



# IMPACT REPORT 23/24

**‘A WORLD WHERE INDIVIDUALS  
AND ORGANISATIONS ARE  
EMPOWERED, AND EVERYONE  
FEELS CONNECTED AND ENGAGED.’**

# HELLO FROM OUR CEO

It's with great excitement that we present our 2023–2024 Impact Report! Wow, what a year it's been busy, challenging, but ultimately rewarding. We can't help but feel a deep sense of pride in what we have achieved. Together, we have made a tangible difference in our communities, even as we navigated some tough times. Funding has been tight, and the need for our services continues to grow, and the unwavering dedication of our team, partners and volunteers has kept us moving forward.

Reflecting on our achievements, we're filled with gratitude for everyone who's been part of this journey. Your support whether through donations, volunteering, or simply spreading the word has been invaluable. We have got big plans for the future, and we know that by working together, we can continue to make North Somerset a place where everyone thrives.

So, here's to the power of community, the strength of our partnerships, and the bright future we're building together!

**MANDY**  
**CEO VANS**



# WHO ARE VANS?

Your local independent charity, who for over 25 years have been the champion of the non-profit making sector across North Somerset. This year we have fine-tuned our mission to better serve our community and ensure we make the biggest possible impact.

**Our mission? It's a bold one:**

**'To inspire, lead, support, advocate and influence people to take positive action in creating a more connected, inclusive, and thriving community for everyone'.**

We know that our work is more crucial than ever, and the heart of what we do is about building strong partnerships—because, together, we can truly make a difference in our community.

**Curious to learn more?**

Whether you are after expert advice, keen to volunteer, or just want a chat – get in touch, we are always here to help!



## OUR FOUR KEY OBJECTIVES GUIDE OUR EFFORTS:

- **Advocacy and leadership: Empowering non–profits to lead and thrive.**
- **Partnerships and collaboration: Developing and encouraging partnerships and collaborations.**
- **A dynamic sector: Creating, developing, and strengthening a vibrant non–profit community.**
- **Volunteering: Growing and nurturing volunteering opportunities.**

*This report aims to give you a flavour of the work that we do.*

# OUR YEAR IN NUMBERS

This year we supported over **3700** residents and **258** community organisations, running **24** projects together with **11** partners and stakeholders.

## ADVOCATING FOR LEADERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT

We have engaged with an amazing 258 different non-profit making organisations.

## PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

**85**

Good Causes supported by  
Our North Somerset Lottery

North  
Somerset  
Community  
Lottery 

This money has provided  
**much-needed  
unrestricted funds to  
good causes** working in  
North Somerset, allowing  
them to choose how they  
spend this additional money.

**£35,318**

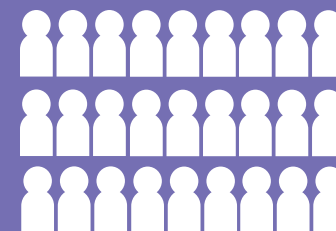
**funds raised totalled**  
(up 16% on 2022–2023)



**23**

**partnerships and forum  
events facilitated**

**200+**  
participants.



## A DYNAMIC SECTOR: CREATING, DEVELOPING, AND STRENGTHENING A VIBRANT NON-PROFIT COMMUNITY

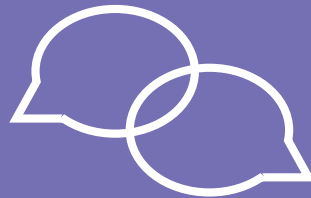
**33** workshops and  
events delivered



**681** participants



We have seen **181**  
people who have experienced  
domestic abuse



**1327**  
free counselling  
sessions provided

**RECLAIM**  
FREEDOM from abuse

## VOLUNTEERING: GROWING AND NURTURING VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES

**139**  
organisations  
(up 22% on 2022–2023)  
registered on our Online  
Volunteer Centre.



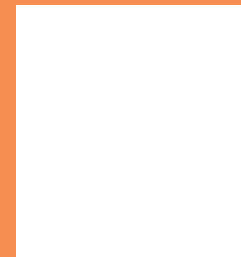
**658**  
volunteers  
(up 81% on  
2022–2023)

Our VANS  
volunteers  
total =

**263**

volunteering in:

Health  
Care Homes  
Good  
Neighbour  
Scheme  
Children's  
Centres



Our volunteers delivered  
**500+**  
hours supporting the  
vaccination programme

Our volunteers visited  
**81**  
residents in Care Homes

# THE HIGHLIGHTS

## ADVOCATING FOR THE SECTOR AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

**Championing the non-profit making sector to ensure that they have the resources, support, and recognition they need to make a positive difference in the world.**

### **We champion the sector**

- We are working together to create a Health Strategy that prioritises community well-being, as the non-profit making Locality Lead for Weston-super-Mare, Worle, and Villages, and a member of the Integrated Care Board. We are committed to harnessing the strength of the nonprofit sector to improve health outcomes and reduce the demand for medical care.
- We have worked closely with St Monica's Trust to help shape their new funding strategy, which aims to support nonprofit organisations addressing loneliness and isolation. We want to make a positive impact on the community by providing resources to those who need it most.
- We are leading the charge in commissioning the State of Ageing Report, listening to what our community wants to improve the lives of older people in North Somerset. This report makes recommendations and sets the standard for how we work together to make North Somerset an age-friendly community.

**Look out for the State of Ageing Report in October 2024**



*"Thank you so much for being on the steering group for the NAVCA network, it's been so valuable your voice has been there..." NAVCA CEO*

### **We foster leadership**

- We are committed to developing strong and innovative leadership within the non-profit making sector, empowering organisations to thrive and address community challenges. We hosted the Senior Leaders Forum and online webinars have helped us to learn from each other and foster the growth of strong non-profit making leaders and resilient organisations.

**81 senior leaders of non-profit making organisations have attended 7 leadership events this year. Events have focused on Well-being, Health and North Somerset policy development.**

### **We promote inclusivity**

- To ensure that the needs of our communities are better understood, our work with minoritised groups allows us to work with statutory organisations, like health and the police. We chair the Police and

the North Somerset Independent Advisory Group (IAG), playing a crucial role in addressing concerns and building stronger relationships between the police and the community. The IAG provides guidance, insights, and constructive feedback to the Senior Leadership of Avon and Somerset Constabulary, supporting improved policing practices and community engagement.

**Our partnership with Somerset County Cricket Foundation — the Maqbul Project — continued to deliver regular cricket sessions for local asylum seekers who otherwise have limited access to organised physical activity and social events.**



One of the Maqbul participants played a full game for Somerset Disability Cricket team – a friendly match against Gloucestershire County. As far as we know he is the first asylum seeker ever to do so.

- We actively support the RACE MATTERS Campaign – participating in workshops and conversations that centre on improving relationships between our local community and the Police. Our involvement has supported changes in local policing with early evidence improved reporting of incidents and a greater willingness to listen and respond to community views.

### **We support survivors**

- Reclaim originally set up as a counselling service and developed into a 'By and For' Trauma therapeutic recovery service for survivors



of Domestic Abuse, providing specialist one-to-one counselling. Reclaim is funded by North Somerset Council and the Police and Crime Commissioners Office. This year, funded by North Somerset Council, we have also provided 1:1 counselling sessions for Children and Young People aged 11-17 years, as they are now recognised as survivors of abuse themselves.

*"Yes, the sessions have been very helpful. It has helped me process all the emotions I have experienced through the end of this relationship, grief anger, and sadness. Also helping me address my boundaries and keeping me moving forward – out of this toxic relationship." Reclaim service user*

# THE HIGHLIGHTS

## COLLABORATION

**By working together we can pool our resources, share knowledge, and achieve greater impact. Partnerships allow us to expand our reach, increase our visibility, and create a stronger network of support.**

### **We bring people together**

- We host the Ageing Well Forum. The Forum brings together statutory and non-profit making organisations who are working to improve the lives of older people in North Somerset. We produce a monthly Ageing Well Bulletin for our partners providing information from local, regional and national sources around Ageing Well.



In December 2023 we hosted an Ageing Well Showcase event to highlight projects funded through the Weston Locality and delivered by non-profit making organisations to colleagues in North Somerset Council and the NHS. These included: The Proud Bar Tea & Chat, Men's Talk Club, Somerset Cricket Foundation and Vision NS plus virtual grant holders, smaller grants offered to small grassroots groups.



**Our Ageing Well Bulletin goes to 100+ individuals and organisations. We also produced a Winter Newsletter for older people with 1000 copies being distributed to our community.**

*"Brilliant range of info & well presented. Clinicians have reported is really useful to give out (particularly transport)".*  
Ageing Well Winter Newsletter

**Our online volunteer centre has seen an increase in the number of opportunities available for young people aged 16+ up from 30 opportunities to 53 (Up 76% from 2022 – 2023).**

- Our Volunteer Coordinators Network (VCN) is open to those who manage volunteers. The Network offers support and an opportunity for members to connect, engage with peers and share expertise. Through consulting with the members, we have identified the topics that are important to them and bring in specialist expertise to support them. This year we facilitated an interactive deaf awareness workshop delivered by Emm Sharpe from Sharpe Studies.

- Young people are our future leaders. Our Community Researchers programme, funded by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR), trained young people at Weston College to engage their peers in Health Research. They wrote a report that went to NIHR, Woodspring and Weston, Worle and Villages locality and public health, making several recommendations for the future.

*"A suggestion is for the NIHR to run more research champion workshops as young people tend to listen more to people in their age range compared to people out of their age range"*

*"The VCN forum is having a positive impact as it allows good signposting and shows a positive impact when joining together across multiple organisations and North Somerset as a whole."*  
VCN Forum Participant.



### **We look to a sustainable future**

- We are committed to engaging young people in our communities and helping to grow the next generation of leaders. We were delighted to be able to launch our Children and Young People Volunteering work this year, supported by a grant from Quartet. We have worked with the sector to ask about their experiences and challenges when recruiting volunteers aged 14-18. We also visited sixth formers to promote volunteering (approximately 300 students) and discuss their volunteering experiences.



- In partnership with Girls on Track, Weston's Museum and Weston-super-Mare Mercedes Benz Dealership we were able to jointly deliver a sports-based STEM activity event, giving 10 local schools and over 100 pupils a STEM careers and learning experience.

*"The biggest THANK YOU for today. The girls (and staff) have all come back to school absolutely buzzing having had the best day today. We would love to be a part of any further events..."* Science Curriculum Lead, Bournville Primary School.

# THE HIGHLIGHTS

## CREATING, DEVELOPING, AND STRENGTHENING A DYNAMIC NON-PROFIT MAKING SECTOR

**A vibrant and resilient non-profit making sector plays a crucial role in improving the quality of life for our communities. By creating, developing, and strengthening this sector, we foster innovation, build resilience, and create a more equitable and sustainable society.**

### **We continue to work to create a dynamic non-profit making sector**

- Training is core to the work that we do, sharing expertise and good practice is key to a vibrant and resilient sector. The United Kingdom Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) Community bid writing sessions and webinars, funded by North Somerset Council, allowed us to work more closely with 42 individuals and groups. These sessions allowed the groups to share their project ideas and tailor their proposals to meet the needs of the funder.

Fundraising and bid writing are essential for all nonprofit organisations, enabling them to address complex challenges and make a lasting impact. We delivered four fundraising and bid writing events attended by 54 participants.

*"It is wonderful to feel that VANS is there to assist. Applying for grants is quite a challenge as I hate asking anyone for money!"*  
Fundraising Workshop Participant



*"Brilliant to meet other organisations and also have clear actionable goals for the future rather than just training / talking."*  
Week of Action Participant

- Expanding our sector can make a significant impact on the economy and society. This year we recruited a new Physical Activity Co-ordinator to support the design and delivery of a new joint initiative with North Somerset Council, aimed at helping people to be more active – opening up opportunities for 888 residents to have free access to regular physical activity of their choice. A key enabling aspect of this project has been our work to raise awareness and standards of inclusivity amongst local activity providers in each of the main towns across North Somerset.

**Our week of action in June 2023 saw us take to the road and deliver 5 free training events across North Somerset to 37 participants, covering topics such as racism, inclusion, fundraising, children and young people volunteering and climate change.**

A joint project between VANS, Lowering the Bar, the For All Healthy Living Centre and Life Cycle has delivered free bicycles to low-income individuals and families giving them a means of transport and regular exercise.

VANS supported Weston's Cornish Pilot Gig Club to complete the first phase of the club's development plan that included the launch of their new boat and saw the club move to a new location on Weston's seafront, putting the club on a more sustainable footing and allowing membership numbers to diversify and grow.

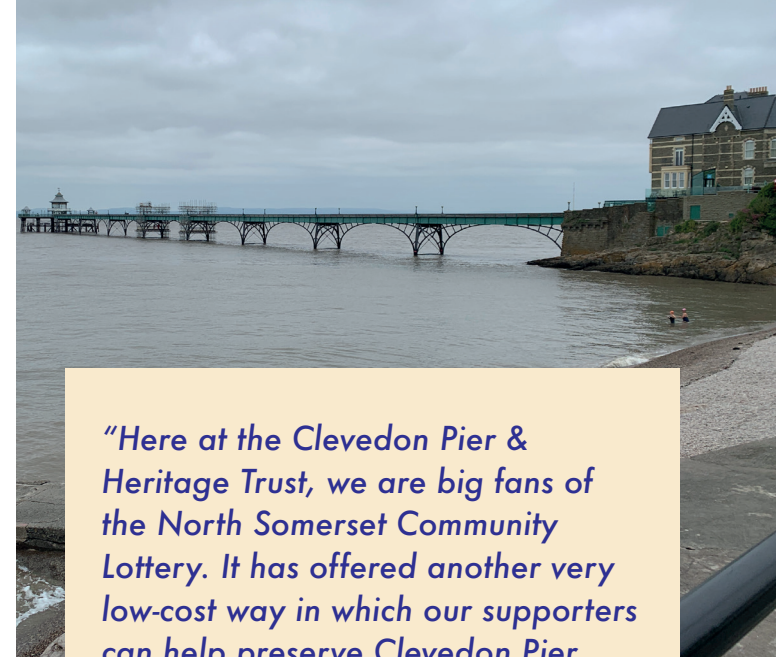


- Inclusion is central to our work. When everyone feels valued, respected, and belongs, it creates a stronger sense of community and reduces prejudice and discrimination. We collaborated with Broadoak Academy to create a vibrant

Festival of Culture, a one-day celebration of Weston-Super-Mare's diverse community. The event brought together local groups like the North Somerset LGBTQ+ Forum, Race Equality Network, Multi-Cultural Friendship Society, Weston Polish Association, Muslim/Mosque & Bangladeshi Community, Hindu/South Asian Community Group, and SARI. Hundreds of families enjoyed a fantastic showcase of local talent and culture, making the festival a memorable part of the school's centenary celebrations.

*"It has only served to strengthen my pride in this town and the people who live here. Our community shares a wonderful spirit of cultural richness and love for each other, and our Festival of Culture proved that." Principal at Broadoak Academy*

- Identifying gaps in provision is crucial in developing effective services, provision and support for our communities. Our most recent innovation is the Thalia Project in partnership with North Somerset Council. This is a specialist trauma service for domestic abuse survivors with disabilities or chronic conditions. We offer training to



*"Here at the Clevedon Pier & Heritage Trust, we are big fans of the North Somerset Community Lottery. It has offered another very low-cost way in which our supporters can help preserve Clevedon Pier, and what's more each month there is an opportunity for ticket holders to win some fabulous prizes. Keep up the good work!"*

professionals to create a better multi-agency approach to support and recovery for disabled survivors. The Thalia Project has delivered presentations to professionals and the community across North Somerset about the connections between domestic abuse trauma and disability to map the need for training, gaps in the provision, and connections with what is already being done. We are in the process of creating a specialist referral pathway for Disabled survivors to self-refer or for professionals to have a referral pathway for their clients.

# THE HIGHLIGHTS

## DEVELOPING AND GROWING VOLUNTEERING

**Volunteers are the backbone of non-profit making and grassroots organisations, providing essential services and support that is not possible with paid staff alone. Volunteering is a selfless act that can have a profound impact on both individuals and communities.**

### **VANS continues to grow volunteering**

- Offering a high-quality service and reflecting on our practice underpins everything that we do. We were thrilled this year to be awarded NAVCA Volunteer Centre Quality Accreditation for our work on volunteering. We were amongst the first twelve organisations to be accredited nationally. The award centred on our work promoting volunteering across North Somerset and our plans to grow volunteering in the future. Going through the accreditation process allowed us to focus on our volunteering programme, identify areas for improvement as well as write a Volunteering Strategy for North Somerset.

In November 2023 we brought together thirty non-profit making organisations to work on the Strategy and set the priorities for growing



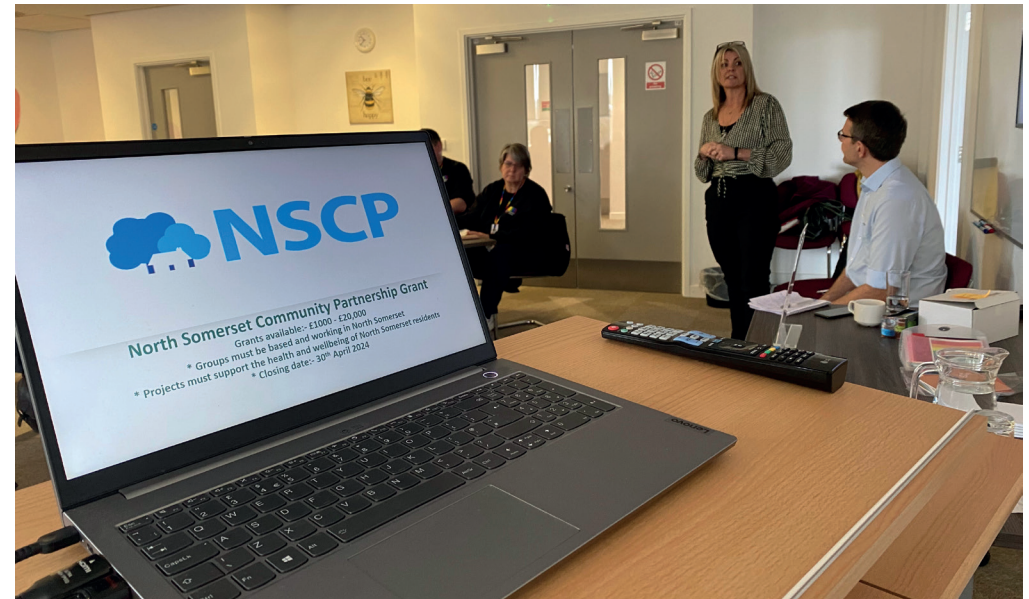
The VCQA Accreditation reflects everyone's hard work and we could not have done it without the hard work of other organisations. Going through the accreditation process has given us the space to assess our volunteering programme, identify areas for improvement and implement changes. The VCQA can also provide prospective volunteers and non-profit making organisations with assurance that they are working with a well-managed and reputable organisation committed to their wellbeing.

volunteering across North Somerset. One of the key strands of work was encouraging the inclusion of underrepresented groups into volunteering. Exploring new ways to engage groups who for various reasons would not normally consider volunteering.

- Engaging underrepresented groups with volunteering is key to creating a more inclusive volunteer experience. Our Step Forward programme is open to North Somerset residents aged 18 and over. It supports adults facing challenges or barriers to accessing volunteer and employment opportunities. The programme puts a particular focus on volunteering as a means to reduce social isolation, improve physical and mental wellbeing, and provide individuals with the skills and confidence to pursue employment opportunities.

*"Doing this course made me act. I am now volunteering in a role that I love. I also plan to do another course at North Somerset Training next month. Deb is a great teacher and easy to talk to. I liked meeting new people and sharing our experiences. I will miss the course but hope it will help me move on to do more learning, carry on volunteering and eventually into a paid job". Step Forward Participant.*

- Working in collaboration with others is one of our core objectives. We, working in partnership with Health and North Somerset Council, recognised the need for a Befriending Alliance. We facilitated the Alliance, establishing a single point of access for Befriending referrals



and raising the profile of befriending with service providers. The Alliance has highlighted the need for a Befriending Service that will continue to develop this work once this project is completed. In the Final Project Report, feedback consistently showed that we provided high-quality programme management, forming a strong network of non-profit making sector services and creating a strong framework for future delivery.

**The Alliance has 13 organisational members and made 81 referrals to member organisations. 46 new befriending volunteers were recruited.**

# OUR TEAM

**In today's complex and ever-changing world, we remain a vital force for good in our communities, building a strong and innovative non-profit making sector.**

Our expertise has allowed us to provide even more support and guidance to individuals and organisations this year. We have a successful history of implementing programmes and projects that have made a positive impact on our community. We continue to develop creative and effective solutions to complex challenges, working in collaboration with our partners and stakeholders, which allows us to strengthen our impact and reach.

We foster a collaborative and supportive culture that values diversity, innovation, and community engagement. Our team is passionate about making a positive impact and working together to achieve our goals. We offer a flexible work environment, opportunities for professional development, and a commitment to create a supportive and inclusive workplace. We believe in our team and invest in their well-being and growth.

Our people are supported by a committed and skilled VANS Board of Trustees who all believe passionately in the work we do. The role Trustees play in our non-profit making organisations and grassroots

**"We foster a collaborative and supportive culture that values diversity, innovation, and community engagement."**

**"We are grateful to our funders for their unwavering commitment to our cause and would like to say a massive thank you to them."**

groups is fundamental, however, their work often goes unseen. Trustees are committed to the organisations they support, offering their knowledge and skills for free to help build resilient and innovative organisations that are fit to face the challenges their communities face. I would like to take this opportunity to celebrate the work of all trustees in our communities.

This has been another difficult year for many, with limited funding and a growing demand for our services. As a charity ourselves, we are aware of the obstacles charities encounter when trying to fund their critical programs. We are grateful to our funders for their unwavering commitment to our cause and would like to say a massive thank you to them. Their contributions have allowed us to provide essential services and make a real difference in the lives of those we serve.



I hope that you enjoyed reading our Impact Report and learning more about our achievements.

**Delyth**  
**Chair of Trustees**

# THANK YOU

**We cannot make an impact on our own.  
We would like to say a huge thank you to:**

## OUR COMMUNITY

You are the beating hearts that pump life into our world. You empower us to overcome challenges, celebrate triumphs, and create a legacy that transcends generations. Without your support, we would not be able to do what we do, whether as volunteers or as participants you make our job easier and enjoyable. We love working with you.

## NON-PROFIT MAKING ORGANISATIONS

Non-profit making organisations are at the heart of everything that we do. You are integral to the fabric of communities, serving as crucial resources and advocates. You are essential partners in helping us to improve the lives of people in North Somerset by providing essential services, advocating for change, and building strong communities. Without you we would not be able to achieve our mission.

## STATUTORY SERVICES

We are deeply appreciative of your support. Your expertise and resources have been invaluable in supporting our work with communities and non-profit making and grassroots organisations. Your partnership and support has helped us to promote innovation and prevention. We are committed to continuing our collaboration to create a more connected, inclusive, and thriving community for everyone.



## OUR FUNDERS

We would like to express our sincere thanks to you for your invaluable support. Your contributions have been instrumental in making our work a reality.

**Thanks to your belief in our mission, we could not do what we do without you. We are very grateful for your partnership and commitment.**

### Here you are in alphabetical order...

Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Trust  
National Institute for Health and Care Research  
NAVCA  
North Somerset Council  
Quartet Community Foundation  
Sirona Care and Health  
The Integrated Care Board  
The Medlock Foundation  
The Police and Crime Commissioner  
The Red Cross.  
University of Bristol  
Voscur  
Wesport  
Weston Town Council  
Weston, Worle and Villages Locality  
Woodspring Locality





**VOLUNTARY**  
**ACTION**  
NORTH SOMERSET

**GET IN TOUCH WITH US:**

Email: [info@vansmail.org.uk](mailto:info@vansmail.org.uk)

Telephone 01934 416486

[www.vansweb.org.uk](http://www.vansweb.org.uk)

 [voluntary-action-north-somerset](#)

 [voluntaryaction.northsomerset](#)

 [vansvolunteer](#)

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Grove House Grove Park,  
Weston-Super-Mare  
BS23 2QJ

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