



Candidate Brief



Contents

Candidate Brief	1
Contents	2
Introduction	3
What we do.....	3
Practical support for your organisation and community.....	4
Leading VCSE Engagement in Norfolk.....	4
Working to ensure fair outcomes for all.....	4
Our Vision	5
Our Mission.....	5
Core Values.....	5
Our Impact.....	6
Looking forward.....	6
Bit of history	7
We describe our mission as.....	8
How we got to this.....	8
How to contact us	9

Introduction

Thank you for your interest in joining Community Action Norfolk. This is an exciting time in our development.

Norfolk has a huge wealth of voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations providing benefit to thousands of people. They operate across a wide spectrum from the smallest community group to the largest delivering highly specialist services; from working with a niche client group to campaigning on broad social issues.

It is a challenging time; reductions in public sector funding will continue to affect many. The impacts of an aging population and other changes in our communities are changing the way services need to be provided. This is creating the need to shift toward more preventative and integrated services which offer the promise of being better for individuals and more cost effective for providers. However, delivering on that promise is hard across many themes and organisations in what is a large rural county.

We believe that voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations have an important role to play in overcoming these challenges. Our goal is to provide them with the support they need and build the strategic relationships necessary for them to fulfil that role and for all of us together to build a stronger, fairer Norfolk.

We are looking for talented and dedicated people to help us achieve our goal. If you think that's you, we very much look forward to hearing from you.

What we do

Norfolk has over 3,000 charities helping 100,000's people a year – we help them.

Community Action Norfolk is what is usually referred to as an infrastructure organisation. It makes us a little unusual in that the primary people we try to help are other voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations, with the aim of making Norfolk a stronger, fairer place.

The easiest way to think about it is that we are like a trade body for Norfolk's VCSE sector. As part of this we provide direct support to organisations; helping them with funding, governance and generally trying to achieve their goals. We also advocate and campaign on issues important to VCSE organisations. Some of this centres on making sure VCSE organisations are part of key discussions that affect them and can access the resources they need. However, because the issues that are important to VCSE organisations often focus on the needs and challenges faced by the most vulnerable in our communities a lot of our work focuses on key policies that shape the support.

We also run a range of programmes and projects. Some, like our oil buying scheme and broadband service, are social enterprises that aim to address key social issues (fuel poverty, digital exclusion) directly with a self-sustaining business model. Increasingly much of our programme work such as our activities on housing advice, social prescribing and social isolation follow a model where CAN manages a partnership of local VCSE organisations who undertake the direct service delivery with individuals.

Formally we organise our activities under three core areas of delivery:

Practical support for your organisation and community

Practical support is one of the highest priorities for VCSE organisations. We aim to be the first port of call for VCSE organisations needing support to achieve their goals, from help finding funding and running an organisation, to engaging your community and strategic planning.

Our approach has always been to provide a mixture of reactive support where we respond to the needs organisations approach us with and pro-active support where we try to stimulate initiatives and activities within a community or organisation.

Leading VCSE Engagement in Norfolk

Community Action Norfolk is the leading organisation for engagement with the VCSE sector in Norfolk.

We work closely with VCSE organisations; Norfolk County Council and other partners to build the positive relationships needed to collaboratively develop strategy, policy and services.

For us, VCSE engagement is about gathering your ideas, issues and challenges and bringing them together with those of other VCSE organisations and stakeholders to create a positive dialogue so we can collaboratively find ways to make Norfolk stronger and fairer.

Working to ensure fair outcomes for all

It is a challenging time; reductions in public sector funding will continue to affect. These savings risk hitting the most vulnerable in our communities the hardest or creating unfair discrepancies in the way people are treated.

The impacts of an ageing population and other challenges in our communities are changing the way services need to be provided. This creates the need to move towards more preventative and integrated services which offer the promise of being better for individuals and more cost effective for providers. However, across many themes and organisations, in what is a large rural county, delivering on that promise is hard.

Our goal is to work to ensure fair outcomes for everyone regardless of where they live or who they are.

Our Vision

Our vision is for a stronger and fairer Norfolk

Our Mission

Our mission is to help deliver this through support, empowerment and strategic partnership with voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations.

We articulate this mission in three areas of core delivery

1. Practical support for your organisation and community
2. Leading VCSE Engagement in Norfolk
3. Working to ensure fair outcomes for all

Core Values

Quality & Integrity - We are committed to delivering a professional and high quality service. Part of this is ensuring integrity and transparency in our activities.

Solution Focused - We aim to be evidence-led and outcomes-focused in our work, overcoming challenges with solutions that work.

Empowering - We aim to facilitate empowerment and develop capacity where we can.

Accessible - We are focused on ensuring that we are recognised as trusted and approachable for our varied audiences.

Holistic - We recognise that everything is connected and that we need to take a holistic approach. We are committed to bringing about positive change ahead of organisational priorities.

Prevention - We believe that by being prevention focused we work towards the best possible outcomes for everyone.

Partnership - Working with others is at the heart of what we do. We believe in creating positive but robust relationships based on trust.

Our Impact

Over the last three years we have undertaken over 1,000 cases to directly support around 600 organisations. 91% rated our support as “very good” or “excellent” with 76% saying our support was either “important” or “very important” to their success. Importantly, 62% reported an improvement, as a result of our work, in one or more of the key outcomes we look at as an indicator of an organisation strength and resilience.

We set out to increase the evidence base about the VCSE sector and VCSE organisations’ ability to participate in key discussions. Over a two-year period we saw a 5% increase in those agreeing in our tracker survey with statements around their ability to participate and communicate effectively. We have seen an 11% increase in those saying there is a strong evidence base about the VCSE sector.

We set a goal of reaching more VCSE organisations locally. Over a two-year period we increased the number of organisations we had contact with by 134% to just under 8,000. We increased the number of unique organisations attending events by 545% increasing our e-news distribution list by 32% whilst boosting open rates by 8%.

We wanted to make sure we brought investment into Norfolk to invest in local organisations. Over a two-year period CAN received local public sector investment of £596K whilst leveraging into Norfolk investment of £754K. We invested £529K of the funding we secured in delivery by other local organisations.

Through our programme delivery we estimate benefitting over 100,000 households in Norfolk from training consumers and frontline staff on energy awareness to supporting isolated older peoples through the Lily Programme, housing advice, fuel savings and much, much more. All which we couldn’t have delivered without the support of the huge range of partners with whom we work.

Looking forward

Based on our needs analysis we see the picture of our services going forward as the following:

- The organisational and community support strand to what we do as vitally important. Getting help with running their organisation and setting up projects is a priority for grassroots organisations that make up the majority of the sector. Increasingly we are asked for support from intermediate organisations who have found the current environment particularly difficult.
- We will continue to provide support for communities and organisation balancing reactive services, where organisations come to us for help, with pro-active services aimed at stimulating activity. Alongside this we look to enhance our support offering to ensure we can meet the needs of intermediate organisations. These services will increasingly be modelled on a commercial costed basis whether paid for by the VCSE organisation or a third party funder. This allows us to ensure our sustainability whilst also increasing transparency about work, costs and impacts.
- As the relationship between the sectors changes we see the key part of our voice role is to create early and effective engagement that develops equal partnerships with our colleagues in the public and private sector. We will push for delivery of those actions emerging from the Sector Led Plan and that the sector’s agenda is part of any emerging conversations. Within this is the importance of highlighting the needs and issue of disadvantaged areas and groups.
- We see the core underpinning elements to our voice role as maintaining intelligence about the sector, ensuring legitimacy of the any sector representation and supporting strong communication with the wider sector.

- Responding to the needs of intermediate organisations and of an environment where collaboration needs to be the default option we see brokering relationships, developing and managing partnerships as a growing area of what we do. Where CAN is best placed to do so this includes managing the supply chain, performance and quality of delivery organisations without undertaking a direct delivery role ourselves. With our own collaboration arrangements we will pursue opportunities where additional benefit is derived for our constituents whilst being consistent with our core values.
- As communities and VCSE organisations are being asked 'to do more' we see our role as helping with information about what the sector does (or does not do) at both a strategic and operational level and facilitating opportunities and key infrastructure on the ground for organisations and people to connect.
- We will continue to develop our social enterprise based solutions as a key part of meeting social needs and supporting our own sustainability.
- We see this overall model as that of a hybrid infrastructure and commissioning organisation. There to support VCSE organisations, responding to local needs, ensuring our own financial sustainability but operating without compromising our values or integrity.

Bit of history

Community Action Norfolk is formed from the merger of Norfolk Rural Community Council and West Norfolk Voluntary Community Action in 2015.

Norfolk RCC was founded in 1986 and West Norfolk VCA in 2002.

Both organisations had core services aimed at providing direct support to communities and voluntary sector organisations alongside strategic advocacy, trying to get the best possible outcomes for the people and communities of Norfolk. As both organisations' names suggest, Norfolk RCC had a rural focus to much of its work with West Norfolk VCA concentrating on the west of the county.

Norfolk RCC and West Norfolk VCA had a long track record of working together to deliver community development services, jointly supporting organisations and trying to make best use of the resources available to support our local organisations and communities.

In summer 2014 Norfolk County Council retendered the contract to support engagement with voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations. The contracts for the North Norfolk, Norwich and South Norfolk Clinical Commissioning group (CCG) areas were secured by Norfolk RCC, West Norfolk VCA secured the West Norfolk CCG contract and Momentum Norfolk secured the specialist contract focused on Children and Young People. Following this the three lead organisations came together and signed a joint declaration in October 2014 to coordinate VCSE engagement activity as much as possible whilst retaining a strong focus of their geographic or thematic areas of specialism.

With Norfolk RCC and West Norfolk VCA increasingly working closely together, around Christmas 2014 both Boards of Trustees asked the Chief Executives to draw up proposals for a merger with the aim of safeguarding services and providing the best possible support to the organisations and people both organisations work with.

Following an agreement by both Boards to the proposals and a full due diligence process the two organisations merged on the 1st April 2015 becoming Community Action Norfolk.

Following the merger Community Action Norfolk is the main organisation in Norfolk supporting voluntary sector engagement.

We aim to be the first port of call for VCSE organisations needing support with funding, running their organisation and achieving their goals.

We work strategically to try and make Norfolk a fair place for all, whoever they are, wherever they live. In a county where 53% of the population live in rural areas, rurality remains a key issue.

We describe our mission as

Building a stronger and fairer Norfolk through support, empowerment and strategic partnership with voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations

How we got to this...

Talking to different people about what our role should be, there was a tension between different key aspects:

- The trade body role: supporting and advocating on behalf of voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations.
- The reason behind why we are trying to do this, the noble cause, that will make our communities better places.

We've tried to bridge these two aspects. The way we see it is our aim is to try and build a stronger and fairer Norfolk. * If we don't keep sight of this we risk not staying true to the ethos of the charity. The way we do this, however, is through providing support, helping facilitate empowerment and building strategic partnerships. The main focus of that work is with voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations. This last bit helps emphasise the trade body role. The bit it misses is that we do work with the public and commercial sectors and we very much want to work with them (not simply tell them what the sector thinks about what they are doing). The final thing about the trade body role is simple: we can't possibly represent the sector! It's too big and too diverse. Our goal is to effectively **promote and champion the sector's voice** or perhaps more accurately voices.

***Why a stronger and fairer Norfolk?** As we talked to our staff teams, both Boards of Trustees, members and stakeholders, a number of things emerged. The first was the tension between the noble cause and the trade body role. We started talking about the noble cause being to make Norfolk a better place. Some felt that this implied that Norfolk wasn't a good place to start with, which is just false; Norfolk is an excellent place to live and work for the majority of people. Through a few iterations stronger seemed to be broad enough to encapsulate the ideas we wanted to convey whilst being sufficiently short and accessible.

Fairness was also seen as very important; from our history it was about ensuring the core of the rural aspects of Norfolk RCC's role was retained as well as the work WNVCA had undertaken around prejudice and equality. For many of the VCSE organisations we talked to the main concern was about getting a fair deal for a particular group within our community. Fairness as a word, whilst potentially seen as loaded, was chosen over equity or other phrases, as while all were hard to define in terms of the end result; fairness was more broadly accessible as a concept. No-one seemed to have any issue with Norfolk!

What we mean by strategic advocacy- Strategic advocacy is about identifying groups of instances or recurring themes that are causing challenges or creating benefits. It is then about taking those patterns and using them to facilitate changes to the ways things are done in the future rather than providing redress in those specific instances where problems have taken place. There are many excellent VCSE organisations that provide individual advocacy supporting people who have faced a specific challenge. We don't want to duplicate this activity and also recognise that individual advocacy is not something we have capacity to do effectively, fairly or to a high quality.

How to contact us

For an informal conversation about the role please contact Jon Clemo, Chief Executive, 01362 698216, jonathan.clemo@communityactionnorfolk.org.uk

The main office number 01362 698216 or email office@communityactionnorfolk.org.uk.

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