short-handed way to refer to someone, as 'person they are advocating for' is a bit of a mouthful and the legal shorthand of 'P' (used legally for person in legal cases) can be just too short.

At our recent staff away day we took the decision to refer to people by their name when advocating for them in a meeting for example. This works well to bring the focus back on the person and their issues rather than being seen as a case. We will use the term 'people', where possible, when describing people we

“The advocacy sector is embedded in person centred practice so it is interesting to reflect on how over time advocacy service providers have slipped into the trap of adopting these commonly used labels

work with generally, to strip back the labels and connotations that they bring. We are committing to amend our documents, online presence and in person behaviour to ensure we always refer to people as people.

Here's a summary of some of the debate on Social Media sparked by Jane's blog. The word 'individuals' was not popular, nor was 'clients'. Others said they and people they worked with were uncomfortable with 'service users'. Another contributor said "I hate things like parents being addressed as 'mum and dad'".

Several people said they prefer to use 'people' or person (if they cannot share their name), 'people we work with' or 'families we work with'. Two organisations use 'friends', other organisations say 'members' or 'participants'. 'Women we work with' was used by one organisation, sometimes shortened to 'the women' or even 'our women'. Someone said they had seen 'citizens' used a lot and another hesitantly suggested 'beneficiaries'. There was agreement that it depends on the type of work and the situation so, for example, in a housing context 'residents' might be appropriate and someone said they had no issue with medics referring to 'patients', though someone else said "people are just 'patients' for a short time and the rest of the time they are just people!".

“Brilliant blog about the need to keep real people at the heart of a person-centred approach

“Fascinating topic to explore

“This is a really interesting topic to think about and I've never heard a satisfactory answer

We'd love to hear your views on this so please join in the discussion. You can [share the blog from our website](#) and find us on Twitter @CVAdvocacy.

Involvement and Inclusion

We are always keen to involve and include people we work with whenever possible in debates and decisions to make sure that their voices are heard in those discussions. We previously developed a Service User Involvement Strategy and actions stemming from that included involvement in recruitment of advocates, quality audits and promotional films. However, we were aware that this needed reviewing and updating, not least because meaningful involvement has been particularly difficult over the last two years due to the Covid pandemic.

Colleagues from Connected Voice's Support and Development team carried out an audit of the ways we involve people we work with and we are updating our strategy to reflect their recommendations.

Further to the No Labels debate, we will be holding a consultation with people who use our services about what they would like to be called. The consultation will include our so-called 'Service User Information' page on our website which is full of information for people who use our services.

We have also been looking at ways of improving digital inclusion and accessibility across the organisation. Difference NE and Enhance UK delivered an excellent series of Digital Accessibility workshops last year and colleagues will be attending further training this spring. We have already made good use of the training - for example we have improved the accessibility features of our self-advocacy app, DIY Advocate® and our website.

Making services inclusive and accessible is an ongoing challenge which we relish!

It's not Always About the Money

Jack Summerside
Support and Development
Officer



Jack talks to Suitability CIC and Success 4 All about how they have benefited from in-kind support

Finding ways to achieve your organisation's aims is not always just about raising money from grant-making trusts. A broader range of income sources, and other ways of bringing skills, experience and resources into your organisation, is an integral part of an effective business and funding strategy.

Photo of Darren Tate,
Suitability CIC



When we deliver our funding training, there's always at least one instance of two or more organisations finding they share some goals and are keen to swap contact details to explore potential partnerships. The same is true of our increasingly popular [VCSE Networking Events](#) and themed ongoing networks that we help co-ordinate.

Another means of getting things done by winning 'in-kind' support is by reaching out to industry and business and building ongoing relationships. Here are just two examples of how this has worked for organisations we've worked with.

Suitability CIC supports unemployed men in the North East with access to free interview clothing enabling them to look and feel confident. *'Suitability started in 2019 at a request from a young man who had a job interview but didn't have suitable clothes or the money to buy any.'* Darren Tate told us.

Darren reached out to businesses to gather more clothing donations, and his parents' loft and garage soon became a mini warehouse. A local storage business donated nine months of free storage, and just recently Hypoint has offered both storage and a showroom space at its premises in Gateshead.

Laura Goldston, Manager at Hypoint, said: *'We were very impressed by the important work Suitability is doing. So many men might not get the opportunity to make the most of their lives through lack of the right clothes – and we're pleased to be able to play a small part in Suitability's mission to help.'*



Photos: 'how it started' with suits hanging in the loft next to 'how it's going' with suits on a rail ready to load into a shipping container

Success4All began in 2006 as an after school homework club for children & young people in the West End of Newcastle. Caroline Afolabi-Deleu told us *'Together with a group of parents, we set up our first Learning Hub in the Millin Centre. Over the last 15 years we've diversified our services and created spaces where children and young people have a sense of true belonging, and where they can challenge and motivate each other to achieve their full potential.'*

Success4All has built a strong relationship with local commercial law firm Muckle LLP. Caroline told us: *'Muckle has been a great support to us in many different ways, through donations, staff volunteering their time – bringing a wealth of skills to our Learning Hubs, and later joining our board of Trustees bringing their business skills to the running of our organisation. Thanks to funding from Muckle LLP, Reece Foundation and other local organisations we were able to fit out our Learning Bus, a multi-functional mobile learning space that allows us to engage with communities we wouldn't otherwise be able to reach.'*

Something that both these very different organisations have in common is their successful use of social media to garner support and spread the word about what they do, creating meaningful inclusion of the community, of beneficiaries, partner VCSE agencies and the

business world. You can see and hear more about [Suitability](#) and [Success4All](#) in these brilliant videos.

And there are new developments here at Connected Voice to help more organisations and business to come together. Giovanni Spatuzzi tells us more: *'Connected Voice is excited to work in partnership with Newcastle Volunteer Centre, North Tyneside VODA and Northumberland CVA over the next five years to create a vibrant and impactful employee-volunteering scene in Newcastle. This will support private sector organisations to share their skills with voluntary and community organisations to make a positive difference to residents and communities.'*

India Gerritsen adds: *'As the new Volunteering Development Officer I'll be setting up employee-volunteering in Newcastle. We aim to focus on partnering businesses that have employees with expertise to offer voluntary support to VCSE organisations. Whether that's in human resources (such as advice on staff management), social media, health and safety, marketing, digital tech use, website creation, editing and upkeep, volunteer wellbeing such as stress reduction and emotional support, or general support.'*

Alongside this, you can [find out more about the exciting developments around volunteering in Gateshead](#) ●

Photos (Mike Smith Photography): A group of children in front of the Success4All bus waving their hands in the air. A group photo inside the bus picturing Caroline on the right.



The Power of Local

Connected Voice Annual General Meeting 2022

Tuesday 26 April, 2pm - 4pm

St Mary's Heritage Centre, Oakwellgate, Gateshead, NE8 2AU

Arrival and registration is from 1.30pm, for a prompt 2pm start, and there will be hot drinks and light refreshments after the business of the AGM concludes at 4pm

You are warmly invited to our AGM celebrating The Power of Local. We'll hear from Dr. Rob Macmillan, Principal Research Fellow at CRESR the Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research, about the impact of the work of charities during Covid, and the potential implications for us from the Levelling Up agenda.

We'll also hear a performance by local poet Rowan McCabe. Gateshead Director of Public Health Alice Wiseman will be talking about the importance of VCS activity in supporting health and wellbeing, and two local neighbourhood organisations will share the variety of ways they harness the Power Of Local right here in Newcastle and Gateshead.

[Book your place through Eventbrite](#)



Photo of several large round tables filled with people at our 2018 AGM inside St Mary's Heritage Centre

VCSE Networking Events

Connected Voice brings together the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations serving Newcastle and Gateshead through our Networking Events. These events:

- Showcase and celebrate best and innovative practice
- Inspire participants with new ideas and ways to meet the needs of their communities
- Connect people and organisations to forge new partnerships and ways of working together to the same goals

Each event follows a distinct theme and we welcome a range of speakers from local organisations in the first half, followed by a chance to network

Upcoming events:

[VCSE Networking Event - Food - Access, poverty, education and employment](#)

Wednesday 30 March, 1pm - 3pm

[VCSE Networking Event - Volunteering](#)

Wednesday 25 May, 1pm - 3pm

You may also be interested in:

[Connected Voice Newcastle and Gateshead Funding Fair 2022](#)

Wednesday 22 June, 1pm - 4pm

Payroll from Connected Voice Business Services

Connected Voice Business Services has one of the largest payroll bureaux specialising in charities and not-for-profits in the North East.

Our comprehensive service includes auto enrolment, BACS payments directly to your employees and advice, support and training throughout the year. We will help take the hassle out of your payroll admin and keep you compliant.

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

Our fees are competitive and 100% of our profits are gifted back to Connected Voice to further its charitable work in helping people and organisations.

To discuss our payroll service and request a quote, contact Sally Adams:

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.