

Spotlight

Digital

Featuring Citizens Advice Newcastle and Chopwell Community Centre

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Zoe Amar on how charities can use digital to improve diversity

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Funding and digital - what digital skills and online presence do funders expect now?

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About this magazine

Connected Voice 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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Issue 2: Digital

The theme for this edition is ‘Digital’. Most of us are aware of the importance of having digital skills and being present (and safe) online but research has shown that charities, community and social enterprise organisations are lagging behind in this area.

We share a few useful insights into how organisations are making the most of digital tools – CRMs, webchat, email and finance software. We also share how organisations, including our own, are helping other organisations and people in the local community

to become more digitally enabled. There’s useful insight in a special feature from digital expert, Zoe Amar about how digital can help charities to improve diversity and our own funding expert, Jack Summerside, offers his views on how digital has become more of a priority for funders (and what we should do about it). Lastly, we bring good news and updates from our Advocacy team about their services ●

Amy McKie, Marketing and Communications Officer

Embracing Digital

Lisa Goodwin
Chief Executive



Ignoring digital technology is no longer an option. Here’s what we plan to do

This edition has a focus on digital. As an organisation with a remit to support, advise and represent other VCSE organisations, digital support must be a key part of our offer. We will never claim to be experts in digital ourselves – technology moves too fast for that to happen – but we have a key role in ensuring organisations can access the support and advice they need to use digital effectively, and this is something we have a renewed focus on.

The charity digital report 2019 showed that the voluntary and community sector is behind in the adoption of digital and has a desire to address this. 68% of charities rate their board’s digital skills as low. 52% of charities have no digital strategy. Just 53% of charities are aware of emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, and only 12% are looking at how these developments could change their services. Charities know that they need to consider digital in the long term – but they need support to do this and that is where I hope we will begin to show more leadership on both embracing digital ourselves, and in supporting our members to do so.

I believe there are real benefits for charities in the development of digital technology. We will always need to be person-centred, but there are lots of examples of how use of digital can improve our support services and increase our engagement. Big data gives us the opportunity to understand and address issues in society like we have never been able to before. There is much for us all to learn about how we can do this safely, sensitively, and without leaving people behind – but ignoring advances in digital technology is no longer an option.

We are proud to be leading a new partnership with North Tyneside VODA and Northumberland CVA to offer a digital version of our training courses – more on page 10. This is the start of a new digital offer for our members. We won the NAVCA award for Embracing Digital last year – and we have a good track record of innovation thanks to the development of our DIY Advocate app, and the evolution of the OurGateshead website. But like most charities we have been a little slow to change many of our services to respond to an increasingly digital world. This has been for good reasons. We are custodians of public funds and we want to focus our resources where they are needed – on beneficiaries. Investing in technology and associated training can be expensive, so it isn’t something we tend to prioritise while demand is high. But we know that we all live in a digital world now. So with our new partnership we are taking our first steps using online training to increase the reach and flexibility of our support.

We can’t be the experts in digital – but we do have a key role as a connector and we can promote those organisations who are doing brilliant things with digital, so they can share their experiences and tools that help them. With that in mind, the theme of our AGM this year is **Doing Good in a Digital World**. Our AGM takes place on 21 April from 2pm at St Mary’s Heritage Centre in Gateshead. We are keen to showcase VCSE organisations in Newcastle and Gateshead who have had a positive impact using digital – so if that’s you, please get in touch. Look out for your invitation in your inbox (this is the first time we haven’t sent a paper invitation to our members with this magazine!) and please check our website for updates ●

Our Values: We amplify voices

Amy McKie
Marketing and
Communications Officer



How do our values reflect our ethos and the work that we do?

There are five core values that underpin all the work that we do. Over the next few issues of Connected Voice, we'll share with you how each of these values represent what we do.

We amplify voices.

From individuals to organisations, we believe everyone has a right to be heard.

Trusted to listen, understand and advocate, we strive for excellence. We're open and honest, we stick by people and give our support to ensure their voices are heard.

We have always supported people who struggle to be heard.

Our Advocacy service helps people understand their rights, to be heard and to advocate for themselves. Our Support and Development team hosts regular Focused Networking Events that give organisations a platform to share ideas, successes and challenges.

Haref gives Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities a chance to voice their health concerns directly to health providers and to work strategically to tackle specific issues.

OurGateshead provides a popular online space for people to share local news, events and activities.

'We amplify voices' feels more subtle for Charity Business Services. Relationships are built on trust, regular communication and a deep understanding of our client's financial needs. We give them the tools to be able to report confidently to funders, trustees and the Charity Commission.

Collectively, we amplify voices by campaigning on issues affecting the people and organisations we work with. We represent local organisations in strategic partnerships and influence funders, government departments and policy makers to achieve positive change. Our research gives people the chance to tell us what matters to them and helps us identify trends so we can present a connected voice to decision-makers in our region and beyond.

The theme of 'digital' is interesting in the context of amplifying voices. Digital technologies give us the power to share our stories far and wide but it is challenging to be heard in a noisy online world. For some of the people we work with, digital technologies are a real barrier when they are complex or inaccessible.

We must think creatively about how and where we communicate. As technology progresses, we are ready to embrace new ways of communicating whilst ensuring we still reach those who need to hear from us ●

A Brief Introduction to CiviCRM

William Mortada
Technology for
Social Purpose

A powerful digital tool with a growing support network for charities and community organisations

William is a website and database developer (mortada.co.uk) that specialises in supporting organisations with social purpose to make the best use of technology. We asked William to give us a brief insight into CiviCRM and why it is so popular with voluntary organisations.

I run a user group for organisations that use CiviCRM in the North East of England. CiviCRM is an open-source contact management system that is specifically designed for charities and non-profits. It is used by over 11,000 organisations around the world including a good number in the North East.

CiviCRM is a flexible system that can be used in a variety of different ways by different types of organisation. At its core it is a contact management system that allows you to track the history of interaction with your contacts, whether they are donors, clients, members, volunteers or supporters. It can be used for fundraising, membership, events, case management, email marketing and accounting. CiviCRM is a web-based system that can integrate with your website and payment processors. This means that you can take donations via your website and allow members or event attendees to sign up and pay through online forms.

I first came across CiviCRM about eight years ago and was struck by its ethos and the community around it. I think it is a great fit for voluntary organisations. CiviCRM is open-source software. This means that you can download it for free without having to pay a license fee.

More importantly, it means that anyone is free to make changes and improve the software. Rather than a single organisation developing their own custom system in-house, open-source software promotes a collaborative approach. CiviCRM users are encouraged to share their improvements so that everyone can benefit.

There is a strong and active community of CiviCRM users and developers who meet every three months in Newcastle. The next meeting is 9 May 2020.

You can get in touch with William by email on william@mortada.co.uk if you would like to know more ●



How Small Charities Can Use Digital to Improve Diversity

Zoe Amar FCIM
Zoe Amar Digital



Zoe Amar (pictured below) is Founder and Director of her own social enterprise organisation, Zoe Amar Digital. Zoe is also chair of the Charity Digital Code and co author of the Charity Digital Skills Report.

The charity sector should be flying the flag on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) but it's not

Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) is, like digital, one of the biggest issues facing our society at the moment.

From Laurence Fox's provocative, headline grabbing Twitter antics to newsreader Alistair Stewart's sacking over a deleted tweet, to the Football's Association's work to combat racism on the football pitch; making people of all backgrounds and perspectives feel safe, included and represented is an area which is both challenging but fraught in the divided times that we live in.

“Less than one in ten of charity sector employees are from BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) backgrounds



The charity sector should be flying the flag on EDI. But it's not. Less than one in ten (a mere 9%) of charity sector employees are from BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) backgrounds. This is a lower proportion than both the public and private sectors (both at 11%) and the UK population as a whole (14%). And representation worsens the higher we go in charities; just 5-8% of executive and non-

“The bottom line is if we don't make our organisations more inclusive we will miss out

The bottom line is that if we don't make our organisations more inclusive we will miss out on talent. Further, research has shown that diverse organisations outperform others financially. Over in the corporate and public sector, companies such as Lloyds

executive leaders in the sector are from BAME backgrounds. Meanwhile women account for just over a quarter (27.5%) of chair, CEO and CFO positions, and represent 41% of senior positions overall. Over three-quarters (77%) of chair positions are occupied by men.

So how should charities tackle this issue? As a BAME woman working in the sector I'm especially aware of how important this issue is. I'm often at meetings where I'm the only BAME person, and sometimes one of very few women, in a group of leaders. One of the reasons I set up a social enterprise seven years ago rather than apply for charity CEO roles is that there were very few people like me represented at leadership level in the sector.

Banking Group and PWC have invested significantly in diversity programmes. But what can you do if you're a small charity without a lot of money or time?

“It's not just enough to agree it's important

- The first thing to do is for leaders to make this a priority. It's not enough just to agree it's important. Talk without action is just lip service. Signing up to the ACEVO racial diversity principles on their website is a good place to begin.
- Then take a look at your data. Mapping out representation of race, gender, disability and other forms of non-visible diversity in your charity will help you establish a baseline and understand where you're at. Setting up a survey can be done easily and for free via online tools such as Google Forms or SurveyMonkey. Then look at the data with senior colleagues and decide how you can move your charity forward. Do you need to focus on training so people are more aware of the issues, changing recruitment practices or championing role models?

- Review how you recruit. If you're a charity who always recruits through the same networks, chances are you may get what you've always got, and may struggle to attract a more diverse range of candidates. Using social media you could ask partner organisations to spread the word about your vacancies. I would also make it clear in your content that diversity is a priority. I'm on the board at Charity Digital Trust and we spent time crafting our trustee adverts to ensure that diversity was stated as a clear priority in the job description on the website. We also included why it was important, i.e. a diverse board would help the charity create the digital products and services of tomorrow.

Using digital to research the issue, gather data and improve recruitment are good first steps towards helping your organisation unlock the power of EDI to be more sustainable and to better represent the communities you serve. But this is just the beginning. Being open to new ideas, challenge and learning as you go will be essential. Keep the conversation going with staff, beneficiaries and other stakeholders from different backgrounds and perspectives. Let them be your guide ●



Spotlight: Citizens Advice Newcastle

Shona Alexander
Chief Executive

Shona sheds light on Citizens Advice Newcastle's research into digital versus face-to-face services



Contact information

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What does your organisation do?

Many people don't realise that we are a local charity. We have been around since 1939, so there is an assumption that we are part of the statutory services. It's also assumed that we are a branch of the national Citizens Advice Charity. Neither is true. While we are members of the national charity, and work very closely together as a network, we are independent - a separate charity and not-for-profit company managed by a local voluntary trustee board. All our services are focused on the specific needs of Newcastle people, which is why we do things a bit differently to our colleagues in other local Citizens Advice offices. For instance, research and campaigns work is really important to us, and we have great support from the local Millfield House Foundation which allows us to drive forward projects like the Living Wage Campaign.

66 We help over 12,000 people a year

We help over 12,000 people a year, with more than 30,000 different problems. The main areas of enquiry are debt, welfare benefits, home energy, immigration and employment. The advice is provided by a staff team of 23 together with around 50 specially trained volunteers. All of their

work involves digital technology - case recording, phone calls, text messaging, online benefit claims, web-based application forms, and correspondence by e-mail. Everyone uses computer tablets, mobile phones and laptop computers, and the digital technology enables more people to be advised more quickly.

Tell us about your key projects and the impact of digital?

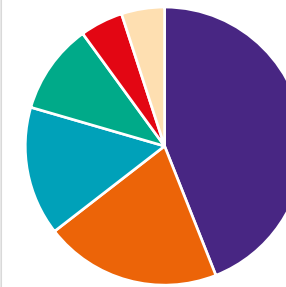
Based on the fourth floor of City Library, the charity regularly advises between 60 - 70 clients at each daily drop-in session - a 300% increase from three years ago when we were in the old Nelson Street premises.

Demand for face-to-face advice continues to increase year on year, despite the huge drive to prioritise "digital by default" for many other services, including Citizens Advice nationally.

Citizens Advice Newcastle commissioned Newcastle University to investigate why so many people still prefer to come to a drop-in session for their face-to-face advice. Many clients had tried to access advice digitally, but still wanted face-to-face help.

A significant and growing issue for clients is the difficulty they have in contacting organisations to try to resolve their problems

Why people who sought advice online didn't feel it brought them closer to solving their problem



- Issue was too complex
- Had to bring in physical documents
- Didn't understand the advice online
- Online advice didn't specify clear actions to take
- Couldn't find the issue online
- Other

Photos courtesy of
Greening Citizens Advice
Newcastle

Above left: Results from the Newcastle University research. The research also found that 46% of people who attended a drop in session before looking online did so because they prefer to speak to someone in person or because it was more convenient (14%)

Above right: Citizens Advice reception in Newcastle City Library

themselves. Getting through by phone to the Department for Work and Pensions, the Council, home energy providers and even the phone companies themselves can be very time consuming and frustrating. Many clients don't even have sufficient credit on their phone to be able to wait for their call to be answered. Webchat with these same organisations can also be difficult and very often doesn't help to resolve the client's problems.

Increasingly, the charity is dealing with clients in destitution; those who are living on very little or even no money, with no food or fuel in their homes. Demand for food bank vouchers and emergency top-ups for pre-payment fuel meters has never been higher. This direct help is just not available digitally, so for some people the face-to-face sessions are a lifeline.

66 For some people the face-to-face sessions are a lifeline

Chief Executive Shona Alexander says, "We are gearing our advice services to use digital technology as much as possible so that people can access us quickly and easily using different channels. However, for some clients there is just no substitute for face-to-face advice. I think there is a real risk that we discount face-to-face advice as being old fashioned and out-of-date. The simple truth is that it works."



"There are, rightly, increasing concerns about people's loneliness, vulnerability and isolation. Our face-to-face advice is personable, friendly and free - as it has been for over 80 years. Crucially, our fantastic volunteers love it. They will openly admit that the main reason they come here is to help people and for them, just putting a smile on a worried client's face makes it all worthwhile. That's why our face-to-face advice sessions are so popular."

"We know that we need to do more phone and webchat advice. At present we get 2,000 calls a month but we are only ever able to answer around 7% of them because we simply don't have the resources to meet demand. We are committed to finding new funding to ensure that we develop these digital services without cutting our face-to-face advice sessions."

How has Connected Voice supported you?

We were originally set up in 1939 by the Tyneside Council for Social Service, which is the ancestor of Connected Voice! Connected Voice helps us to keep in touch with the voluntary and community sector network in Newcastle and further afield. They also ensure that our concerns and ambitions are known to decision makers, particularly funders. We really like the recent changes which have been made, and look forward to working even closer together ●

Using Digital to Advance People's Knowledge

Giovanni Spatuzzi
Infrastructure Support Manager



Giovanni shares news of an exciting new digital training opportunity

Throughout its 90 year history Connected Voice has worked in partnership to develop innovative services, projects, partnerships and organisations that address social problems.

In a new partnership with Northumberland CVA and North Tyneside VODA, we're looking at how we can develop a new digital training platform that will help us to better meet the needs of the people and communities we serve.

The partnership's aim is to advance people's knowledge and practice by giving volunteers, trustees and staff the opportunity to access online training 24/7. This will give people more choice and flexibility, and help them to overcome barriers that may be preventing them from taking advantage of face-to-face training, such as capacity and geography. The digital training will allow us to expand our current offer of support, information sheets and face-to-face training.

The partnership, led by Connected Voice, secured £15,000 over 12 months from the National Lottery Community Fund to design, produce, trial and test digital training packages

on Good Governance, Good Fundraising, and Volunteers and the Law. We selected these topics because they are our most frequently requested and well attended sessions. During the trial and test period, we will offer these one hour training courses to people for free via the online platform Teachable, where each participant can receive a certificate. As the training courses are at no direct cost to participants, we will ask each person for feedback to improve the training. We're aiming to have the trial online training courses available from July 2020.

Following the free trial and test period, the partnership will then sell each training course for £20 per person; a fee that was considered reasonable and affordable from our consultation with a number of local organisations. Our goal is to create a self-sustaining income generation project that is not dependent on grant funding. Although the promotion of the digital training will focus on our respective areas, any person willing to pay, can use the training ●

Connected Voice
Connecting People
Supporting Action



The Haref Bulletin: When email is used effectively

Vicki Harris
Haref Coordinator



Vicki makes the case for why email is still a valuable digital tool

In our modern world of technological advances, email might feel a little old fashioned. It's a sign of how rapidly things have evolved that less than 20 years ago we asked our members if they would like to receive their information bulletins by email instead of post - a move that was met with initial caution and nervousness. However, email remains an effective way for us to share snapshots of news and useful updates in a format that is easily accessible for most of the people we work with.

The Haref bulletin started life over 10 years ago as an information email for the Haref Network. Today, anyone can subscribe to the Haref bulletin and we now send monthly updates to over 570 people. This includes contacts in the Newcastle and Gateshead Clinical Commissioning Group and local GP surgeries. The Haref bulletin is for anyone who is interested in tackling health inequalities for BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) communities and improving how services are delivered.

The bulletin has 4 themes:

- Haref updates (meetings with the Haref Network and Haref Allies, and key issues that we are taking action on)
- Updates for health and social care practitioners
- Local groups, activities and events for BAME communities
- Reports, resources and voluntary/paid opportunities

It has proved to be important for connecting BAME communities to relevant local events, informing people about key health issues, and promoting engagement opportunities and training for local people and practitioners to ensure more people from BAME communities can have their say and improve their skills.

We also campaign about key barriers for service accessibility, and use the bulletin to promote examples of good practice, such as Doctors of the World's 'Safe Surgeries' or Maternity Action's support around NHS charging regulations.

The Haref bulletin belongs to everyone, so if you have information about an event or a project you are doing, which is relevant for our BAME communities, then get in touch with vicki.harris@connectedvoice.org.uk and we can include this for you. If you would like to sign up for the bulletin, go to our home page www.connectedvoice.org.uk ●

“Thank you very much for the bulletin and publicity regarding our application to Crowdfunder. We have reached £10,000 and we are going to meet and celebrate this Sunday

“Just thought I would let you know that I think the HAREF bulletin not only looks good it has loads of things that I think are really useful

Spotlight: Chopwell Community Centre

Tracey Charlton-Drewett
Centre Manager

At the heart of Chopwell, giving people the skills they need to become more digitally included



Contact information

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Centre Manager

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What does your organisation do?

Chopwell Community Centre was first set up in 1975. The centre is there for everyone who lives in the village and we offer all sorts of clubs and activities for all ages, from toddlers and youth clubs through to bowls and ukulele lessons. There are two Citizens Advice sessions per week and we offer free access to computers for those who need them.

Tell us about your key projects?

In the last year, we have provided more opportunities for people in our community to improve their

digital skills. We recognise that this is particularly important for older people. The Gateshead Housing Company and Digital Voice, who are based here at Chopwell Community Centre, have partnered to offer a basic digital skills course that is free to learners. It helps them to get online, stay safe and keep in touch.

We're also working in partnership with Digital Voice and Friends of Chopwell Park to deliver a project called Chopwell Past and Present, which has been very well attended. Chopwell has an interesting past and many people have lived here all their lives. The project engages people with old photos

Photos courtesy of
Chopwell Community
Centre and Digital Voice

Right: Old photos from the archive have been merged with modern images to bring the history of Chopwell to life



Photos courtesy of
Chopwell Community
Centre and Digital Voice

Above: The history club working together to digitise images and create a display

and memories. Volunteers scan the photos that people bring in and we train people scan images and record audio memories. Learners have created their own digital stories using scanned photos and images they've found online to document our living history.

We are about to start a digital skills project with Chopwell Primary School and the local fire brigade. Digital Voice will work with the pupils to create short films about fire safety and carbon monoxide. They will hold an event here for the kids to present their information to the rest of the community to raise awareness, providing an important public service, at the same time as developing digital skills.

"We helped build it. It's the hub of the community and it gets better and better." Terry Armoury.

"It's a buzzing place with lots of things happening, good for social integration and there's adults and children clubs going on so it's all ages. People need to learn digital skills to keep up with the world in a way that's interesting to them, keeps them in the loop." Teresa Docherty.

"It's a lifeline for me- I spend most of me time in here, cos I'm retired now, I do crafting, bowls and volunteer at the community café. It's really improved and is being used a lot more now. It's the heart of the village." Kathy Knott

“ We hope to increase access to digital skills for the community

We hope to increase access to digital skills for the community, so we can support people to become more digitally included.

What do people say about your organisation?

“ It's a buzzing place with lots of things happening, good for social integration

How has Connected Voice supported you?

Over the years we have been helped by Connected Voice in various ways; with general advice on all sorts of matters. They are very supportive with fundraising and recently helped us write a new constitution and policies. Mark Shilcock helped us put our timetable on the Our Gateshead website ●



Funding and Digital

Jack Summerside
Infrastructure Officer



Jack shares useful advice on your approach to funding and digital technologies

It's not so long ago that many funders would specifically exclude funding for digital outputs from their criteria, or the list of things they would be prepared to fund. It shows just how fast things have moved over even just the last 5 years that the past few years that now national funders are coming together to work collaboratively on supporting charities with digital. Towards the end of last year the Catalyst was launched, a major project involving funders including the National Lottery and Comic Relief, with the aim of 'bringing a social purpose to the digital revolution'.

You might not be looking to deliver a digital-focused project or activity at the moment (though perhaps now is the right time to consider again if you should be) – but if you're looking for funding there are a whole host of reasons why digital skills and solutions are increasingly important, and in many cases essential.

Firstly, if you're looking for potential funding sources, the majority of funding directories have moved online. Although organisations like Directory of Social Change dsc.org still publish directories of funders, they aren't cheap, aren't updated as frequently and increasingly such organisations are targeting their resources to online reference materials. It's really only a matter of time before the traditional printed directories will disappear altogether. Our local FINE directory has now moved online and ceased printing hard copy funding guides.

Secondly, the majority of funders now concentrate on their websites as the means to publicise and explain the types of funding streams they offer, their criteria, and priorities for what they want to fund.

Thirdly, there are very few funders who will now allow you to submit an application by post, on a paper application form. This is fine for saving paper, and in many circumstances it's quicker and easier to prepare and submit an online application. But if you don't have those skills, you're at a distinct disadvantage.

Now is definitely the time to take a hard look at your own digital skills, or those available within your organisation, and to upskill if you need to. Many of us involved in community organisations aren't in our first flush of youth – that's often what allows us the time to get more involved in civic life outside the constraints of work and family – and that can often mean we're less adept or confident in using digital. However, it really isn't as difficult or frightening as many of us think.

Funders will check out applicants' online presence

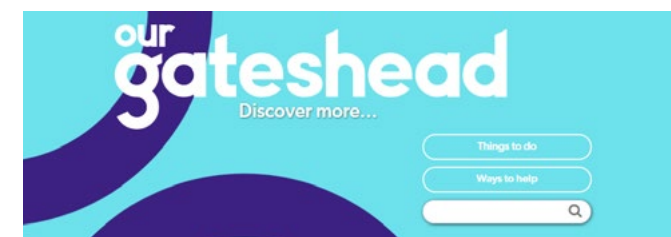
Increasing your digital capacity, as some funders describe it – which basically means you're your organisation getting digital skills and putting them to use – is something that funders are increasingly interested in. This is because they recognise that the environment we work in is moving more and more online – from doing your books, to dealing with the Charity Commission, HMRC, Companies House, funders, banks, or service-providers – and community, charity and social enterprise organisation are in danger of being left behind. The Charity Digital Report (2019) found that 52% of charities have no digital strategy and just 53% are aware of emerging digital technologies.

Funders may check out applicants online presence – and you do have one, whether you realise it or not – such as checking your details on your profile on the Charity Commission website. They'll also look at your website, your social media, and a simple Google search will quickly reveal any local news stories about your organisation – whether that's good or bad publicity.

That's why it's especially important to think about how you want to use digital to engage with the public. It doesn't have to be fancy or expensive, but it does need to be something you can actually use. Have you tried an online search about your organisation, and see what comes up? Better still, get someone who knows nothing about your organisation to look you up, and ask for their honest opinion. Lots of organisations have an outdated website, often built for them by a staff member or volunteer who has now left, taking the ability to update the site with them...and sometimes even the password. Few things are less impressive to a potential funder

Few things are less impressive to a potential funder than an inaccurate, outdated website

than an inaccurate, outdated website, proudly announcing your most recent event to be your 2012 Olympics themed Summer Fair. You'd be far better off not having a website at all, and using whichever social media platform you're most comfortable with using. Whatever you choose, make sure your organisation has an up-to-date listing on the relaunched OurGateshead.org website (if you are based in or cover Gateshead) or InformationNow (in Newcastle) where you can manage a page about your organisation, to make sure you have an accurate and trusted online presence.



Above: The new OurGateshead.org. Managing a page on a community website such as this can sometimes be more effective than having your own site

Connected Voice currently offers training sessions in Cyber Security, and our Funding Advice and support can help you with some useful tools and tips in negotiating some of the digital hurdles in the world of fundraising. We can also signpost you to digital skills providers – just get in touch.

If you're confident with going online, here are some useful links to take a look at; from support around innovation, to developing your digital capacity, or potential funding for tackling digital exclusion. And if you're not confident – and maybe that's the point of this article – what better time than now to do something about it?

- **Catalyst** <https://medium.com/wethecatalysts> a new collaborative project to accelerate UK civil society's use of digital
- **CAST (Centre for Acceleration of Social Technology)** <https://wearecast.org.uk/> working to create a more responsive, resilient and digitally-enabled social sector
- **North East Social Tech Fund** <https://airtable.com/shrjFnESPbOO9g3AK> a pilot programme to support local charities to adopt emerging technologies.
- **National Lottery Community Fund – Digital fund** <https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/programmes/digital-fund>
- **Gateshead Housing Company Community Fund** <https://www.gatesheadhousing.co.uk/a-guide-to-our-community-fund/> tackling digital exclusion amongst Gateshead residents is one of its priorities
- **'The charity worker and the digital service designer'** <http://digitalfable.org.uk/> – an entertaining guide through the basics of digital service design

Keep an eye on the funding pages of our website for news of when currently closed funds re-open, for other potential funders for digital and other types of work. Why not think about preparing a project bid well in advance, and be ready to submit straight away? And if you need support and guidance, just give our Support and Development team a call on 0191 232 7445.

Alternatively you can email us on sdteam@connectedvoice.org.uk ●

Charity Business Services

Michelle Wright
Charity Business Services
Assistant Manager



Michelle encourages us to all make the switch and go digital

Going digital with your finance is a straight forward transition that comes with many advantages:

- Streamline the way data is entered and how reports are extracted
- Conduct regular internal analysis of your finances
- Strengthen financial procedures
- Record financial data quickly, more accurately and always have up-to-date information

We have been recommending accounting software to our larger customers for a while but now that online accounting software is easily accessible and affordable, there is no reason why all of our customers can't make the switch. In the last 12 months we have provided training and support to 11 of our customers to go digital with their accounting and we'll be helping a further four organisations in the coming months. Feedback has been extremely positive so far:

"It has changed my life"

"It is really easy to use"

"Getting information for the board is fast and up to date"

You do not need to be an expert in finances to make the switch, and we have many support options to get you up and running. Just contact one of our team and we can discuss your needs individually.

Payroll and Auto Enrolment – important dates

The end of the tax year is approaching so now is a good time to make sure you are up to date with the legislative changes that will come into force on the 6 April; minimum wage will be increasing across each band, and there are changes being made to employment allowance and the eligibility criteria to claim from 6 April.

Key dates for payroll are:

- 5 April – end of the 2019/20 tax year
- 6 April – start of the 2020/21 tax year, changes and updates come into effect
- 3 May – deadline for issuing P60's to all those who were employed on 5 April

Don't forget we provide a fully managed affordable payroll service with guidance on how to input data correctly into accountancy software or financial recording tools, and can review your current systems to ensure that your organisation is compliant and processing in the most efficient way.

If you need support with any items mentioned in this article, please contact Charity Business Services on 0191 235 7020.

Alternatively, you can email us on cbsteam@connectedvoice.org.uk ●

Cyber Security: Top tips

Mark Shilcock
OurGateshead Officer



Mark offers some useful tips about how to stay safe online

Cyber security is an increasingly important part of running an organisation. Connected voice has been working with the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) to run training sessions to improve the skills and knowledge of charities and voluntary organisation in Newcastle and Gateshead and help everyone to protect themselves online.

Here are two simple tips you can do right away to better protect your organisation:

Tip 1 – How to make your passwords secure

Remembering long random passwords can be difficult. This results in people using patterns that are easily guessed. The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) recommend creating passwords using 3 random words with a number and a symbol.

For example: CheeseHouseBlue43@

As well as being easier to remember, passwords following these guidelines will take 6 years for a hacker to break. This compares to 6 seconds for commonly used password/patterns e.g. P@sswOrd123

Tip 2 – You do not need to remember all your passwords

You only need to remember the passwords that give you access to sensitive information. For example:

- You computer/phone/tablet: These need to be securer as access to these will enable someone to access you emails /files and possibly your organisations servers/network

- Your Email: Your email address is often used to reset passwords. If someone has access to your emails, they can easily reset our passwords to all your systems.
- Your banking system: Access to this allows anyone to set up payments to themselves or purchase items using your organisation money.
- Databases that contain personal information.

For other account passwords, the NCSC recommend that you use software that will generate and save your passwords. If your computer is secured using the recommended 3 word, number and symbol password mentioned above, you can use the 'remember password' feature built into most internet browsers.

Connected Voice will be running a series of free Skills Building Sessions on Cyber Security for Small Charities throughout the year. We can also run a dedicated session at your organisation to bring all your staff up to date on the latest ways to protect yourselves from Cyber crime (This is a paid for service).

Visit our website to find out more or email mark.shilcock@connectedvoice.org.uk ●



Connect, Diversify and Act

Jane Kingston
Senior Advocacy
Co-ordinator



Bringing advocacy to more people who need it

Here in Connected Voice Advocacy, we've always strived to think of new and innovative ways we can respond to current issues, keep our services available, and crucially, support those who need our services the most. In the last issue of Connected Voice we talked about our app DIY Advocate®. This time we want to highlight our lesser-known advocacy contract services which make a huge difference to people's lives.

- **Offering a local advocate** – we have strong links with councils around the country and deliver bespoke advocacy contracts for people placed for care and treatment in the north east out of their ordinary area. This proves more cost effective and efficient for councils and the individual benefits from having a local advocate.
- **Specialist mental health advocacy** – Connected Voice is the preferred provider in the Autism Inpatient Unit (Mitford), a national service based in Northgate Hospital Morpeth. Our team of advocates are trained in neurological conditions and deliver the Independent Mental Health Advocate service for adults with Autistic Spectrum Disorder.
- **Supporting people who are not eligible for statutory advocacy** – some people are legally entitled to statutory advocacy but the legal roles do not cover many issues that people face. We meet this gap by delivering bespoke services where commissioning authorities choose to contract issue-based advocacy. Examples of this include providing a voice for individuals and helping them navigate legal proceedings for Child Protection or Court of Protection cases.

- **Personal injury claim support** – we ensure Solicitors and Case Managers put advocacy on the agenda for people with personal injury claims. We design bespoke packages of advocacy support for individuals who require an independent advocate to have their voice heard in planning rehabilitation, care, accommodation packages, and every day issues.

"Advocacy enables us to get the views and wishes of clients we would not normally get"

"The model of Advocacy within Mitford should be adopted throughout England. I am impressed by the innovative ways advocacy uses to communicate with clients."

"You have done really good work with M. After your visit we have noticed a difference in her autonomy and ability to say 'no' with people; you have done great work helping her understand her rights"

"I would like to commend the advocate... he has spent time with [client] in advance of meetings, gently helping her to express her views and her worries. I have seen the [client] become more confident in sharing her views and even feeling able to challenge professionals' judgements and assumptions."

If you would like to know more about our specialist contract advocacy services, please get in touch.

Call 0191 235 7013 or email advocacy@connectedvoice.org.uk ●

Challenging Hate

Paul Whitlock
Senior Advocacy
Co-ordinator



Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner, Kim McGuinness, continues to support our Hate Crime Advocacy Service.

We're delighted to be awarded funding for the fourth year running by the Police and Crime Commissioner for Northumbria to provide our Hate Crime Advocacy Service.

What is hate crime?

A hate crime is a crime that you think was motivated by prejudice or hate because of what you look like or how you live your life. This can include your (or someone else's):

- Disability (including mental health and learning disability)
- Race
- Religion
- Sexual orientation

Hate crimes can include:

- Verbal abuse
- Harassment
- Physical attacks such as hitting, punching, pushing or spitting
- Threats of violence
- Hoax calls, abusive phone or text messages or hate mail
- Online abuse, for example on Facebook or Twitter
- Displaying or circulating discriminatory literature or posters
- Damage to things such as your home, pet or vehicle
- Arson (setting fires)

“I think your service is great as without it a lot of people like myself would not get the help and advice we need.”

Our Hate Crime Advocacy Service

In the first 9 months of 2019/20 our Hate Crime Advocacy service:

- Supported over a hundred people (a 40% increase on previous years) who have been victimised by hate incidents across all the above strands.
- Supported people from Gateshead, Newcastle, North Tyneside, Northumberland, South Tyneside and Sunderland.
- Provided advocacy support to people with a wide range of issues including: reporting hate incidents; navigating through criminal justice procedures and police investigations; securing appropriate safe accommodation; having action taken against harassment; accessing services; making complaints; employment, benefits and education

As a result of our support, victims of hate crime have been listened to and had their experiences validated, had advocacy support to take appropriate action and ensure their voices are heard, and been provided with truly independent support to challenge decisions across the statutory and public sectors.

In a recent evaluation of our service users:

- 80% of respondents rated the service excellent and 20% good.
- 100% of respondents said they would recommend the service.

To find out more, call 0191 235 7013 or email advocacy@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.

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

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

Charity Business
Services

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

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

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



@ConnectedVoice_



@ConnectedVoiceCharity



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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.