



**DURHAM
COMMUNITY
ACTION**

2022

**ANNUAL
REVIEW**



We work with and for communities and believe that County Durham is a better place for having thriving community organisations.

We run Durham Community Action (DCA) well, so that we can support community organisations by:

- Providing expertise and advice that is tailored to their needs and circumstances.
- Supporting and nurturing new community initiatives.
- Enabling good volunteering practice and opportunities.
- Representing and providing a voice for the community and voluntary sector in County Durham.

What we value

Objectivity, honesty, and integrity

Doing the right thing

Setting high standards for the sector

Encouraging a can-do culture

Accountability and responsibility

Professional pride

Enabling leadership

Learning the lessons and sharing them

Listening and reflecting

Analysis and problem solving

What we are doing

Providing expertise and advice

We support community organisations to do their work effectively, by providing advice, training, resources, and help to tackle challenges, and to realise their aspirations.

Supporting new initiatives

We work with networks and communities of interest to track opportunities and challenges for the sector, and to innovate and test new approaches that strengthen our social and community infrastructure.

Enabling good volunteering

We provide brokerage and resources to develop volunteering opportunities and good practice in volunteer involving organisations. We champion volunteering across all sectors in County Durham, and support people who are new to volunteering to find the right opportunities for them.

Providing a voice

We apply our knowledge and expertise within the VCS into sector led networks, and multi-agency partnerships in County Durham, the north east and nationally. We achieve this, through effective leadership, and representing sector interests and the issues that affect communities in County Durham. Through championing the interests of our local VCS, we can influence and help shape public sector policy, and the design and commissioning of local services.

How we made a difference in 2021/22



Supporting our communities

- 766 VCS organisations received information, advice & guidance
- 327 organisations and community groups participated in Share & Learn
- 115 active members of the closed Share & Learn Facebook page
- 414 delegates participated in community development workshops
- 47 community organisations directly assisted through the Community Hubs Development Programme
- 39 Cree organisations were assisted directly, supporting 330 Cree members
- 42 training sessions delivered attracting 342 participants
- 120 organisations and groups participating in DCA training sessions
- Advice in County Durham was supported to develop debt advice services in 3 communities
- Successfully completed delivery of the VegCities campaign
- Community Food & Growing Network relaunched as a bi-monthly online forum

Supporting volunteering

- 705 new volunteers helped with information, advice and guidance
- 49 new volunteer led groups linked with us through our training programme
- Volunteer Bank further developed to assist with Covid-19 vaccinations and testing
- 270 active members of the County Durham Volunteer Co-ordinators Forum
- We sustained contact with active Mutual Aid groups and used the information that we gathered to assist with Community Resilience Planning following the Winter Storms

The voice of the Voluntary & Community Sector

- Assisted with planning for revised Social Prescribing models, including development of a Connector
- Represented the VCS as a member of the County Durham Together Partnership
- Participated in the Funding & Volunteering Task Groups of the County Durham Together Partnership
- Chaired the Better Together Network and the Advice in County Durham Partnership



Our annual Volunteer Recruitment Fair made a welcome return to Durham Market Place in June 2022, after a 2-year hiatus due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The event was the culmination of months of careful planning, and despite the blustery weather it proved to be a great success. 35 volunteer recruiting organisations had stalls and there was a healthy turnout of visitors. New ideas, including a Facebook Live broadcast and a Volunteering Podcast helped us to attract a wider audience. Photographs: Durham Community Action.

Front cover (clockwise from top left): 1: Gainford Village Hall (Hallmark and small grants); 2. DCA Training Event; 3. Student Volunteer Fair; 4: DCA Staff & Trustee Awayday (Photographs: Durham Community Action). Back cover (clockwise from top left): 1: Volunteer Recruitment Fair 2022; 2. Raby Castle Cricket Club (new kit funded by a grant from Ballinger Charitable Trust); 3. Saying farewell to Jo Laverick after 18 years as DCA's Executive Director; 4: Demonstrating the Volunteering Website at DCA's Staff & Trustee Awayday (All photographs: Durham Community Action) except no 2 on the back cover which is supplied courtesy of Raby Castle Cricket Club.



The path to recovery

Although we have finally emerged from the periods of extended lockdown during 2020/21, the longer-term effects of Covid-19 continue to reverberate across the Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS).

Having adjusted to working remotely, we spent much of the past year keeping in touch with organisations and groups that were sustaining community support networks at whatever levels they and we could. This was a time for re-setting & building on lessons learned, and for shining more of a light on the ramifications of the pandemic for communities and people.

The effects of Covid-19 on communities, and on the VCS's reach, their workforce, volunteering, and their growth and development did weaken capacity. Our social & community infrastructure was undermined, and we expect recovery to take shape over a longer than anticipated period, years rather than months.

This vulnerability was compounded by a succession of Winter storms, with an expectation that severe weather and its impact on community infrastructure is being designated a 'new normal,' as climate change becomes more tangible in the public eye.

There are increasingly complex challenges for the VCS and our partners in the public sector with respect to equitable provision of public services, including health, social care, and education. These challenges include the undermining impacts of poor and worsening mental health, poverty, and the escalating rate of the cost of living. We are seeing discomfiting increases in the numbers using food and fuel banks, and growing numbers of new faces queuing for food and debt advice. These challenges are more evident, visible, and will become more acute in the coming year.

Any one of the challenges that we are facing would be difficult to respond to with tired and dispirited workforces across all sectors, however the range and depth of these challenges, coming in the wake of the pandemic and cost of living crisis, is a real concern.

This review outlines our objectives, achievements, and some of the positive outcomes within our core themes of Community Support, Volunteering, Food & Growing, and providing a Voice for the Voluntary & Community Sector in Co. Durham during 2021/22.

Our work during the year was responsive in nature. We collaborated with colleagues in the VCS and the public sector to support communities with information, advice, and training.

Supporting networks and partnerships within the VCS continued to be of crucial importance to us.



Joanna Laverick
Executive Director

We play a key role by representing and championing the sector. Multi-sector partnerships are effective for information exchange, problem solving, consultation, and collaboration to shape new approaches to services, and never more so than during the past year.

We also worked closely with a diverse range of funders, including Commissioners, the Community Foundation and charitable grant giving trusts. Funders have been hugely supportive, enabling greater flexibility, and sustaining the sector as organisations adapted how they reach their beneficiaries. Through this support, a lot of VCS organisations and groups have been able to sustain and to start the process of rebuilding their income streams and activities.

DCA, like many VCS organisations is reliant on a wide portfolio of funding support; we were fortunate to once again enjoy the overwhelming support of County Durham Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), County Durham Community Foundation, Defra, Durham County Council, the National Lottery Community Fund, the Office of the County Durham Police, Crime & Victims Commissioner, and all of our other funders. Grateful thanks to everyone that has supported us with generous funding, help and support.

This is my final Review as DCA's Executive Director. After 18 rewarding years, it is time to 'hang up my boots' and enjoy some leisure time. I do so in the knowledge that I am leaving DCA in the capable hands of Kate Burrows, who is stepping into the hot seat after several years as Community Support Manager.

DCA has a brilliant staff team who work tirelessly to provide our communities with the help and support that they need and deserve. We are proud of them, and grateful too for the continued commitment and support of our volunteer Trustees, including three new Trustees who joined our Board during the past year, bringing fresh experiences and perspectives.

Thank you to everyone that I have had the pleasure to meet and work alongside over the past 18 years.

My very best wishes for the future.



Ballinger Charitable Trust

We were delighted to be approached by the Ballinger Charitable Trust to assist with delivery of a small grants programme to help groups 'come out of Covid-19 hibernation' and flourish in their local communities.

The programme targeted small, grassroots groups in the Teesdale, Weardale & Derwent Valley Area Action Partnership areas. We invited groups to submit an expression of interest, telling us about their group and outlining their project ideas. There was a healthy response, and twelve eligible groups were invited to an informal 'virtual' meeting to chat through their ideas with two trustees from the Ballinger Charitable Trust.

The groups talked about how they were supporting their communities and what difference a grant from Ballinger would make. Each group that attended was awarded a grant of around £500, making £6085 in total. Applicants who weren't shortlisted received help from DCA to find other project funding.

This programme has allowed DCA to engage with more grassroots, volunteer led community groups and has led to further conversations around governance and additional funding opportunities.



Two younger members of the band try out new musical instruments funded by Ballinger Charitable Trust (Photo: Middleton and Teesdale Silver Band)

We have been supporting our local communities throughout County Durham for over 87 years, and this role, just like our volunteering work, continues to underpin everything that we do.

Responding to the challenges emerging in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic helped to guide our work throughout the year. The over-riding priority was to keep in close touch with volunteer led community groups, finding out about their needs, fears, and concerns, and providing them with practical information, advice, and guidance.

Many individuals and organisations appreciated our continued focus on training and funding advice. We were able to use technology to good effect, sharing information and good practice via social media, our newly introduced podcasts, and through updates on our website. Covid-19 limited opportunities for face-to-face meetings during much of the year, however we made use of online conferencing tools to provide virtual networking opportunities, and to also offer on-going support for the wider VCS.

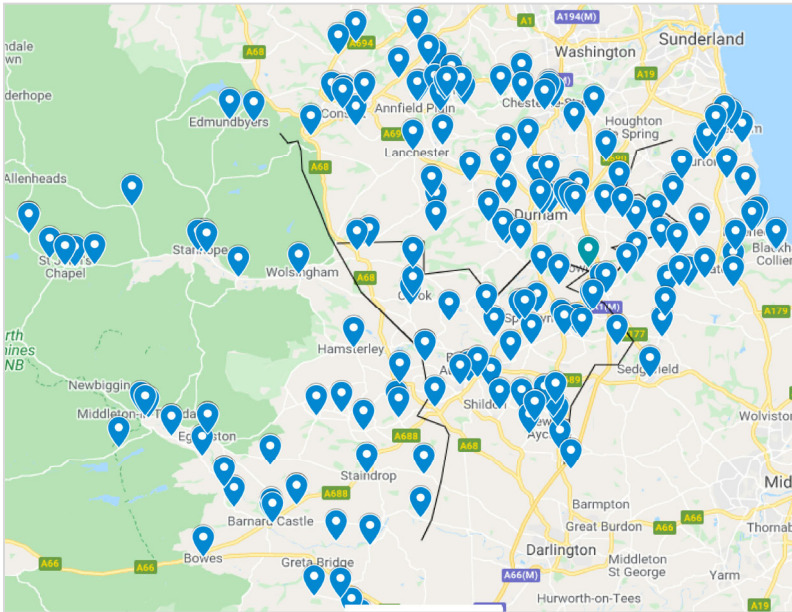
414 people participated in our range of themed workshops during the year, including 3 Meet the Funder events, and several focused activities for Community Buildings. In total we supported 766 VCS groups with information, advice, and guidance.

We were also able to provide information and advice, together with small seed fund grants to develop new initiatives (supported by the National Lottery Community Fund), and for projects to help Community Buildings recover from Covid-19 (funded by Durham County Council).

Audio / Digital Case Studies and Podcasts

DCA's website, Facebook and Twitter accounts proved very useful during the Covid-19 pandemic, helping to keep our communities fully informed.

Building on these strong foundations, we have now introduced audio / digital case studies and podcasts covering a wide range of topics, including Assets Transfers, Being a Trustee, Community Growing, Governance, Hallmark, Safeguarding and Volunteering. For more information visit: durhamcommunityaction.org.uk/case-studies-.html durhamcommunityaction.org.uk/podcasts.html



(Above) Map showing the reach of the Community Hubs Development Programme within County Durham. The blue pins show the community organisations that we have identified as being hubs for their area. Base mapping © Google Maps.

The Community Hubs Development Programme supported by the National Lottery Community Fund made good progress during the year. This initiative is helping Community Hubs across County Durham to develop new ideas to address and resolve issues, enabling communities to support their own needs, helping to combat social isolation and loneliness, and providing access to advice and other support services.

47 community organisations are receiving a full package of support, including a designated DCA Development Officer offering bespoke advice, information and guidance, and help to undertake an organisational healthcheck covering both governance and finance.

Gainford Village Hall

Hallmark is ACRE's national quality standard scheme for the management of community buildings and village halls. There are 3 elements, with Hallmark 1 focusing on the management and administration of the charity.

Gainford Village Hall is well used by the community with a range of activities running for all ages. The Hall was successfully reassessed for Hallmark 1 by DCA earlier this year. The building is a well-maintained and managed community facility, and the development of the hall for the benefit of the community is a credit to the hard work and dedication of the committee. Internally the kitchen and supper room have been renovated creating a good quality community space. External improvements ensure that the centre is clean, tidy, and appealing to visitors.

The Hall was recently awarded funding through the Community Buildings Support Fund (funded by Durham County Council, and managed by DCA), which is providing small grants to assist the recovery of community buildings after the pandemic. Groups are slowly returning, including a bridge group who use the supper room, yoga classes and table tennis in the main hall.

The Trustees are working towards Hallmark 2 which focuses on health & safety, licensing, and maintenance. They have also commissioned an architectural feasibility assessment to look at space utilisation. DCA is supporting the hall with this further development, providing advice and guidance, supplemented with seed funding through the Community Hubs Development Programme.

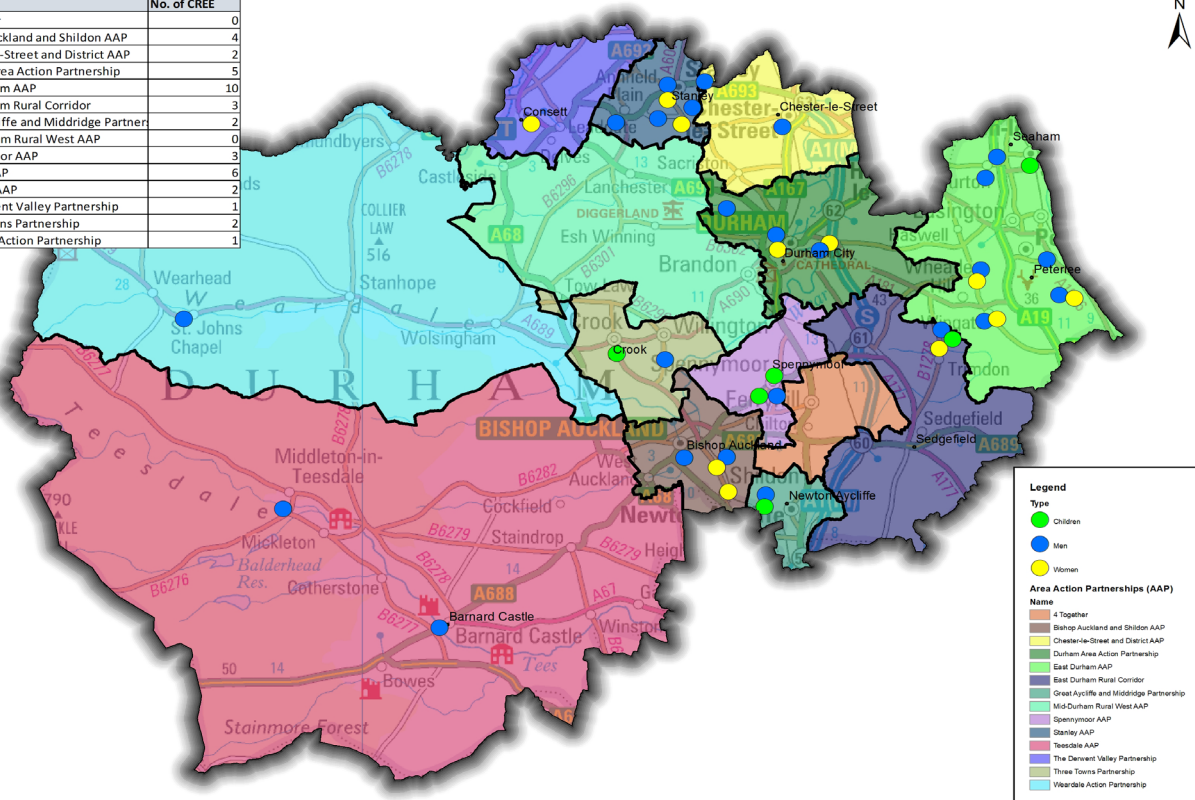


Top: Community Events (Photo: Gainford Village Hall Recreational CIO); Middle: Gainford Village Hall; Bottom: Hallmark 1 presentation (Photos: Durham Community Action)

Supporting our communities



Name	No. of CREE
4 Together	0
Bishop Auckland and Shildon AAP	4
Chester-le-Street and District AAP	2
Durham Area Action Partnership	5
East Durham AAP	10
East Durham Rural Corridor	3
Great Aycliffe and Midsridge Partner	2
Mid-Durham Rural West AAP	0
Spennymoor AAP	3
Stanley AAP	6
Teesdale AAP	2
The Derwent Valley Partnership	1
Three Towns Partnership	2
Weardale Action Partnership	1



Locations and types of Crees within Area Action Partnerships in County Durham
Mapping © Crown Copyright and database rights 2019 Ordnance Survey LA100049055

In collaboration with Durham County Council’s Public Health Team, we again supported 39 organisations through the Cree network. Originally based on the Australian Men’s Shed movement (Cree being a local colloquialism for sheds) and launched in 2011, the network has evolved and expanded to offer a safe, communal space to men, women and young people who may be experiencing poor mental health, risk of social isolation, self-harm, suicide and general health and wellbeing. The network of Crees recently earned recognition for its contribution to Public Health by supporting communities throughout the pandemic.

A new website (<https://www.durham.gov.uk/creenetwork>) was launched in November 2021 to raise awareness of the Crees. It includes an interactive map to find out more information about local Crees, the activities taking place, training opportunities and wellbeing support for Cree staff and volunteers.

Share and Learn Network

The Share and Learn Network for community organisations and groups continued to thrive, benefiting from a fully subscribed on-line programme of networking and training activities. Membership of the network increased during the year to 327 organisations and groups. The network also continued to operate a closed Facebook page with an active membership of 115 organisations.

Several online Meet the Funder events were held during the year attracting a healthy turnout from network members. Believe Housing, County Durham Community Foundation and Sir James Knott Trust were amongst the funders attending; each session comprised a presentation from the funder, followed by a Question-and-Answer Session for delegates which was facilitated by DCA staff.

DCA Share and Learn Meet the Funder



SIR JAMES KNOTT TRUST



Sir James Knott Trust Monday 12th July, 10.30 - 11.30AM

This virtual funding information session is for representatives of voluntary and community groups across County Durham.

There will be information provided about their current funds, how to apply and an opportunity for you to ask questions.



We continued our support for Community Led Housing initiatives in County Durham, working closely with Communities CAN which promotes and supports a broad range of initiatives across the North East of England. Our staff are assisting local groups within County Durham who want to develop community-led housing schemes, by providing peer support, technical support, links to specialist suppliers and advice on best practice.



Durham Action on Social Housing have converted part of their offices to provide affordable accommodation with support from the Community Homes on the Map initiative (Photo: DASH)

Community Building Energy Audits

Castleside Village Hall contacted us for funding advice in December 2020 as their boiler was no longer safe to use. We suggested that they take advantage of a free energy audit through the BEEP team at Durham County Council, to help identify the most efficient replacement.

Once the energy audit had been completed, we worked with the Trustees to identify potential funding, helping them to secure a £1,500 grant from the BEEP Team. This was matched with £1,000 from the Hall's own resources, enabling the Hall to acquire a new boiler system.

We have established a Community Buildings Energy Audit scheme that was launched just after the year-end. We are now able to offer eligible community buildings grants of up to £5,000 funded by Durham County Council, to help implement energy efficiency improvements that are recommended by the BEEP Team.

Making a difference

Although the Covid-19 pandemic again presented significant challenges, we can point to a number of positive outcomes from our work during the year:

- As a broker and information point for the VCS, we were able to ensure that the sector had rapid access to relevant, timely, guidance and advice as they sought resources to re-open and/or to re-build their activity programmes after being closed due to Covid-19. We supported and advised community services about how they could manage and ensure their continuing compliance and safety within new and rapidly changing guidelines and regulations.
- Advice, guidance, and interventions helped to sustain community-based services delivered by volunteers, and community buildings managed by local people, helping them to re-establish the resources they need (staff, volunteers, and funding) to continue supporting their beneficiaries.
- Peer to peer networks for volunteer Trustees were expanded and supported, ensuring greater shared learning, problem solving, and confidence building to plan and sustain their offer.
- Knowledge, understanding and access to a changed funding climate were improved within the Voluntary & Community Sector.
- Volunteers and front-line staff were able to work together across sectors, developing good practice and helping them to provide stronger support for their clients and user groups.
- Lessons learned and intelligence were shared and disseminated, ensuring a clear view of social infrastructure issues arising through recovery, further crises (triggered by the impacts of Winter storms), and then through longer term adjustments to different ways of working and the tools required e.g., digital services and reach for the most vulnerable and isolated people.



Support for volunteering sits at the very heart of our work, thanks to investments from County Durham Community Foundation, Durham County Council and our many other funders. During the year we again worked closely with volunteers, mutual aid groups, and individual volunteers, supporting health and wellbeing including the Covid-19 vaccination programme, and providing advice, funding and access to resources & training,

We collaborated with partners to co-ordinate a voluntary support offer for organisations and their volunteers, who again found themselves struggling under Covid restrictions for much of the year. We migrated training and support sessions on-line and provided good practice support for organisations that are run by, and support volunteers. This helped to ensure that volunteer involving organisations had the resources and skills needed to support volunteers and their beneficiaries safely, and in full compliance with their legal obligations.

Topics covered within our training programmes included remote working practices, safeguarding, volunteer recruitment (in a pandemic) and supporting younger volunteers. Specific developmental sessions covered volunteers and the law, and safeguarding. This support was really valued and welcomed, given that many volunteer involving organisations had to manage remote working whilst also ensuring volunteer safety. 42 training sessions attracted 342 delegates from 120 organisations. 49 new volunteer led groups linked with us through our training programme.

Bespoke training

Livin, the housing provider, asked us to design a training programme that would help them to build the capacity of their customer voice volunteers.

We delivered a series of practical workshops to build confidence and develop the skills required, which included talking to other tenants about their experiences, report writing, observing how a service is delivered, and using a laptop computer.

Livin noted that the workshops had helped the volunteers to acquire new skills, and given them the confidence to help influence, shape, and support Livin's policies, strategy, and service improvement.

Feedback was very positive. The volunteers responded well to the training, and welcomed the ability to learn at their own pace, backed up with support from the tutors throughout the process.

Making a difference

The Covid-19 pandemic presented significant challenges; however, we can point to a number of positive outcomes during the year:

- As a result of this work, volunteer involving organisations in County Durham are more effectively networking, sharing good practice, and offering mutual support for tackling and finding solutions to problems.
- There are improved pathways for volunteers to access opportunities, develop their experience and make contributions that are both valued and add value to civil society.
- There is now a robust and efficient system of communication and collaboration between front line staff in the NHS and the VCS sector with respect to recruitment, support, and placements for volunteers.
- Volunteer led groups and organisations have support and ready access to advice and help when they need it. They are better informed and have the resources on hand that help them to ensure that their volunteers are well trained and supported.



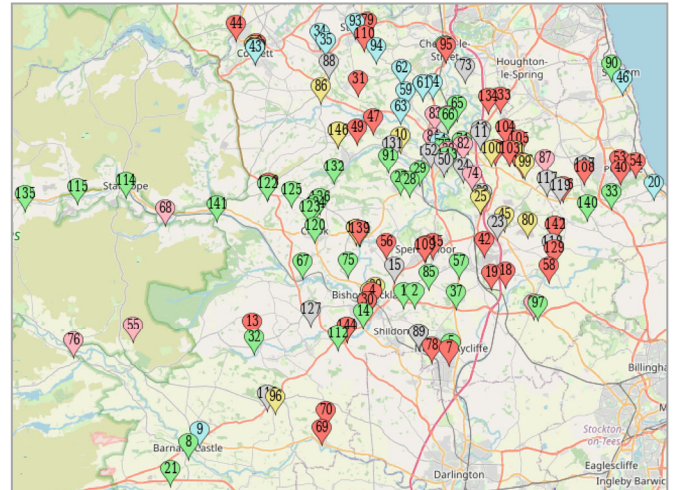
DCA offers a wide range of training courses, including bespoke training designed for individual clients. Courses are delivered online & face to face. (Photo: Durham Community Action)



Supporting volunteering

Mutual aid groups are informal by nature, and many sprung up as an initial response to the Covid-19 lockdowns that began in Spring 2020. Small local groups, often linked to local community centres or locally trusted organisations, organised themselves as mini volunteer forces to reach people who were isolated, vulnerable, and alone. Although some groups disbanded once the initial effects of the Covid-19 pandemic subsided, others remained, providing a valuable support network within their local communities for Covid-19.

This was particularly true in the aftermath of Storm Arwen which had a devastating impact on rural communities across County Durham and beyond in November 2021. During the year we sustained contact and support for continuing mutual aid groups across County Durham, picking up important messages from their links with vulnerable people, and assisting Town and Parish Councils with support to develop Community Resilience Planning.



We tracked and supported 141 mutual aid groups across County Durham at the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic. Whilst some groups have since disbanded, others remain, making a valuable contribution within their communities, particularly in the aftermath of Storm Arwen in November 2021. Map data © OpenStreetMap (<https://www.openstreetmap.org/>) contributors, ODbL (<https://opendatacommons.org/licenses/odbl/1.0/>)

Food for Thought

Sacrison Youth Project created Food for Thought in March 2020 to support the local community through the Covid-19 pandemic. Care packages, hot food, prescription collection, advice, information and a doorstep befriending service were provided using volunteers. At its peak, 30 volunteers were supporting the project, answering help from 7am – 10pm seven days a week.

Sacrison did not have an established food project, so the volunteers contacted DCA for advice. We put them in contact with local groups to share best practice. The group already had a very good knowledge of their local community allowing them to reach the most vulnerable, however they estimate that 80% of the people supported were unknown to the project team prior to the pandemic.

As the pandemic progressed, the project adapted to meet community needs. Local networks were established with companies that had surplus food, and issues such as food waste and redistribution were tackled. The pandemic gave many vulnerable and unsupported people the confidence to reach out and seek support, as the previous stigma was reduced because it had now become a universal problem. By engaging with the community, the volunteers began to identify gaps in support services.

Food for Thought is now a permanent part of Sacrison Youth and Community Project's offer providing a range of support services, including Care Packages, Debt Management, White Goods and Digital Poverty Support, a School Uniform Bank, Community Shelves, and Information, Advice, Guidance & Signposting. When Storm Arwen resulted in the loss of power for a prolonged period, Sacrison Youth Project was able to respond quickly, supporting the community through difficult times.



Mutual aid volunteers helping out at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic. Photos (top) Catchgate & Annfield Plain Isolation Support (bottom) St Helens & West Auckland Covid-19 support group





We continued to inform and consult with the VCS Safeguarding Network and provided representation on both the Children and Adult Safeguarding Boards in County Durham. Contributions from the Network were fed through to Safeguarding Board meetings and training events, helping to inform and shape resources.



In addition to face-to-face advice, we also publish a wide range of self-help resources to help VCS organisations that recruit and manage volunteers (Photo: Durham Community Action)

Seaham Music Academy

Formed as a charity in 1992, the Academy teaches children and adults to play music, providing tuition that can help people progress from beginner through to exam and performance level. The charity is funded through grant appeals and payments for the lessons they provide.

Following a request for help to develop suitable volunteering policies and procedures, our team provided signposting to similar organisations that were able to offer advice. We were also able to support the Academy to draft policies covering topics including complaints, equality and diversity, inclusion, safeguarding, and whistleblowing. We explained that the policy of creating policies and procedures is only the first stage; once in place they need to be regularly reviewed and updated.

As an infrastructure support organisation, we are well equipped to provide information, advice and guidance to support others in the VCS. We enjoy strong links with a wide range of partners at national, regional and local level including ACRE (rural issues) and Safer Culture North East (safeguarding). By drawing on the combined knowledge of multiple organisations, we are able to positively impact the performance of the voluntary organisations that we work with.

Tin Arts

Previously a company limited by guarantee, Tin Arts re-registered as a Community Interest Organisation (CIO) in 2021. The expanded use of volunteers highlighted the need for new volunteering policies and procedures. In addition, Tin Arts did not previously advertise for volunteers, but now planned to do so.

Our knowledgeable staff explained that by adopting the Volunteer Kitemark framework, Tin Arts could ensure that an excellent volunteer experience was awaiting those who joined. The Kitemark is a recognised measurement of quality, and can also help with fundraising and winning contracts. Although Tin Arts have not yet secured the Kitemark, they are making great progress towards achieving it, and have started to implement some excellent good practice into their volunteer processes.



Volunteers Fairs held at Durham University and local Colleges offer a good opportunity to showcase the wide range of volunteering opportunities that are available (Photo: Durham Community Action)

During the year, 705 people, all new to volunteering, were supported with advice, information, and guidance through the Centre for Volunteering. We also recruited 247 members of the Volunteer Bank, and worked with the County Durham Clinical Commissioning Group and the Primary Care Networks, to promote, recruit, and manage a pool of volunteers to support Covid-19 vaccination and testing centres across County Durham.

The Volunteer Co-ordinators Forum continued to develop and expand, ending the year with a membership of 270 organisations that work with volunteers. We organised and hosted 4 meetings of the Forum on-line, attracting increased participation from the membership.



DCA facilitates the Community Growing and Food Network which helps to bring together like-minded organisations with projects or interests related to growing and food. The network enables community groups and organisations to connect, communicate and collaborate, sharing good practice and supporting each other.

Network sessions are held online bi-monthly. Each session has a different theme providing an opportunity for members to meet with other community groups and organisations, discuss topics of interest, and to also share experiences and updates. It also provides an opportunity to showcase the achievements of individual projects.



The FISCH project is building the confidence and self-esteem of children by encouraging them to grow their own produce (Photo: Durham Community Action / Peter Samsom)

The FISCH project

The Family Initiative Supporting Children's Health (FISCH) encourages children and families to grow their own food, and to then produce their own healthy meals. The project started in Willington, but has since expanded to other communities across County Durham.

It provides opportunities to meet new people and make new friends. It also helps to improve knowledge and actions relating to healthy diet and physical activity. Children are encouraged to get involved at all stages, and there are tangible signs of increased confidence and self-esteem as skills are shared with classroom peers.

It is hoped that the allotments will become more sustainable as families take ownership and continue the good work that has started.

As an infrastructure service provider, we play an important role representing and championing the Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS), through the range of strategic multi sector partnerships, and continuing reviews of partnership working.

Covid-19 remained the dominant influence on our work. The health and wellbeing of our communities and people who have struggled through the pandemic, has been, and remains at the forefront of all partners concerns. During the year we worked with our partners to ensure that a sustainable social and community infrastructure remains in place and has access to the resources that are needed to help it rebuild and thrive.

We consulted with VCS organisations and service providers to build stronger local connections with Primary Care Networks, and to support planning for revised Social Prescribing models and new systems for access to health care.

We once again represented VCS interests as a member of the County Durham Together Partnership, various task groups (covering Funding and Volunteering) and as a member of the Board of the County Durham Partnership. This enabled us to collaborate with public sector colleagues to promote a joined-up policy for commissioning and funding, engaging with communities of interest in the development of new funding programmes, and influencing the provision of key services by engagement with Heads of Services. Consultation and survey work with VCS sector service providers enabled us to gather and share intelligence about needs, and issues arising from support work in the community. Important information and best practice were then disseminated through multi sector partnerships.

We ensured that the VCS sector was fully engaged with co-production on responsive services to support mental health, access to advice providers and health care. Advice in County Durham and Better Together, as networks of countywide VCS and specialist providers, were each mobilised to share insights and experiences, in turn contributing to the development and delivery of objectives arising from the Poverty Action Group.

During the year, we chaired and supported the review and development of the Advice in County



Durham multi-agency network as the 'go to' practitioner network for all agencies to come together and join up services. Network members continued to provide advice and one to one casework support across County Durham.

Under our leadership, the Advice in County Durham Partnership also compiled and supported a successful three-year funding bid to develop the partnership. We consulted and drew up plans for 2 surveys, covering the membership, and debt advice providers services in County Durham. We also refreshed and confirmed a governance model for the Advice Partnership, so that partners are robust enough to manage future investment opportunities, together with any future resultant conflicts of interest that may arise.

We continued to Chair the Better Together Network (including two policy forums), and the Advice in County Durham Partnership. We also contributed to the County Durham Partnership Board from a VCS perspective. These roles have helped to inform strategic agendas for partnership working in County Durham, and for emerging new models of commissioning services.

Representing the sector on the Regional Funders Network, we helped to inform and shape funders

approaches to supporting the sector through recovery from the shocks of Covid-19 and the Winter storms. We also managed a small grant scheme for community buildings.

Development of a Connector commissioning model continued, aiming, to target funding into the VCS sector more effectively, and also consulting with the VCS and commissioning colleagues through a Better Together Policy Forum. In addition, we represented VCS interests in multi-sector Task Groups, tackling mental health, funding and investment, and volunteering.

Collaborating with local authority and NHS / Public Health partners, we co-ordinated communications, resources and reach into communities and responded to local needs. We also represented the VCS into the Community Cell for County Durham, providing regular updates on issues and impacts for the sector.

Our team co-ordinated and managed information exchanges for the VCS and health & social care providers addressing social isolation, health, and wellbeing services, particularly in rural areas. This included leadership of workshops about the VCS in County Durham, for NHS staff based in Primary Care practices and Hospital Foundation Trusts.

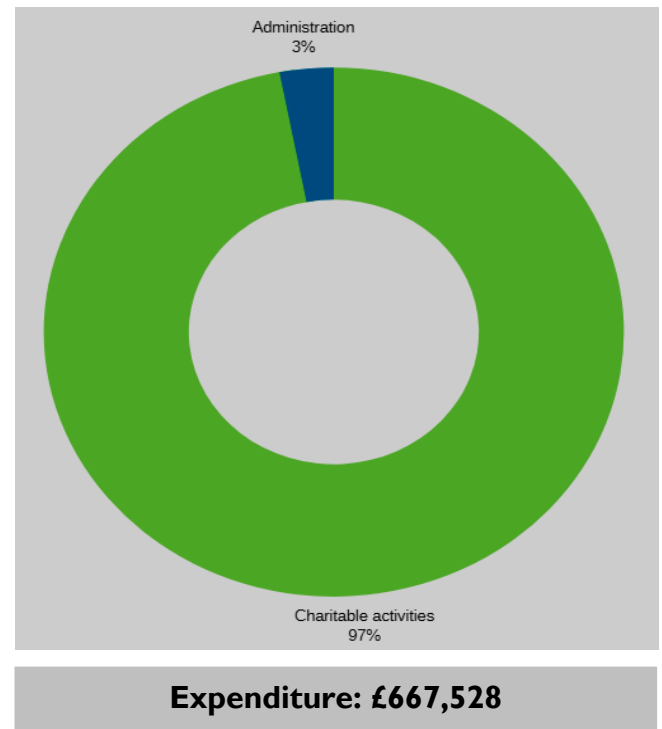
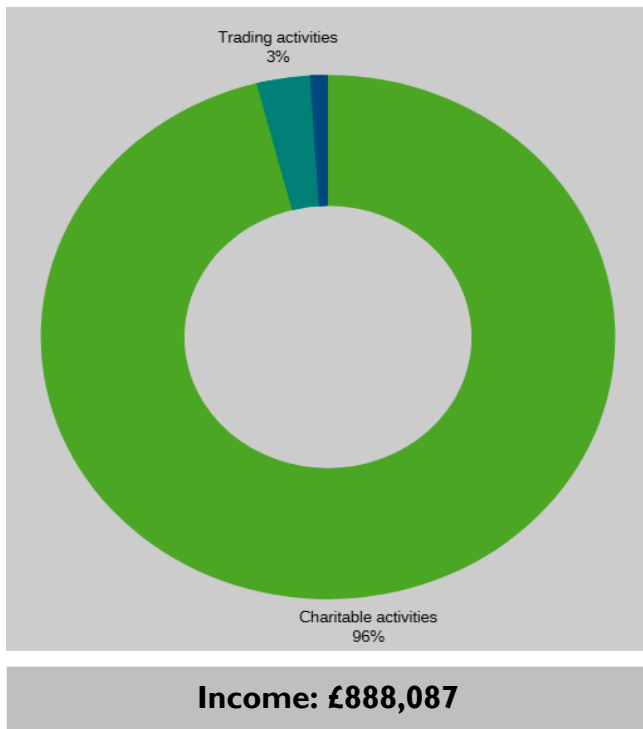
Making a difference

Although the Covid-19 pandemic presented significant challenges, there were a number of positive outcomes from our work during the year:

- Voluntary and community sector led partnerships are collaborating to shape community services. This will enable them to be responsive to the needs of communities that are struggling in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, and with the impacts emerging from the economic downturn, particularly in regard to mental health, food and fuel poverty and access to support and advice services. This in turn ensures that the voluntary sector is actively engaged and represented within key public sector led networks.
- Collaborative coalitions are working to influence the design and delivery of public service contracts.
- Front line VCS organisations are better informed and trained about the issues that affect them and the people they work with.
- Funding and investment into the VCS sector are becoming more responsive, streamlined, and targeted, and also more enabling in terms of sustaining a community infrastructure through the Covid-19 pandemic.
- The VCS in County Durham has a strong representational base that is influencing the ways in which public services are shaped.



Our finances



The pie charts illustrate the income that we received during the 12 months ended 31 March 2022, and how it was invested into our work with communities. During the year, our income from core activities exceeded our expenditure, resulting in a surplus of £148,965 for the year. Meanwhile, we received £71,594 more restricted project income than we spent during the year. Taken together the overall outcome was a surplus of £220,559 for the year. We generate investment from a variety of sources, including commissioning, consultancy, contracting, grant aid, and service level agreements. This ensures that all our activity takes place within our ethos of community development, and that it adds value to our other areas of work, including policy work and influencing.

Our funders

We gratefully acknowledge the support of all our funders, partners and customers including:

ACRE
Ballinger Trust
Bloom Procurement
Communities CAN
Cornforth Partnership
County Durham Clinical Commissioning Group
County Durham Community Foundation
County Durham Sport
Defra
Durham Area Youth
Durham County Council
Durham Police, Crime & Victims' Commissioner
Frosterley Village Hall
Fulwell Community Association

Hamsterley & Low Westwood Comm. Association
Jubilee Fields Community Association
Lanchester Community Association
Livin
Murray & Lamb
NAVCA
Pioneering Care Partnership
Stanley Area Youth Consortium
Tees, Esk & Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust
Teesdale Day Clubs
The National Lottery Community Fund
The Soil Association / Sustainable Food Places
The Wider World
VONNE

About us



Staff serving during the 12 months ended 31 March 2022

Katie Baggott (from 26/04/2021)
Isla Ballard
Helen Brown
Kate Burrows
Fiona Christian (from 28/02/2022)
Tracy Emery
Hannah Foster (from 26/04/2021)
Susan Garrett (from 14/06/2021)
Tara Hallimond
Lyndsey Hocking (from 25/10/2021)
Joanna Laverick
Charlotte Linton
Allison Lishman
Hannah Murray-Leslie (until 03/02/2022)
Anne-Marie Parkin (until 31/07/2021)

Peter Samsom (until 03/02/2022)

Abby Thompson
Susan Tron MBE
Tracy Emery

Trustees serving during the 12 months ended 31 March 2022

Professor Sarah Banks
Mrs Linda Bird
Mrs Patricia Buckley-Atkins (Treasurer)
Mrs Jenny Flynn MBE (Vice-Chair)
Mrs Angela Hawkes (from 23/09/21)
Mrs Elaine Kilgannon MBE (from 23/09/2021)
Mr Mike Litchfield
Professor Fred Robinson (from 23/09/2021)
Mr John Robinson
Mrs Clarice Smith
Mrs Jan Worters MBE (Chair)



After nearly 2 years of virtual meetings held via Zoom due to the Covid-19 pandemic, DCA Staff and Trustees were once again able to enjoy a face-to-face awayday at Spennymoor Town Hall in December 2021 (Photo: Durham Community Action / Russell Hayward)

Find out more on our websites and social media



durhamcommunityaction.org.uk
fooddurham.net/
countydurhamvolunteering.org.uk



[facebook.com/DurhamCommunityAction/](https://www.facebook.com/DurhamCommunityAction/)
<https://www.facebook.com/countydurhamvolunteercentre/>



twitter.com/DurhamComAction
twitter.com/food_durham
twitter.com/durhamvolunteer?lang=en

2022

ANNUAL REVIEW



DURHAM COMMUNITY ACTION

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Crook
County Durham DL15 0BF
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Charity number: 229119
Company number: 309329