



Humber and North Yorkshire  
Health and Care Partnership

# VCSE Collaborative: Project Overview 2022-26

May 2026





# Contents

<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Message from former Chair of the VCSE Collaborative ...</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Message from the Head of VCSE.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Feedback from VCSE Collaborative Place Leads.....</b>	<b>6 - 8</b>
<b>Volunteers at the Heart of the System .....</b>	<b>9 - 10</b>
<b>VCSE Workforce Mapping .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Cardiovascular Health.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Social Prescribing .....</b>	<b>13 - 15</b>
<b>Green Social Prescribing .....</b>	<b>16 - 18</b>
<b>Community Transport .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Community Leadership Programme .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Cancer Innovation Grants .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Representing the wider VCSE sector .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>VCSE Expo .....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>VCSE Case studies .....</b>	<b>23 - 24</b>
<b>Children and Young People Core Connector Programme..</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Research Engagement Network (REN) .....</b>	<b>26 - 29</b>
<b>Building Vaccination Capacity.....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Personal Health Budgets.....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>VCSE NHS App Rollout Support.....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>With thanks .....</b>	<b>33</b>

# Introduction

This highlights report captures the collective work and achievements of the VCSE Collaborative and its representatives throughout 2022 – 2026.

From 2022 - 2026, the Humber and North Yorkshire Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Collaborative represented the wider VCSE sector across East Riding, Hull, North East Lincolnshire, North Lincolnshire, North Yorkshire and the Vale of York.

The VCSE Collaborative comprised of Place Leads from VCSE sector infrastructure organisations and representatives from our six places, alongside representatives from the NHS, and the VCSE Collaborative staff team.

Up until December 2025, the VCSE Collaborative sat within the governance structure of the Humber and North Yorkshire Health and Care Partnership and was equal to the other Collaboratives of Mental Health, Primary Care, Acute and Community.

The VCSE sector is an important partner for statutory health and social care organisations and plays a key role in improving health and care outcomes for its communities, not only by delivering services but also by shaping their design and advocating for, representing and amplifying the voice of service users, patients, and carers.

Through out the duration of the VCSE Collaborative, the aim was to enable the potential and impact of the VCSE sector to be realised by being fully integrated into the planning, design and delivery of health and care across Humber and North Yorkshire, as is highlighted throughout the [NHS Long Term Plan](#).



Community First  
Yorkshire



North  
Lincolnshire



Humber and North Yorkshire  
Health and Care Partnership

Sector Support  
North East Lincolnshire  
Partnership

forum

Smile  
foundation

**NHS**  
Humber and  
North Yorkshire  
Integrated Care Board (ICB)

# Message from the Former VCSE Collaborative Chair

The diversity of our voluntary and community sector in Humber and North Yorkshire is amazing. It includes small self-help groups and national charities employing skilled staff and supporting volunteers all committed to making a difference.

The voluntary and community sector is our greatest asset and our best kept secret. It achieves powerful things every day, providing help and support when people need it and plays an important role in supporting communities to have a voice. It achieves things that others can't and makes things happen because they are the right things to do. I am proud to have spent most of my career in the voluntary and community sector and for the opportunities I have had to see first hand the difference you make and to have had the chance to work alongside many of you.

Four years ago, I was asked to take on the challenge of establishing our VCSE Collaborative, working alongside a group of committed Chief Executives and Gary and his small team. I was always clear that our Collaborative would focus on enhancing and developing our role in delivering vital services within our local communities and maximising the potential of future partnership opportunities across organisations and sectors. I wanted us to shine a light on things that were taken for granted or went unseen. I wanted to celebrate everything you do.

**As we approach a new world of strategic commissioning and neighbourhood health, the ICB remains strongly committed to our relationship with the voluntary and community sector. We cannot meet any of the challenges that lie ahead without maximising the skills, knowledge and experience that you bring.**



**Jason Stamp**

Chair of the Humber and North Yorkshire NHS Integrated Care Board (ICB) and former Chair of the Humber and North Yorkshire VCSE Collaborative

# Message from the Head of VCSE

Over the last few years, the VCSE Collaborative has worked within Humber and North Yorkshire's Integrated Care Board (HNY ICB) to strengthen connections between the VCSE sector and health and care, and to ensure the VCSE is recognised as a strategic partner.

I am proud to have led the Collaborative through this period, and the team should be proud of what they have delivered. Together, we have enabled VCSE organisations across HNY to engage in a wide range of programmes that have improved outcomes for our population and supported the ICB to deliver its priorities.

The VCSE sector continues to impress me with its reach into communities and with groups who are too often underserved. Across HNY there are thousands of organisations of all sizes, united by a common purpose: supporting people. It has been a privilege to help bring that dedication, care and expertise into closer partnership with the NHS.

The Collaborative has also been a strong advocate for the sector - helping NHS colleagues understand the VCSE's role and value, and supporting practical partnership working between organisations. These relationships are already making a difference for people and communities, and they create real opportunity for what we do next. Put simply, working together helps people stay well, helps close the gap in health outcomes, and supports more support in communities - not just in hospitals.

This document captures a moment in time and celebrates what has been achieved since the VCSE Collaborative was established. It is not, however, the end. As the NHS continues through significant transformation, our ICB has reconfirmed its commitment to the VCSE as a key partner as we deliver the NHS 10 Year Plan: Fit for the Future.

Thank you to the team for your hard work; to our VCSE Collaborative members for your leadership and advocacy; and to the many partners and colleagues we have worked with over the years.

**I hope you find this a helpful overview of our work to date, and I look forward to continuing this partnership in the years ahead.**



**Gary Sainty**  
Head of VCSE



**Watch 'An introduction to the VCSE Collaborative'**

# Hull



The Hull VCSE assembly was established in 2022 as part of the commissioned infrastructure contract (Sector Connect) delivered in partnership by Forum CIO and Hull CVS. The assembly is held monthly and regularly has attendance of between 45 – 50 VCSE organisations, with a mix of information sharing and networking.

Since the establishment of the ICB VCSE collaborative we have had a standing agenda item to update the sector on the work of the ICB, opportunities to work with the wider system and more recently changes that may affect them.

Over the last 6 months we have amended the agenda item to Neighbourhood Health, giving updates to the sector about new ways of working. This has involved regular attendance by our Place leaders. We have recently moved to a model alternating general sessions with themed assemblies to better explore ways of collaboratively working and facilitate market engagement.

**Gail Baines, Co-Chief Officer, Forum CIO**

# East Riding



The East Riding VCSE Alliance has played a vital role in strengthening collaboration, communication and collective action across one of the largest and most geographically diverse areas in the Humber region. Through active participation in the VCSE Collaborative, organisations across East Riding have benefited from stronger connections with statutory partners, increased opportunities to influence strategic decision-making, and improved access to funding and development opportunities.

The collaborative approach has helped create a more connected and resilient sector, enabling organisations of all sizes to share learning, identify common challenges and work together to address local priorities. This has been particularly evident through joint responses to emerging community needs, the development of place-based initiatives, and increased engagement with health, care and wider public sector partners.

By providing a trusted forum for partnership working, the VCSE Collaborative has strengthened the voice of the sector within East Riding, ensuring that communities, volunteers and local organisations are better represented in conversations that shape services and investment. The result is a more coordinated, informed and influential VCSE sector that continues to deliver positive outcomes for residents across the East Riding.

**Jamie Lewis, Chief Executive, Hey Smile Foundation**

# North East Lincolnshire

**Sector Support**  
North East Lincolnshire  
Partnership

Working with the HNY ICB through the VCSE Collaborative in North East Lincolnshire (NEL) has meant greater opportunities for organisations, communities and individuals to participate in contributing direct insight into how people interact with and relate to health services and the barriers and challenges people face in approaching and accessing services - particularly for those whose voice is seldom heard.

It's meant that relationships and connections between organisations and networks within the VCSE sector in NEL and the HNY ICB have been forged with opportunities to take part in and contribute to events, workshops, and research across the region. A wide range of organisations have been engaged on key priorities such as cardiovascular disease (CVD) insights, vaccine hesitancy, and social prescribing, enabling VCSE partners to gain awareness of system priorities and the HNY ICB to gain awareness of individual and communities' perspectives on what matters to them.

**Jennifer Johnson, Delivery Manager, Sector Support NEL Partnership**

# North Lincolnshire



The Humber and North Yorkshire VCSE Collaborative has played an important role in strengthening partnership working and system leadership within North Lincolnshire. Through support from the ICB and collaborative working across place leads, we have been able to develop and grow the North Lincolnshire VCFSE Assembly into a stronger and more representative forum for the sector.

The Collaborative has created opportunities for conversations between the VCFSE sector, health partners, and statutory organisations, helping to strengthen relationships and increase recognition of the value the sector brings within local health and care systems. This has supported engagement around priorities including women's health, integrated neighbourhood working, student placements, and winter planning.

Like many places, North Lincolnshire continues to face challenges linked to funding pressures and limited capacity across the voluntary sector. Balancing place-based priorities with wider system priorities has not always been easy, however these discussions have been constructive and have helped develop a better shared understanding of local need, capacity, and opportunities for collaboration.

**Debra Taylor, Joint Chief Executive, Citizens Advice North Lincolnshire**

# North Yorkshire



The VCSE Collaborative has strengthened the relationship between the VCSE sector and health across North Yorkshire (NY). The VCSE Collaborative has created a forum for shared learning, problem-solving, and stronger strategic alignment across a wide and diverse footprint which has enabled the VCSE sector to engage more meaningfully in health system planning, ensuring community insight and lived experience are embedded in service design and delivery.

For NY, this has increased visibility, influence, and partnership opportunities for local VCSE organisations. Through funded opportunities via the Collaborative, we have engaged with grassroots organisations to extend reach into inclusion health communities in mitigating the impact of health inequalities.

A key success has been the establishment of the NY VCSE Assembly which has brought together VCSE leaders from across the region with the aim to help shape services and make strategic and operational decisions across health and care. The assembly has helped deliver a centralised mechanism for engaging with the wider VCSE sector across NY. This has strengthened two-way relationships - bringing the ICB closer to the VCSE sector in NY and equally ensuring the VCSE voice is heard within the ICB.

**Dena Dalton, Deputy Chief Executive / Head of Health Collaboration,  
Community First Yorkshire**

# York



The York VCSE Assembly has not only strengthened connections between York's VCSE sector and local and regional health partnerships, but has also acted as a vital conduit for partnership working and collaboration within the sector. It has created space for organisations to come together, share insight, and collectively contribute to the strategic planning and delivery of health and care services across the city.

Participation in the VCSE Collaborative has further highlighted the critical role of the VCSE sector - not only in engaging directly with communities, but in bringing diverse perspectives, lived experience, and professional expertise into decision-making. This reinforces the importance of ensuring the VCSE sector remains central to shaping and influencing the design and delivery of health and care services across the region.

**Alison Semmence, Chief Executive Officer, York CVS**



# Volunteers at the Heart of the System

The Volunteers at the Heart of the System group has provided powerful cross-sector leadership, uniting partners to place volunteers at the heart of our health and care agenda and securing £10m Volunteering for Health funding.

The group was established as part of the Humber and North Yorkshire Breakthrough Workforce Transformation programme. Its core purpose has been to champion the strategic role of volunteering in health and care, ensuring that volunteering is recognised not as an “add-on”, but as a vital and integral component of a sustainable, people-centred health and care system.

From its outset, the group has sought to influence system thinking and culture, showing how inclusive, well-designed volunteering supports workforce resilience, improves experience of care, and provides a vital pipeline into the future health and care workforce.

## **Collaboration and influence**

A defining strength has been the group’s ability to convene, connect and influence, bringing together:

- VCSE infrastructure organisations and frontline delivery partners
- NHS Trusts and primary care representatives
- ICB colleagues across workforce, education and transformation functions
- Local authority partners
- Lived experience voices, and volunteers

This breadth of involvement in sharing practice and collectively shaping solutions has ensured our work reflects real-world challenges and opportunities, supports co-production, and builds a shared understanding of what “good” looks like.

The group commissioned two key reports which highlighted variation, innovation and opportunity across the system, and have helped to shape priorities and inform decision-making.

[Scoping of Volunteering Practices within Humber and North Yorkshire \(June 2023\)](#)



[Scoping of potential for volunteering in social care across Humber and North Yorkshire \(May 2025\)](#)



## Volunteering for Health programme and funding

A major achievement of the group's work was securing £10 million over 3 years through the national Volunteering for Health programme, enabling the system to test, develop and embed new approaches and strengthen volunteering infrastructure.

Since its launch in 2024, the programme has focused on three key goals:

1. **Scaling up and increasing capacity within organisations to support youth volunteering**
2. **Growing connection and partnership to improve pathways into and through volunteering**
3. **Creating a sustainable commitment to youth volunteering through strategic planning**

Working with 8 of our NHS Trusts to collectively improve, develop or launch new youth volunteering opportunities and ways of working.

Working with our local infrastructure organisations to collate and develop a youth volunteering toolkit of resources, guidance and inspiration.

Working with a consultant to identify local needs and opportunities to develop an evidence-based framework for a youth volunteer passport.

Running a Test and Learn with three youth and education organisations to support young people into volunteering and inform our passport development.

System-wide engagement and mapping to create an "eco-system" of organisations that sit around the youth volunteer pathway.

Capturing learning, insights and emerging impact to inform future investment and springboard a Humber and North Yorkshire volunteer strategy.

## Looking ahead: Sustaining collaboration beyond the VCSE Collaborative

The work of Volunteers at the Heart of the System has laid strong foundations for continuing system-wide collaboration and a shared vision for volunteering and long-term commitment to championing its value across our health and care system. The group's work demonstrates how strong VCSE and statutory partnerships can drive system change, keeping volunteers at the heart of the system in practice, not just principle.

**A huge thank you to all members past and present who've made this possible, particularly those who've contributed significant time and expertise to specific projects.**



# VCSE Workforce Research Project provided vital data insight

In partnership with the University of York, the VCSE Collaborative conducted a research project to evidence the scale, strengths and challenges of the VCSE sector across Humber and North Yorkshire.

A total of 335 organisations participated, providing an overview of their organisational status, workforce capacity, financial resilience, operational challenges, and expectations for the future.

## Key findings from the report, include:

- Our VCSE sector is highly diverse and delivers a broad range of services to varied groups with a dominant focus on improving personal and community health and wellbeing. However, there is a striking differences between organisations depending on their size, purpose and funding models.
- Strong partnership working is evident across the sector, yet it is increasingly vulnerable to competitive funding environments, reinforcing the need for collaborative, long term approaches to support and investment.

- There is clear evidence that the sector can support HNY ICB to deliver on the NHS 10 Year Plan, highlighting how a strong and sustainable VCSE workforce underpins the delivery of its three 'big shifts' through prevention, community-based care and integration.

The findings are already being used as part of the [NHS Humber and North Yorkshire Integrated Care Board \(ICB\) People Story Dashboard](#), an innovative tool, designed to bridge the gap between population health, demand for services and the workforce needed to deliver care. The report is also featured in the Humber and North Yorkshire Health and Care Partnership's Insight Bank to inform other areas of work across our health and care system.

[Download report](#)





# Cardiovascular Health Insight Report

The VCSE Collaborative worked in partnership with NHS Humber and North Yorkshire ICB and local VCSE organisations to capture voices from communities experiencing health inequalities in Humber and North Yorkshire.

Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is a major driver of the life expectancy gap in Humber and North Yorkshire (HNY), with disproportionate impact on communities experiencing health inequalities. To understand how prevention, awareness and risk management could be improved, the Cardiovascular Disease Prevention and Transformation team partnered with the VCSE Collaborative to gather behavioural insight from communities most at risk of CVD and who are less likely to be accessing traditional health services.

**Between April and September 2025, 45 VCSE organisations engaged 1,173 people from priority communities across HNY, using community-led, mixed methods to gain genuine insight in trusted, culturally appropriate settings.**

Whilst the focus of this work was aimed at insight related to CVD, arguably the findings can be applied to many conditions and therefore provides a more general understanding of these populations.

The work reflects the application of organisational development and change management principles, shifting the model of prevention towards community-centred, relational and co-produced approaches. It reinforces the need to advocate for public health principles and targeted action to reduce health inequalities and support vulnerable populations, in line with the NHS Core20PLUS5 framework and local strategic priorities.

[Download report](#)





# Social Prescribing across Humber and North Yorkshire

The VCSE Collaborative brought Social Prescribers and Link Workers from across our region together for the first time.

Social prescribing is an approach which links people to non-medical sources of support to improve their health and wellbeing. The VCSE Collaborative organised three conferences and networking events across the length of the programme, to bring social prescribers from across our region together for the first time.

The events provided a key opportunity to showcase the impact Social Prescribing has across Humber and North Yorkshire. As well as networking with peers and learning about each others' work, the conferences provided an opportunity to celebrate successes, discuss challenges, and to shape the future of social prescribing across Humber and North Yorkshire.

**Across Humber and North Yorkshire, Social Prescribing is:**

- Helping people live the best lives they can - It helps people feel heard, valued, and understood, it creates thriving communities, it can support people who are most at risk of poor health, and it helps people get the most relevant and effective support available.
- Providing practical and emotional support - Link workers listen to people and try to understand their situation, and what matters to them. They then "link" that person to organisations and information that can help.
- Taking pressure off the NHS - It is estimated that almost a fifth of GP appointment time is spent on non medical problems – including loneliness, isolation, relationship issues, or stress related to money or housing. Social prescribing gives doctors, organisations, and other professionals a way to help people, and address their problems more effectively

# Case studies: Social Prescribing across Humber and North Yorkshire

The following case studies illustrate how social prescribing operates at neighbourhood level and the impact it delivers for individuals, communities, and the wider system.

They demonstrate how social prescribing:

- **Addresses social determinants of health**
- **Reduces escalation and preventable service demand**
- **Supports prevention and early intervention**
- **Complements clinical pathways**
- **Strengthens neighbourhood and VCSE partnerships**



Each case study demonstrates how investment in neighbourhood social prescribing delivers both personal and system-level value.

[View case studies](#)



View the highlights video from May 2024 below:



# Social Prescribing Development Work

Building on the impact of social prescribing demonstrated across Humber and North Yorkshire, the VCSE Collaborative convened a focused working group of link workers to support the development of a clearer and more consistent approach across the system.

This work explored and agreed a shared definition and outcomes for social prescribing, developed a set of guiding principles, highlighted evidence and impact, and identified early strategic considerations for the future.

Three core guiding principles were established to underpin delivery:

## **Person-led and strengths-based**

Supporting people to focus on what matters to them, building on individual strengths, relationships and community assets

## **Neighbourhood-first, system-supported**

Enabling delivery at neighbourhood level, with the wider system providing alignment and support to sustain effective models

## **Sustainable, connected and investable**

Recognising the need for stable investment, strong VCSE partnerships, and realistic expectations to ensure long-term impact and capacity.

A consistent theme throughout this work has been the support required for link workers to deliver effectively.

This includes the need for team-based models, rather than isolated link worker roles, alongside access to supervision, protected time, manageable caseloads, and stronger system recognition of the role.

Early recommendations emerging from this work include:

- Commissioning for outcomes rather than activity
- Strengthening VCSE partnerships and long-term investment
- Improving data and impact measurement
- Embedding social prescribing within coordinated neighbourhood working

This work will feed into wider system development for social prescribing, helping to shape future direction and support a more consistent, outcomes-focused approach across Humber and North Yorkshire.

**We would like to thank social prescribing link workers and managers across Humber and North Yorkshire for their valuable input and continued dedication. Your work is central to the impact of social prescribing in our communities.**



# Green Social Prescribing – Test and Learn Programme

The programme focused on supporting individuals experiencing mild to moderate mental health challenges and social isolation, through accessible, preventative interventions rooted in local community assets.

The Green Social Prescribing (GSP) programme across Humber and North Yorkshire was delivered as part of a nationally funded Test and Learn initiative (2021–2025), positioning the system as one of seven sites exploring how nature-based, community-led approaches can improve mental wellbeing and reduce pressure on health services.

Delivery was enabled through strong partnership working across VCSE organisations, primary care, referral agencies, and academic partners. Social Prescribing Link Workers played a central role in connecting individuals to a diverse range of nature-based activities, including gardening, walking, conservation, and group-based outdoor programmes. These offers were shaped around ‘what matters’ to individuals, enabling personalised support pathways while also contributing

to local and national evaluation through structured data collection.

Over the lifetime of the programme, more than 1,800 individuals engaged with Green Social Prescribing activity within Humber and North Yorkshire, with a cohort of 332 participants followed more closely to understand outcomes and lived experience. Evidence from both local evaluation and national learning highlights consistent improvements in mental wellbeing, including reductions in anxiety and depression, alongside increased confidence, social connection, and sense of purpose. Participants also reported greater engagement in community activity and improved ability to self-manage their wellbeing over time.

**Continued...**

# Green Social Prescribing

For many individuals, engagement in nature-based activity represented a turning point in their wellbeing journey. Case study evidence highlights how participants experiencing long-term mental health challenges and social isolation were able to reconnect with others, develop routine and purpose, and reduce reliance on clinical services. Activities such as community gardening not only supported mental health recovery but also enabled individuals to contribute meaningfully to their communities, reinforcing a sense of belonging and value.

At a system level, the programme demonstrated the value of embedding community-based, preventative approaches within local care models. Green Social Prescribing strengthened VCSE sector capacity, supported the development of new and expanded community offers, and fostered more integrated working across partners. It also contributed to reducing pressure on primary care and mental health services by supporting earlier intervention and offering appropriate, non-clinical pathways for individuals whose needs could be met outside of traditional medical models.

The programme has also contributed significantly to the evidence base for social prescribing. Using the WELLBY (Wellbeing Valuation) approach, activity in North East Lincolnshire demonstrated an average social return of £6.70 for every £1 invested. This provides a robust economic case for Green Social Prescribing as a high-value intervention, evidencing the impact

of community-based, preventative support in improving wellbeing while reducing demand on statutory services.

Learning from the Test and Learn phase reinforces several key enablers of success. Strong local partnerships, flexibility in delivery models, and investment in VCSE infrastructure were critical to effective implementation. The importance of Link Worker capacity and clear referral pathways was also highlighted, alongside the need for proportionate and meaningful data collection approaches that do not overburden community providers. More broadly, the programme demonstrated that outcomes are strongest where services are co-designed with communities and tailored to local context.



Image York Bike Belles

# Green Social Prescribing

While delivered as a time-limited programme, Green Social Prescribing has demonstrated clear and sustained impact at both individual and system level. It provides a compelling case for continued investment in preventative, community-based approaches that address the wider determinants of health. The evidence generated through this programme supports a shift towards outcomes-focused commissioning, recognising the value of VCSE-led provision and the role of nature-based interventions in supporting population health.

Overall, the programme has shown that Green Social Prescribing is not simply an adjunct to existing services, but a core component of a more holistic, neighbourhood-based approach to health and wellbeing.

Sustaining and scaling this model will be critical to maintaining momentum, building on established partnerships, and ensuring that individuals continue to benefit from accessible, non-clinical support within their communities.

**We would like to thank Andy Barber and Anthony Hurd of the Hey Smile Organisation for leading and delivering the Green Social Prescribing programme, alongside all those who supported its delivery.**

[Download report](#)





# VCSE Community Transport

The VCSE Collaborative worked in partnership with community transport providers across Humber and North Yorkshire to map and better understand the scale, role and challenges of community transport (CT) services.

This work highlighted CT as a critical enabler of access to health and care, particularly within rural and coastal communities where public transport is limited.

Across the ICB footprint, 27 VCSE community transport providers collectively support over 95,000 individuals annually and deliver at least 261,705 passenger journeys. Health-related travel is a primary driver of demand, with services enabling access to GP, hospital and community-based appointments, alongside supporting social connection and independence.

The findings demonstrate that community transport plays a significant role in reducing missed appointments, supporting timely access to care, and preventing deterioration in health.

It aligns strongly with system priorities, including neighbourhood-based models

and the shift from hospital to community, acting as a practical enabler of integrated care.

The mapping also identified increasing demand alongside constrained capacity. Providers reported pressures linked to changes in patient transport eligibility, workforce challenges, particularly volunteer recruitment and retention, and rising operational costs. Funding remains fragmented, with limited direct investment from health despite clear system benefit.

Importantly, the work highlights that many of the challenges facing community transport are systemic rather than organisational. Fragmentation across commissioning, planning and delivery limits efficiency and creates variation in access.

**Continued...**

# VCSE Community Transport

There are clear opportunities to improve coordination between health services, local authorities and VCSE providers, including approaches such as appointment clustering and more joined-up transport planning to reduce DNAs and optimise resource use. Overall, community transport delivers significant social and system value but requires more coordinated and sustainable support to maintain and scale impact.

**Next steps** will build on this evidence through a Humber and North Yorkshire community transport roundtable, bringing

together system partners to move from understanding to action. This will focus on strengthening partnerships, improving coordination, and exploring sustainable investment and delivery models to support a more integrated and resilient community transport system.

**Our thanks to Jane Owen, Liz Lockey and Jane Evison for their leadership and significant contribution to this community transport work.**

[Download report](#)



## Community Leadership Programme

A Community Leadership Programme was commissioned across Humber, Coast and Vale to address inequalities in workforce representation and engagement with people from ethnically minoritised or culturally diverse backgrounds'

The programme was designed as a co-produced leadership development approach, with delivery structured across key strands including:

- Mapping community diversity and existing ethnically minoritised groups, organisations and assets
- Understanding barriers to accessing funding and opportunities
- Supporting increased access to leadership development pathways, including links to the HEY Confident Futures programme

Activity included insight gathering, engagement with community organisations, and development of recommendations to inform more inclusive approaches across the system. The programme also incorporated workshops and partnership working to share learning and support changes to practice.

The programme aligned with wider workforce and equality priorities, including improving diversity in leadership and strengthening engagement with under-represented communities.



## Cancer Innovation Grants

The VCSE Collaborative worked in close partnership with the Cancer Alliance to shape and strengthen the Innovation Grants process, ensuring it was accessible and inclusive of VCSE organisations.

This work included contributing to the design of the application approach to better reflect VCSE delivery models and reduce barriers to entry.

Targeted support was provided to VCSE organisations to raise awareness of the opportunity, encourage applications, and offer guidance where needed. This helped increase VCSE engagement in the programme and supported a more diverse range of proposals. The VCSE Collaborative was also represented on the review panel,

contributing to the assessment and scoring of bids. This ensured that VCSE perspectives were embedded within decision-making, particularly in relation to community reach, inequalities, and delivery feasibility.

As a result, VCSE organisations were successfully represented within the funded projects, including initiatives focused on community-based support, outreach, and improving access for underserved groups.

## Representing the wider VCSE sector

The VCSE Collaborative represented and amplified the voice of the wider VCSE sector across Humber and North Yorkshire, ensuring meaningful input into key priorities such as mental health, learning disability, end of life care, women's health, carers, children and young people, personalised care, and physical activity.

It has also supported engagement in cross-cutting areas including digital and AI, the Digital Ageing Well initiative, population health, and workforce development. Through initiatives like the Insights Database, Breakthrough, and targeted training and education, the Collaborative has strengthened partnerships, elevated lived experience, and embedded the VCSE sector as a key contributor to system-wide improvement.



# Hosting a Humber and North Yorkshire VCSE Expo

On 22 April 2024, VCSE Collaborative brought representatives from the VCSE sector together, in Hull, for the first Humber and North Yorkshire VCSE Expo.

The VCSE Collaborative welcomed the Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive, from NHS Humber and North Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (ICB) to engage in conversation with attendees about the VCSE sector's involvement in the design and delivery of health and care in our region.

These discussions provided insight into the challenges facing health and care, and offered reassurance that the VCSE sector is an essential partner within the integrated care system.

'Conversational spaces' held during the event were also a highlight and provided attendees with the opportunity to share their experiences, knowledge and ideas around the following topics:

- Health Inequalities
- Integrated Care Board / Place

- Communications
- Representation
- Place-based Assemblies
- Volunteering
- VCSE Collaborative
- Workforce / People

## Showcasing the VCSE sector's work in health and care

To highlight the VCSE sector's expertise and knowledge in the delivery of health and care across our region, the VCSE Collaborative commissioned a series of short videos to show as part of the Expo. The videos provide insight into the importance of the VCSE sector's role in the design and delivery of health and care and capture the breadth of the sector's work across our region.

**View each video on the next page.**

The following health and care case studies show the breadth of the work Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations are delivering across Humber and North Yorkshire.



## North Yorkshire

Community Transport Project -  
Nidderdale Plus



## North East Lincolnshire

Mental Health Alliance



## Hull

'Settling In' - Hospital Discharge  
Project

The following health and care case studies show the breadth of the work Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations are delivering across Humber and North Yorkshire.

## York

Extra Discharge Support Service



## North Lincolnshire

Non-regulatory Care Project



## East Riding

Restorative Yoga



# Children and Young People Connector Programme

The Children and Young People (CYP) Transformation Programme, in partnership with local Healthwatch organisations across the coastal areas of Humber and North Yorkshire, delivered a pilot CYP Connectors scheme to better understand the experiences and needs of young people in accessing health support.

Local Healthwatch recruited and trained 20 connectors aged 16–25 from coastal communities to engage with their peers around experiences of asthma, diabetes and epilepsy. This formed part of the wider CYP transformation programme.

## The programme aimed to:

- Reduce health inequalities by improving understanding of what works well, and what does not, for young people across communities.
- Empower young people to play a meaningful role in shaping how health and care services are planned and delivered.
- Recruit and support young volunteers (aged 14–25) to undertake peer-to-peer conversations within their communities (e.g. schools, colleges, social and hobby groups) to identify barriers to accessing support.

Connectors explored key clinical areas of focus including asthma, diabetes and epilepsy.

Each connector was supported to have meaningful conversations with peers, with insights captured and analysed by Healthwatch teams to identify themes, trends and areas for improvement. These insights were shared through appropriate system channels to inform service development.

The programme also encouraged peer-led expansion, with connectors supporting the recruitment of additional participants to widen reach and engagement.

Although no additional funding was made available from NHSE, elements of the pilot have been sustained through a CYP forum within Healthwatch, maintaining ongoing engagement with young people.

[Download report](#)



**Our thanks to local Healthwatch organisations for leading and delivering the CYP Connector programme, and for their dedication to supporting and amplifying the voices of young people**



# Research Engagement Network

The VCSE Collaborative and IRIS team secured funding from NHS England to establish a Research Engagement Network (REN) and develop a community-led Research Ready Community Champions programme across Humber and North Yorkshire.

This formed part of NHS England's commitment to increase diversity in research participation, with Humber and North Yorkshire Health and Care Partnership selected as one of 17 initial Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) to receive funding.

The programme initially focused on working with VCSE organisations in coastal and underserved communities, building on trusted relationships to increase awareness of research and support more inclusive participation.

Delivered in partnership with VCSE organisations, the programme worked through established community networks to reach people less likely to take part in research, before extending into new communities.

Through these partnerships, community champions were recruited and trained to engage local communities in conversations about research, including what it is, what it is not, and how to get involved. Engagement took place in familiar, community-based settings, helping to build trust, confidence, and understanding.

Following the success of the programme, further funding was secured to expand and develop the model. This enabled extension into rural North Yorkshire, working with additional VCSE organisations and research partners to broaden reach and strengthen local partnerships.

**Continued...**

# Research Engagement Network

The programme also developed a primary care workstream in partnership with the Academy of Primary Care and the University of Hull. This strengthened engagement through workshops, co-designed activity, and support for clinicians and community members to engage with research. VCSE organisations played a key role in co-designing and delivering this work, ensuring community voice remained central to primary care research engagement.



**The REN programme has been eye-opening. It's helped the University of Hull connect with community groups eager to participate in research and has shaped our understanding of local research priorities; it would be beneficial for future efforts to focus on empowering communities to identify their own research agendas and present them directly to researchers and funders.**

***Myriam Dell'Olio***

Primary Care Lecturer - University of Hull / Academy of Primary Care



# Research Engagement Network

VCSE organisations and community champions are increasingly acting as research brokers, connecting communities, researchers, and system partners. This has strengthened links with NHS, local authority, and university research, including involvement in emerging programmes such as the Health Determinants Research Collaboration (HDRC).

Alongside this, an innovative community engagement workstream has been delivered using creative approaches to reach underserved communities. This includes digital stories, podcasts, and an art style gallery to present research in accessible and culturally relevant ways. Community champions have also taken research into public spaces and events, helping to widen awareness and engage new audiences.

The programme has established a strong and sustainable foundation for inclusive research. Over 80 community champions have been recruited, delivering over 100 engagement events and extending reach into communities less likely to participate in research.

“Initially, most people felt research wasn’t relevant to them. Through the REN programme VCSE helped them to see health and social care research needs feedback from those it affects the most. Participants in the scheme now feel that they can get involved and make a difference.”

- VCSE Representative

“As a Research Champion, I was glad to participate in the various sections of the programme. It helps me to provide my views on the need to carry out research representing all the segments of the community. It also helped to advocate for inclusiveness in health and social care research. Research is vital to health, therefore there is a need to encompass sex, age race, religion etc in any research, this will go a long way in achieving a positive result.”

- Research Champion

“**This has been a brilliant series of workshops that I have loved and already benefitted from. [...] I have already participated in research that I learnt about in a REN workshop and am looking forward to doing more. [...] There is way more potential value in our health experiences than I had realised.**

- Participant

Participants consistently reported increased confidence and understanding of research, with many describing how the programme helped them see its relevance to their lives and communities and now feel able to get involved and make a difference.

## Participant Feedback

# Research Engagement Network

Independent evaluation further highlighted strengthened collaboration between VCSE organisations and research partners. The evaluation showed that the programme was particularly effective in building connectivity, empowerment, and the co-development of research opportunities. Noting that its key strength lies in working through trusted community networks to engage diverse groups in research activity.

Building on this impact, the programme has begun to create longer-term pathways into research. In response to growing interest from community champions, a new opportunity was developed with York St John University. Following their academic evaluation of the REN programme, the University recognised the strength of the REN model and approached the ICB to co-develop and part-fund a REN PhD.

This created a clear progression route from community engagement into research leadership. A VCSE Research Champion was successfully supported to secure this PhD, demonstrating how the programme is enabling people from underserved communities to shape and lead research, not just participate in it.

VCSE organisations are now active partners in research, including acting as co-applicants on bids and shaping future research priorities.

The REN and community champions programme continues to grow and evolve, strengthening connections between communities, VCSE organisations, and research systems across Humber and North Yorkshire.



**“It was really an eye opener to find out that medical professionals were interested in what we had to say as patients. It was inspiring and fascinating to hear about different areas of research. Wonderful to have your contributions valued.”**

*- Participant*



**We extend our thanks to Callum Schofield of the ICB IRIS team for his research leadership support, and to the VCSE REN leads whose contribution has been central to the delivery and success of the programme.**

[Visit Ren Voices website](#)





# Building Vaccination Capacity Across Humber and North Yorkshire

The VCSE Collaborative received funding from NHS England to build vaccine capacity within our region.

NHS England provided the Humber and North Yorkshire Health and Care Partnership (HNY HCP) with funding through winter 2023-24 to increase uptake of Covid vaccinations, a proportion of this (£200k) was allocated to the VCSE Collaborative to support the vaccination uptake with targeted parts of our population through VCSE organisations.

Each VCSE Collaborative Place Lead organisation received a set amount of funding to award to VCSE organisations in their area. The funding was specifically aimed at organisations who work with, and support, carers, people who are housebound and find it difficult to access vaccinations, health inclusion groups and people living in areas of deprivation.

The programme of work moved from signposting to vaccination centres to an

insight gathering around vaccine hesitancy.

The model enabled a system-wide approach while allowing flexibility to meet local population needs. This improved consistency, established a core community support offer through VCSE organisations, and ensured resources were used more effectively across Humber and North Yorkshire.

**A total of 23,478 people were directly engaged through the work of the VCSE organisations.**

[Download report](#)



# Personal Health Budgets (PHBs)

The programme supported the development and delivery of Personal Health Budgets (PHBs) through VCSE partners, with a focus on increasing understanding, access, and uptake of personalised care approaches across Humber and North Yorkshire.

Activity centred on:

- Workforce development and training to improve understanding of personalised care and PHBs
- Targeted communications to raise awareness within VCSE networks
- Place-based pilots working with VCSE organisations and specific cohorts
- Direct support to individuals to explore and implement PHBs

The approach combined system-level activity (training and communications) with place-based delivery, enabling VCSE organisations to work directly with individuals to identify needs, co-design support, and implement personalised solutions.

Case study evidence demonstrates positive impact for individuals, including improved organisation, confidence, wellbeing, and ability to engage in daily activities and work.

**Findings from delivery highlight a number of key themes:**

- Improved choice and control: Individuals valued the opportunity to make decisions about their own care and wellbeing, with PHBs enabling more personalised and meaningful support

- Decision-making challenges: Some individuals found the process overwhelming, particularly where large or unfamiliar choices were involved, requiring additional time and support
- Importance of tailored support: One-to-one engagement, clear guidance, and structured support were critical in helping individuals navigate decisions and use budgets effectively
- Workforce and market challenges: Identifying appropriate providers, particularly for neurodivergent individuals or those requiring specialist support, could be time-consuming and complex
- System learning: The time required to coordinate PHBs, including research, sourcing provision, and supporting decision-making, has implications for workforce capacity and delivery models

**Overall, the programme demonstrated the potential of VCSE-led approaches to support personalised care, while also highlighting the importance of realistic expectations around capacity, time, and infrastructure required to deliver PHBs effectively.**

# Do more with the NHS App!



## VCSE NHS App Rollout Support

VCSE partners across Humber and North Yorkshire were supported to promote and increase awareness of the NHS App within local communities, with a focus on reaching underserved and digitally excluded groups.

Activity included the distribution of digital and printed resources, delivery of engagement events, and use of community networks to promote the app through trusted channels. This involved talks, stalls, newsletters, social media activity, and targeted outreach through local organisations and community groups. Across the programme, VCSE organisations engaged communities through a combination of in-person and digital approaches, including:

- Community events, talks and stalls
- Surveys to gather insight into awareness and use of the NHS App
- Social media campaigns and newsletters
- Distribution of printed materials via community venues and partners

Monitoring data indicates that thousands of people were reached through these activities.

Feedback from VCSE partners highlighted a number of consistent themes, including:

- Digital exclusion remains a significant barrier, particularly for those without smartphones, internet access, or digital confidence
- Preference among some groups for face-to-face support and non-digital routes
- The value of trusted community organisations in supporting awareness and confidence
- Greater effectiveness of one-to-one support compared to group-based approaches for some individuals

The programme has provided valuable insight into how digital health tools can be promoted through VCSE networks, and the importance of tailored, community-based approaches to support access and inclusion.

# With thanks

We would like to take this opportunity to extend our sincere thanks to everyone who has been involved with the VCSE Collaborative over the years.

Your commitment, shared expertise, and willingness to work together have been fundamental in shaping and strengthening the Collaborative, ensuring it was reflective of the voices and needs of the communities we serve.

The progress achieved would not have been possible without the time, energy, and passion contributed by individuals and organisations across the VCSE sector.

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