

ISSUE ONE
FREE PUBLICATION

OUR SUFFOLK

THE VOICE OF SUFFOLK'S VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR



State of the Sector Survey

What are Suffolk Charities facing right now?

NEWS | FINANCE | ANALYSIS | LOCAL STORIES | LEADERSHIP

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Welcome

I'm delighted to welcome you to the first edition of Our Suffolk.

I've long had the hope of creating a platform for VCFSE voices to share their successes, their expertise – and yes, their challenges too.

And so, here it is – a focused publication full of guidance, updates, best practice, tips and information from and for the sector.

For all of us living and working within the county, change is happening at pace and in multiple ways across our services and systems.

With that backdrop, I hope 'Our Suffolk' provides a collaborative space for sparking conversations, and deciphering how that tide of change affects and impacts our sector.

Just in the last few weeks leading up to our launch, we've seen local elections bring a major shift in the political climate, and you can be sure we'll be looking more at issues such as this in the coming edition.

Our focus for this launch issue, however, is the all-important State of the VCFSE Sector 2026 report.

Alongside this, the publication includes expert voices on volunteering and finance, a spotlight on some fantastic projects, and a dive into Local Government Reorganisation.

So grab a cuppa, take a break, and enjoy the read!



Hannah

**Chief Executive,
Community Action Suffolk**

Editorial & Production Team

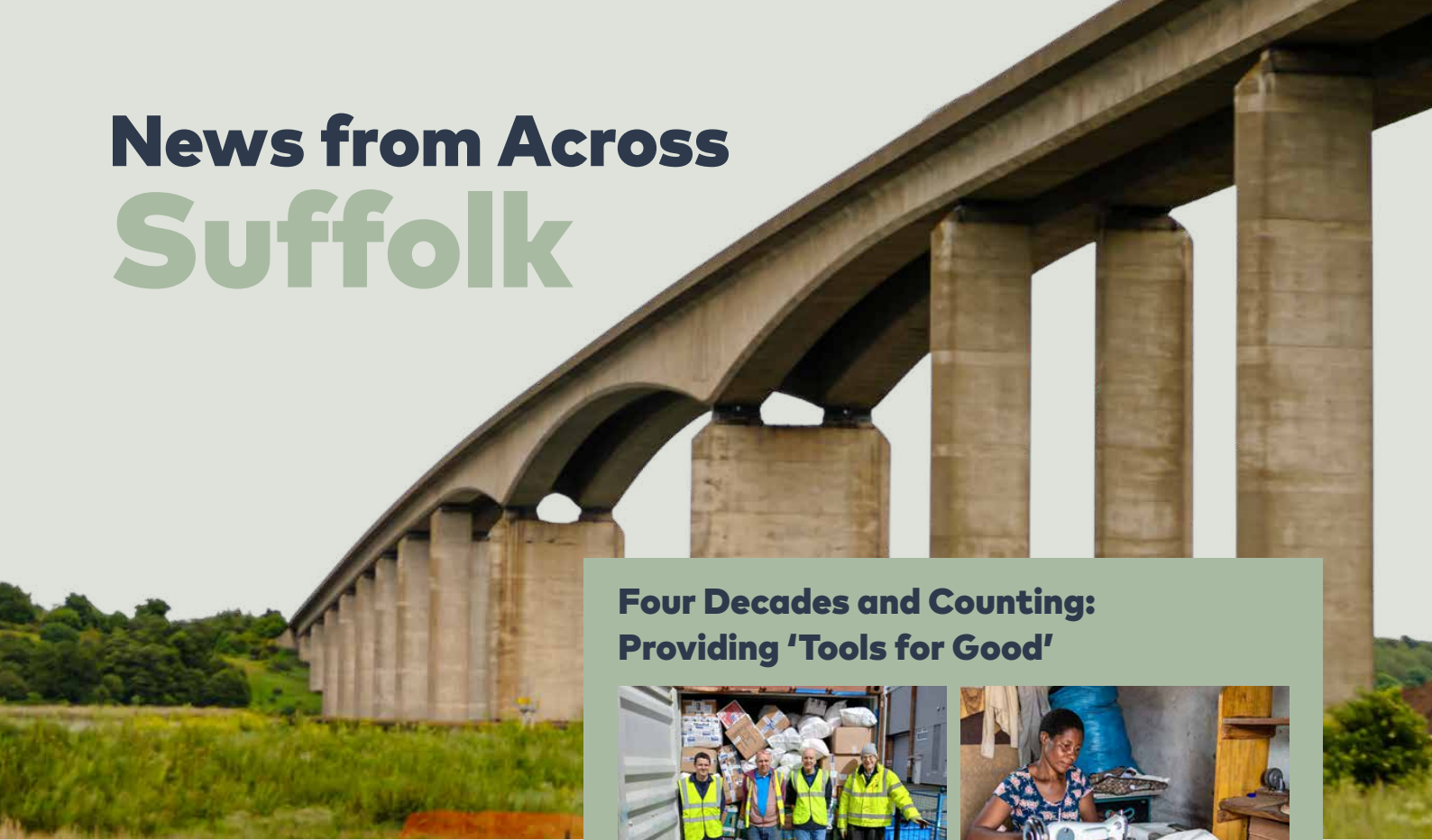
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News from Across Suffolk



Workshop Programme Saved for Suffolk

Involve Active has stepped in to ensure the continuation of much-loved woodwork and craft sessions in Lowestoft.

The workshop activities were delivered by SOLD (Special Objectives for the Local Disabled) but came under threat after Access Community Trust ceased trading.

Involve Active is working with Mat Parker, who previously led the sessions.

Four Decades and Counting: Providing 'Tools for Good'



Suffolk-based Tools With a Mission is continuing to build on its incredible 40-year legacy.

The charity sends toolkits of refurbished and donated tools to communities in need – namely in Burundi, Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia, Uganda and Zimbabwe.

Closer to home, the organisation has also helped local causes, by supplying tools and gardening equipment.

Its Ipswich team recently supported Suffolk's FramFridge, by providing agricultural kits.

New Community Mental Health Service Launches in East Suffolk

A new community-focused counselling service, Harbour Minds, has launched in East Suffolk.

Harbour Minds offers affordable counselling alongside opportunities for counselling students and newly qualified therapists to gain supported, real-world experience. The initiative aims to bridge a growing gap between increasing demand for mental health support and limited accessible services.

The organisation is keen to collaborate with local groups, businesses, and services.



New Men's Hub for Woodbridge



Following the success of its Ipswich-based Men's Hub, ActivLives has now opened a weekly offering in Woodbridge, at the Grove Court Care Home.

Members meet every Monday from 10am – 12noon.

Under Pressure



Scan for the full chat on YouTube

State of the Sector Report Reveals Stark Picture in Suffolk

RISING COSTS, shrinking incomes and unprecedented levels of demand are placing huge pressure on Suffolk's voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) sector.

That's the clear conclusion which has emerged from the 2026 State of the Sector Report, published jointly by Community Action Suffolk and Suffolk Community Foundation this month.

Drawing on extensive research and stakeholder insights gathered across late 2025 and early 2026, the report highlights ongoing strain from insufficient funding, increasing and ever more complex demand, and continued volunteer recruitment and retention challenges.

Hundreds of organisations contributed to the sector analysis, with the majority echoing the same message about a need for greater system partnerships and urgent recognition of the sector's fragility in order to help them overcome key concerns.



A Vital Sector Facing Financial Uncertainty

Suffolk's Voluntary sector is vast, with impressive growth over recent years – despite the challenging climate.

There are an estimated 11,456 organisations in all, including nearly 3,000 registered charities, over 7,700 unregistered groups, and hundreds of CICs, societies and faith organisations.

But, despite the great scale of the sector, it's always worth reinforcing the reality – that it is dominated by very small organisations who have low incomes, limited resource and continually seek to punch above their weight.

- 83% of charities have incomes below £100,000
- 48% less than £10,000
- And only 2% exceed £1 million in annual income

This year's report also reflects that income across the sector has fallen sharply, reversing previous growth shown in 2023/24.

The latest picture points to:

- Registered charity income dropped by £33.4 million in the financial year 2024/25
- Average grant sizes in Suffolk have decreased by 64.7% in the last two years
- And the number of registered grants awarded on 360 Giving has fallen from 808 to 297

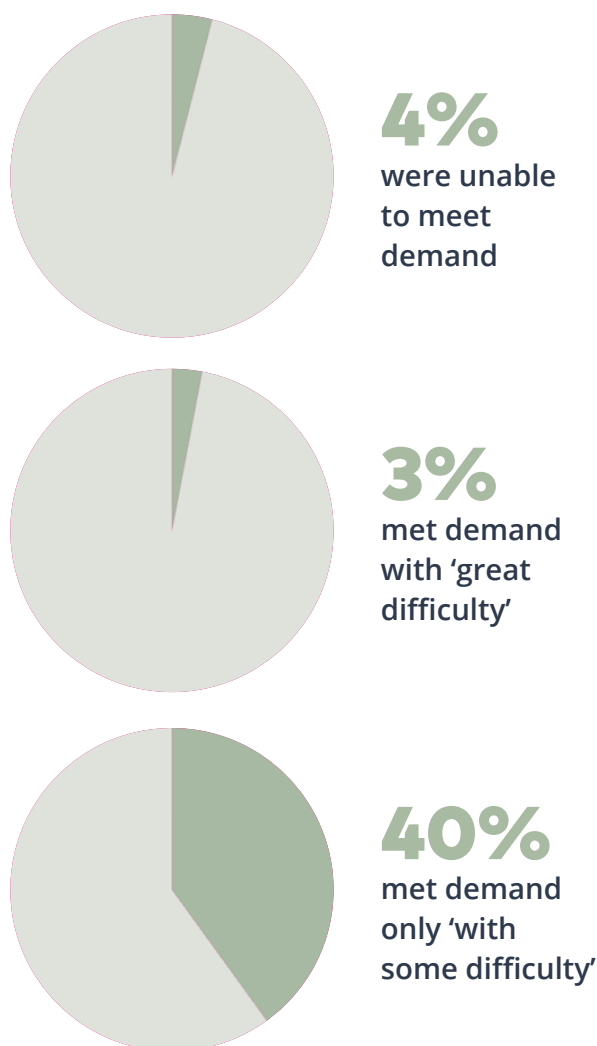
And all this against a backdrop of rising costs for these charities. Leaders talk of the most significant pressures coming from staff salaries, energy bills and insurance.

Alarmingly, some 9% of surveyed organisations report having no reserves, leaving them only weeks from potential closure, while a further 4% say they are unlikely to meet contractual obligations if their financial situation worsens.

Demand Rising Faster Than Capacity

The report finds that some 50% of organisations saw an increase in the complexity of need among the people they support, while 61% expect further increases this year.

No matter the great hope and aspiration of Suffolk's organisations to support the community's growing demands, the report found:



For some organisations, pressure is compounded by the fact that 23% are delivering services they believe should be the responsibility of statutory agencies, highlighting gaps in public provision.

Still, the sector continues to show its resilience with 68% remaining confident they can maintain or improve their service levels over the next year.

Written by: Hannah Reid (left), Chief Executive, Community Action Suffolk and Hannah Bloom (right), Chief Executive Officer, Suffolk Community Foundation

Volunteers: A Critical but Challenged Resource

Suffolk relies heavily on volunteers, with 43,514 people supporting registered charities alone.

This does not account for the thousands more who also support unregistered community groups across the county.

But volunteer recruitment continues to rank among the sector's top three challenges, alongside insufficient funding and rising demand.

An essential volunteer role for VCFSE organisations which support good governance is that of trusteeship, and in Suffolk, there are some 15,725 trustees registered with the charity commission.

There is, however, an increasing trend of difficulty in recruiting trustee roles with rising concern about the commitment, duties, and legal responsibility these positions require.

National research published earlier this year highlighted that of 1000 nationally representative adults in the UK, only 6% would definitely consider becoming a trustee while 54% said definitely or probably not.

A Sector at a Turning Point?

While the report paints such a stark and, in many ways, concerning picture, it also points to a resilient sector, which is seen as essential and valued within its community.

Time and again over the last few years, the sector has risen to the challenges and ensured service users and communities are supported.

The question is not whether there is a desire among organisations to keep fronting the challenges and providing for the people of the county – but who is able to, against such complex issues and mounting pressures.

For some during this year, the challenges have simply proved too much and the worst has happened.

As providers of vital services and support these VCFSE organisations and groups are essential to Suffolk's communities and economy and, together, across the Suffolk system we must think differently about what we can do to support sustainability and growth. ■



How Do We Fix Volunteering? An Insight from Sir Nick Young

At the recent High Sheriff Awards, Sir Nick Young gave a thought-provoking keynote address on volunteering. Here, he shares his thoughts with Our Suffolk.

“VOLUNTEERING – a marvellous feature in this country – appears to be fading somewhat under the pressures of modern life.

After a 40-year career in the voluntary sector, I believe volunteers are every charity’s key strategic asset.

People helping each other is one of the key touchstones of healthy communities, but the current level of committed volunteering is way down on what it was forty or even twenty years ago.

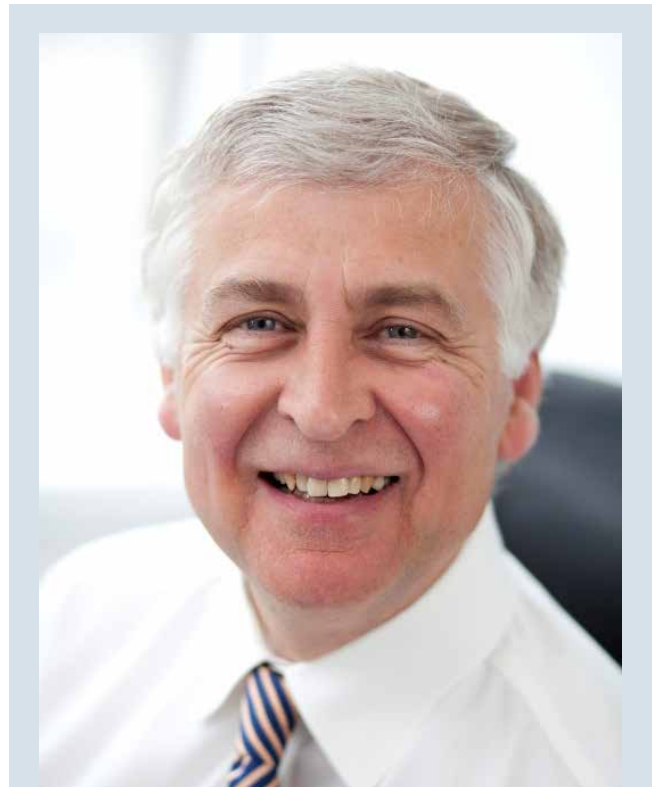
Running the Red Cross in the UK, I used to spend many happy evenings each year addressing national and local gatherings of extraordinarily dedicated and loyal volunteers, but the number of those volunteers dropped dramatically, as it has with most organisations, particularly since Covid.

The latest national statistics on volunteering agree, with only 28% of adults committed to regular formal volunteering even once a year, and, only 17% on a regular monthly basis.

These low numbers are well down since 2019-20, when 37% of us helped out formally at least annually. 44% volunteer informally once a year, down from 54% pre-pandemic.

This at a time when, health and care services are in crisis, schools are struggling, communities are fragmenting, costs are rising, and political discourse is becoming ever more divisive.

Recent research suggests 4 in 10 groups are unable to recruit enough volunteers to meet their objectives, with a total estimated shortfall currently of around three million volunteer helpers nationwide.



Sir Nick Young started as a commercial lawyer, before changing course and joining the voluntary sector, first with Sue Ryder and Leonard Cheshire, then as chief executive of Macmillan Cancer Support, and finally as chief executive of the British Red Cross, stepping down in 2014. He was knighted for services to cancer care in 2000.

So what’s happening and, more importantly, what can we do about it?

Charities are struggling financially, with fundraising income relatively static. The proportion of people giving to charity annually is down to 50%, compared to 58% in 2019, and, with costs rising inexorably, the necessary investment in recruiting, equipping and training volunteers is suffering.

Safeguarding and health and safety standards have made reliance on volunteering more onerous for charities, and individuals – a good thing of course, but a challenge nevertheless for cash-strapped charities who have to invest in more stringent and costly procedures.

Fewer volunteers means more work for (expensive) staff and remaining volunteers struggling to maintain services or levels of fundraising activity, and the ever-increasing risk of burnout for those who stay on.

As a sector we have to fix this ourselves!” ■

5 Volunteering Actions we must all take:

1

VCFSE organisations must recognise the vital strategic importance of volunteers as an asset, and ensure they have a strategy for recruiting, inducting, training, and retaining volunteers they need openly and inclusively, while also dedicating resource to ensure volunteers are effectively managed – with a budget to match.

2

Funders must devote more funding to volunteer recruitment and retention activities alongside dedicated funds to support core costs and longer-term sustained investment in charities.

3

Charities must advertise opportunities more widely.

4

Local authorities and employers must encourage Employer Supported Volunteering.

5

Charities must work together, creatively and cooperatively, to learn from each other about volunteering best practice.



A Regional Perspective...

by **Andy Crump**



SIR Nick Young is right to highlight both the urgency and importance of strengthening volunteering.

From a personal perspective, I know just how powerful those opportunities can be.

My own journey began as a volunteer over 20 years ago, working alongside experienced staff in a local sports coaching environment.

The lessons I learned there about teamwork, responsibility and community have stayed with me throughout my career, and ultimately helped shape the path to my role today.

That experience is far from unique. Through our work with young people across Suffolk, we see how volunteering can provide something many are currently missing – a sense of connection, of place and of purpose.

In safe, supportive environments, young people can build confidence, develop skills, and begin to see what their future might look like, often influencing career choices or opening up employment opportunities.

But these opportunities do not always happen by chance anymore.

If we want the next generation to benefit in the same way, we need to be more intentional, creating accessible, visible and flexible routes into volunteering that reflect how young people live today.

By doing so, we not only strengthen our communities now, but invest in the skills, confidence, and leadership of the future. ■

**Andy Crump is CEO of Inspire.*

The charity, headquartered in Ipswich, is always keen to hear from anyone interested in supporting a young person through volunteering. Contact them for more information.

Is Our County's Strength Hiding in Plain Sight?

By Bruce Leeke, CEO, Ormiston Families



Bruce Leeke

I MAKE no apology for being an optimist.

I'm a realist, but I'm an optimist too.

Having stepped into post at Ormiston Families earlier this year, I've had the valuable opportunity to look at Suffolk from a new vantage point.

I'm increasingly arriving at the view that, while there are very real challenges facing the voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise sector, it's also one of this county's greatest strengths.

Yes, there is much discussion about Suffolk's future – its infrastructure, public services and the changing shape of regional government. But beneath all of that sits something just as important: an extraordinary network of charities, community groups, volunteers and local organisations quietly improving lives every day.

The State of the Sector survey reminds us of the scale of that contribution, with more than 11,000 organisations and over 43,000 volunteers across Suffolk.

And why does that matter so much?

Because when people are under pressure, they often do not turn first to a formal system. They turn to a trusted person, a familiar organisation, a place where they feel understood.

That should give us confidence. It should also shape how we think about the future.

If Suffolk wants to build on its strengths, there are some clear principles that should guide us:

Back prevention as strongly as crisis response

Too often, support arrives when problems have already escalated. We know that earlier help for families, children and individuals can prevent greater pressure later. Prevention is not an optional extra but one of our smartest investments.

Value relationships, not just services

People rarely remember systems. We need to make support simpler and designed around the lives and experiences of real people and their challenges and needs.

Trusted relationships are often what positively change outcomes.

Create a culture of support, not stigma

Too many families hesitate to seek help because of how it might be perceived.

We must continue to focus on normalising the idea of support, where people across our county feel they are able to access the services they need without judgement, and with the knowledge that their past experiences are understood in the context of how they present themselves today.

Stay ambitious for Suffolk

This county already has many of the ingredients others are searching for, not least its strong communities and proactive organisations.

We don't need to reinvent the landscape, but build on what we deliver and collaborate more than ever to create earlier, stronger and more joined-up support for the people and communities who need it most. ■

A Message from Suffolk's New High Sheriff

Service, Fellowship and Food – hopes for the coming shrieval year.

STEPPING into the High Sheriff role is a huge honour, and a humbling one.

It's the oldest secular office in the country, and while a shrieval year is just a blink in that long history, it's a precious chance to make small, meaningful improvements.

The best part?

Getting out across our county to understand Suffolk's ecosystem, connect people who might not otherwise meet, and celebrate those doing brilliant things every day.

My theme for the year is simple: food as a force for good.

Food shapes our values and our community, and it can be a powerful tool to give people a sense of purpose.

I want to use the modest convening power of the High Sheriff office to spotlight economical and healthier eating; recognise projects helping people and improving our food system; strengthen local distribution networks; and bring decision makers together around a table where real, practical collaboration can happen.

I'm also keen to back initiatives that open doors, like hospitality training for ex offenders, so people can find purpose, skills and work.

Of course, the High Sheriff's duties include providing continuity each year and supporting the Lord Lieutenant.

The invaluable work of the judiciary and those who keep us safe – police, magistrates, prisons and probation, the courts, emergency services and more – remain central to the role.

I'll also be championing the voluntary and community sector, faith groups, local authorities, and businesses whose generosity underpins so much good in Suffolk.

As the sixth member of my family to serve Suffolk in this way, I'm determined not to be swept up by the history, but to do justice to the role: in an inclusive, purposeful, and public facing way.

If you know a group that would benefit from a visit, a spotlight, or simple thanks, please get in touch. Let's break bread, share ideas, and use this year to lift up the people who quietly hold our county together. ■

High Sheriff of Suffolk suffolkhighsheriff@gmail.com



Oliver Paul DL, High Sheriff of Suffolk 2026-27

NEWS IN BRIEF

Theatre Relaunches Costume Department



Sudbury's Quay Theatre has opened the doors to its all-new costume store this month.

Once a popular addition to the Theatre's offering, the costume hire service had been paused for some months, due to a need for space, refurbishment and funds.

Now, thanks to the generosity of volunteers and donors, the new space features a vast amount of vintage outfits, party costumes, theatrical garments, headgear, iconic jewellery, show make-up and quirky props – all for hire by groups or members of the community.

A ribbon-cutting launch event saw bestselling author – and Suffolk resident – Erica James – welcome people to the new store.

Krystle Charlton, Theatre Manager at The Quay Theatre, said: "We are so excited to be able to bring this great feature back to the community. It's been much missed and we know it's going to be incredibly popular.

"Our volunteers have worked so hard to source items, help with cleaning, and have donated much needed funds."

Donations are welcomed from April. Contact the team behind the new department by emailing costumes@quaysudbury.com ■

Capital Programme Boost for Britten Pears Arts

Cultural charity Britten Pears Arts has been awarded a £1.9million Creative Foundations Fund grant, which will go toward the cost of restoring Snape Maltings Concert Hall.

Work will commence in January 2027, with refurbishment to include improving seating, adding insulation to the roof and modernising toilet facilities.

Jennifer Riddell-Carpenter, MP for Suffolk Coastal, said: "This funding is fantastic recognition for Suffolk's cultural crown jewels." ■

A Legacy of Coffee and Connection



As she steps down after more than two decades leading the Rural Coffee Caravan, Ann Osborn reflects on community, kindness and what the sector needs next.

What advice would you give someone in their first leadership role in a not-for-profit?

Get to know all the people who've been carrying out this mission before you came along. Talk to them and hear their memories. I've asked everyone to write a personal profile for Alice (Sim, our incoming CEO when I retire). Then, I'm encouraging her to go out and meet everyone.

What are you most proud of having been part of during your 23 years at Rural Coffee Caravan (RCC)?

Being part of this team. Together, we've made a difference to innumerable people and communities. I'm particularly proud to be 'Sally Fogden's representative'. We wouldn't be here if it wasn't for her founding this charity. Of course, along the way there have been lots of proud team moments such as winning The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service and European Social Services Award for Person Centred Care.

Out of all the people you've met, whose story moved you the most?

I won't single out any one person's story as that's theirs to tell, but I am moved every time someone tells me that their life is better because of the coffee caravan. They may have made new friends, received information that helped, or a benefit that they didn't know they were entitled to.

What do you hope will be your legacy at RCC?

Alice understands that Sally's wonderful model works. I hope that will stay in place. It's simple and effective and it's been changing people's lives for 23 years.





Will you still be part of RCC at all – as a volunteer, for example?

I will step back to give Alice space to make the role 'hers'. If there's a gap in the future, I'd be willing to become a Trustee. Meanwhile, I will always be at the other end of the phone.

What's coming up for RCC in 2026 that you're excited about?

I'd like to see the Meet Up Mondays network grow, but I'm also excited to see what Alice does. It's quite thrilling for our little charity to have someone younger and with fresh ideas come in and do it their way.

What can other organisations learn from RCC?

Its informality, flexibility and adaptability. We've been so successful because we practice kindness inside and outside of the charity.

James Timpson is my hero; I really like his philosophy. People never need to fear making mistakes or to say, 'I got that wrong' or 'Can you help me?'.

Staff work happier and harder if they are cared for, rather than expected to give their lives to work. I've managed to keep our staff and volunteers for a long time, and they treasure that their private lives are valued and protected.

I'm both proud of and grateful for longstanding support from local businesses; CoffeeLink (which donates all our fresh coffee), Christies Care (who built and has supported both our websites) and Helen Oldfield at Affinity PR (who has done our Comms/PR pro bono since 2003). That's quite an achievement to hold onto those supporters for that length of time.

Any regrets about not having achieved something?

I'm in the fortunate position of not regretting anything. I think we've achieved more than we ever thought we would. I'm very much a 'cup half-full' person.



What was your perception of the sector when you first began at RCC, and how do you feel about it today?

I didn't have any perception when I started. I wasn't aware of it as a 'sector'. I just considered myself very lucky to get what appeared to be a lovely job.

My perception now is that it is a vital part of society's infrastructure, and so many people's lives are touched by it. And it is in trouble.

There are more organisations than ever chasing the same money and although there are plenty of generous people that have standing orders, I would encourage everyone to give locally. If you imagine the landscape without the local voluntary sector, it's a dire prospect.

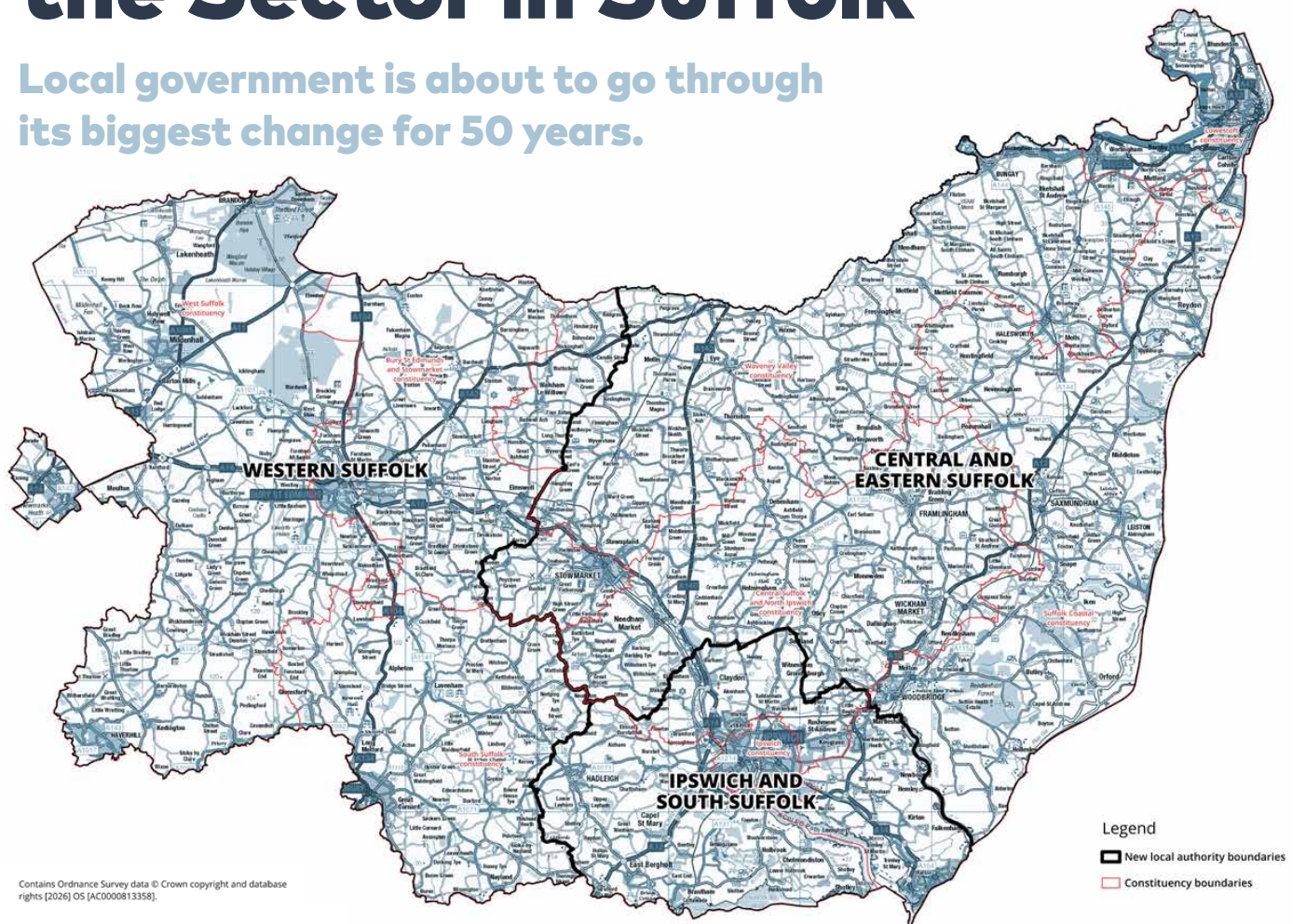
Now I understand how many people and their families benefit from the sector.

What sector opportunities and challenges do you envisage?

A shortage of volunteers, because older people are not automatically volunteering when they retire. And the rising running costs (in our case, five vehicles and an office). It's making it much harder for charities to exist. If everyone gave £2 or £3 per month it would make a massive difference. ■

What it Means for the Sector in Suffolk

Local government is about to go through its biggest change for 50 years.



The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government recently announced three new unitary councils will be created in the county on 1 April 2028.

These will cover Western Suffolk, Ipswich and Southern Suffolk, and Central and Eastern Suffolk.

They will replace Suffolk County Council and the five district and borough councils: Babergh, East Suffolk, Ipswich, Mid Suffolk and West Suffolk.

But what are unitary councils, how will the VCFSE sector and its needs be represented during this change, and what happens next?

We answer some of the key questions.

What does the change to unitary councils mean?

Suffolk currently has a 'two-tier' council system.

Services like adult social care, children's services and road maintenance are delivered by Suffolk County

Council, while district and borough councils provide household bin collections, housing, planning, and leisure centres – among many other things.

In future, one council will deliver all these services where you live, making it a simpler, more efficient and connected way of doing things.

How will the VCFSE sector and its needs be represented in this change?

Community Action Suffolk hit the nail on the head in its Local Government Reorganisation manifesto. It described this as a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reshape the way Suffolk supports its communities, by working in genuine partnership.

The aim is not simply to restructure councils, but to transform public services – rewiring the public sector more closely around citizens and neighbourhoods.

Feedback from Suffolk's VCFSE sector was used to develop the case for three new councils. It emphasised

the need for close, responsive relationships, stronger infrastructure and fair funding – recognising the sector’s vital role in prevention and early intervention.

As the backbone of Suffolk’s communities, the VCFSE sector will be closely involved as six existing councils come together to design new councils and services – with a commitment to ongoing engagement over plans for the future.

All councils involved recognise the importance and vital work carried out by the voluntary sector.

In any transition work, care will be taken to capture where it is working well and build on that good practice, recognising that each unitary or group will have different needs and challenges.

They are also committed to ensuring a smooth transition from the current arrangements, particularly around funding and commissioning.

I run a voluntary organisation in Suffolk – do I need to take any action now?

No, nothing changes for now. The new councils will not take over until April 2028.

The councils recognise that organisations are likely to have questions and have pledged to provide regular updates.

What happens next?

There is a huge amount of work to do to change the current structures to new ones over the next two years.

The six existing councils have already started the preparatory work and will now begin detailed planning on this transition.

THE KEY MILESTONES

Autumn 2026

Secondary legislation, known as a Structural Changes Order, is likely to take effect. This is a key moment, formally confirming new unitary councils will take over on 1 April 2028.

Autumn 2026

Three Joint Committees are established, one for each new council. Each one is made up of existing county, district, and borough councillors. Their role is to prepare for the new councils, by developing draft plans and options for services, roles and budgets, for the new councils to make decisions on.

May 2027

Elections for new councils are held, and Shadow Authorities are then formed. These take over from the Joint Committees. They will appoint senior officers, set the council constitution and vision, design and implement services, and agree the first budget.

1 April 2028

Vesting day – the moment when the new unitary councils take over with full powers and functions. Suffolk’s current county, district and borough councils will no longer exist. ■



** This article was contributed by Suffolk’s county, borough and district councils*

Awards Honour Outstanding Community Contribution

HUNDREDS of volunteers and charity representatives have been applauded in a celebration hosted by Suffolk Community Foundation.



High Sheriff Award Winners

The Foundation's Annual Review, together with The High Sheriff's Awards, took place in March and featured Sir Nick Young, former CEO of British Red Cross, talking passionately about the importance of volunteering (*See page 6).

Guests were treated to performances by Kenzie Perry from innov8 Workshops and Unscene Suffolk, a community theatre and music project for visually impaired adults,

Awards were presented to a number of charities and projects for their outstanding community contributions.

The full list of winners is as follows:

Future Female Society, which runs creative projects, workshops and programmes to raise the aspirations and confidence of girls and women in Suffolk.

Waveney Surf Lifesaving Centre, which provides life-saving training for people of all ages in Lowestoft.

P.H.O.E.B.E, an Ipswich charity offering specialist advice, information, casework, advocacy and support and counselling to black and ethnic minority women and children.

Forge Community Church in Debenham, for its Moses Project, which supports new families in need by gifting them baskets full of baby products, handknitted clothes, toiletries and wipes.

George Vestey DL, Chair of Suffolk Community Foundation, said: "It has once again been a challenging 12 months for many of Suffolk's fantastic charities, with the current economic climate continuing to bring added pressures amid high levels of demand.



Future Female Society



Forge Community Church

Against this backdrop, the vital work carried out by Suffolk Community Foundation and our partners has become ever more important.

"During the past year, we are proud to have awarded £3.8 million to 362 charities and community groups to help them tackle inequality, loneliness, poverty, poor health, disability and lack of opportunity. We are sincerely grateful to everyone who has made this possible, including our donors, trustees, ambassadors, volunteers, staff and partners.

"It was great to see so many of those supporters at our Annual Review event and shine a spotlight on some of the county's charities, celebrate their positive work and reflect on the real and lasting difference they are making to people's lives." ■



Celebrate Suffolk's Community Champions: AWARDS NOW OPEN!

NOMINATIONS are now open for this year's Suffolk Community Awards.

Celebrating the people, groups and organisations who make a difference across our county, the awards are led by a partnership between Community Action Suffolk, Suffolk Association of Local Councils and Suffolk County Council.

This year's awards will culminate in an event at the Museum of Food in Stowmarket on Tuesday 22nd September.

Submissions are encouraged from across the sector, with the opportunity to shine a spotlight on teams, youth groups, trustees, faith organisations and inspirational and impactful projects.

There are a total of 18 categories in the 2026 awards, spanning areas such as 'Most Active Town or Village', 'Outstanding Individual', 'Village Halls' and 'Climate Response of the Year'.

Hannah Reid, Chief Executive of Community Action Suffolk, said: "Every year we see an incredible selection of submissions for these awards, often from initiatives which receive relatively little attention and are so deserving of praise and appreciation.

"Our categories for this year cover a great breadth of community activities and projects, so most causes, clubs, individuals and organisations will likely fit into one of these areas.

"I'd encourage everyone involved in the sector to consider making a nomination.

The closing date for this year's nominations is Sunday 12th July.

For full details, and to enter, go to:

www.suffolkcommunityawards.co.uk/the-awards ■



2026 AWARD CATEGORIES IN FULL

- Voluntary groups and community organisations
- Outstanding individual contribution
- Village halls and community buildings
- Youth participation
- Youth Club of the Year
- Young Person of the Year
- Contribution to volunteering
- Event Organiser of the Year
- Faith groups supporting communities
- Most Active Town or Village
- Climate Response of the Year
- Council, councillor, young councillor and clerk awards

'A Heroic Battle'

With her year as High Sheriff now at an end, Gulshan Kayembe reflects on what she has seen, and why the voluntary sector cannot continue to carry the load alone.



DON'T expect a sugar-coated assessment of the voluntary sector in Suffolk, from outgoing High Sheriff Gulshan Kayembe.

Yes, she'll be sure to tell you about the incredible achievements of its organisations, and about the passion, entrepreneurialism and resourcefulness of the very many people she's met.

But she won't deny the sector has its challenges.

She won't hold back on telling you where she thinks there's room for significant improvement.

She certainly won't spare the punches on saying who and how she thinks there's 'stepping up' to be done.

"If I am honest, I would say that both the statutory and the private sector need to do more to support communities and the voluntary sector," she insists.

"This is not a criticism of individuals. There are many dedicated people across the statutory and private sectors who are deeply committed to supporting communities, and indeed, there are many excellent partnerships already in place.

"But more is required. It's a herculean effort requiring inputs from all areas of our county infrastructure."

She continues: "Every single organisation should have a Voluntary Sector Strategy and put resources into it – including money, but also other types, such as lending their expertise, supporting training and more besides.

"I'm not always convinced that leaders at the very top fully understand the realities at grassroots level – and

without that understanding, it's difficult to make the right decisions."

For Gulshan, the answer lies not in criticism, but in stronger collaboration and engagement, lots of listening to service users, and with each part of the system recognising the role it plays in supporting communities.

Sworn in as High Sheriff in March last year, Gulshan has an incredibly impressive background across education, safeguarding and equality.

She was a lead Ofsted inspector for three decades, chaired the Suffolk Police Authority, and holds a number of roles across charities and health boards in the region.

Over the last 12 months of her term in office, she has visited more than 200 organisations or their various events – ranging from the tiniest start-up CIC, to the well



“There are many outstanding people and organisations across Suffolk who are delivering so much and have such passion.”



established charities which deliver significant services across the breadth of the county.

It's a role which offers an unrivalled vantage point.

“It's been a phenomenal experience – very profound,” she says.

“The year has given me an opportunity to try and raise awareness of the social, economic and health determinants that lead people into criminality and that we have to stop building more prisons by addressing the issues of inequality; take early action.

“VCFSE organisations are, overall, outstanding and I am not sure the statutory sector leaders or the well-off realise exactly how much our VCFSE does.

“Life for all of us would be that much worse if these organisations disappeared.”

Gulshan is clear and uncompromising in her description of what the sector landscape looks like to her, from the many experiences and visits she has had:

“It's fighting a heroic battle – thankfully, often alongside some incredibly committed partners – to be properly funded and to have a good enough infrastructure to support its needs,” she insists.

“Funding is the biggest challenge for pretty much every single VCFSE organisation we visited. For some, it is also volunteering.

“I worry about the voluntary sector in terms of its sustainability especially organisations that are employing people.”

And yet, Gulshan is not without optimism.

She does believe that the county's charities and community groups show incredible strength and spirit.

“There are many outstanding people and organisations across Suffolk who are delivering so much and have such passion.

“While I'm still to some extent processing what I've learned in this last year, I can say that these sector groups and communities and people are able to do so much – but could do even more, if the funding system was more encouraging of collaboration over competition.

“The infrastructure around commissioning needs a greater look. It has to work effectively and for all.”

As she passes on the baton and no doubt continues to unpick the year of discovery, Gulshan has two important takeaways from her tenure:

“First, I would say that the time has reinforced my view that it really does come down, time and time again, to prevention.

“So many of the things I saw, be it incredibly impactful arts initiatives, or seeing inside prisons and learning of their issues – it all goes back to the more we can do by way of prevention and transforming lives.”

And the second point?

“The most important of all... Thank you. I want to say thank you to all the wonderful organisations and people who opened their doors to me and gave me such an incredible insight. The county should be proud of all that you do.” ■

Training, Compliance and Good Practice

Suicide Prevention: New Workshop

Suffolk Mind is now delivering a day-long course to help with understanding suicide prevention in working age men.

The workshop runs from 9:30 until 3:30 and has been funded by Public Health England.

Free to attend, the course looks at why male distress can be missed, how to ask about thoughts of suicide, and how to introduce guidelines in your workplace.

For more information, email workplacewellbeing@suffolkmind.org.uk

What Does it Take to be an Effective Trustee?

Community Action Suffolk will be hosting a virtual training session on Tuesday 23rd June, exploring the roles and responsibilities of being a trustee.

The training takes place online between 10 and 12:30pm and costs £45 per person for those in VCFSE organisations.

It's a suitable workshop for those who are either already a trustee, or are thinking about becoming one.

To book, visit the CAS website.

Understanding Dementia

Free online and in-person training sessions are being held in Suffolk over the coming months to help more people understand and support dementia.

Mindful Care Training and Shaftesbury are working together to provide a series of events for volunteers and VCSE organisations.

Devised in response to the Suffolk Dementia Strategy, the training will run from May to July and will feature locations in Ipswich, Snape, Bury and Stowmarket – as well as online.

Each workshop will focus on increasing confidence and upskilling volunteers when it comes to supporting.

More details at: <https://www.eventbrite.com/cc/dementia-support-workshops-for-suffolk-4828939>

Compassionate Conversations

St Elizabeth Hospice has a number of training sessions coming up this summer, designed to increase confidence in supporting someone through grief. The sessions are available both online, and in-person, and are free to attend.



Their Compassionate Conversations training is specifically for helping friends and family navigate a grief journey, while their Compassionate Workplaces session is a two-hour learning opportunity, ideal for those wanting to support colleagues in the workplace.

Training dates are available throughout the coming months.

To book, go to: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/st-elizabeth-hospice-30716527042>

Training for Faith Communities

A free scheme of Faith Security Training (FST) has been launched by The Home Office.

It's designed to help faith communities across England and Wales strengthen their security awareness and preparedness.

The training provides practical guidance to keep places of worship safe and resilient.

Register at <https://email.cdsds.uk/en-gb/faith-security-training> or for further information, email contact@cdssupport.uk.

Partnership Working to Support Communities

Essex & Suffolk Water is looking to build meaningful partnerships to help promote the wide range of support available to communities in Suffolk – both financial and non financial.

The company is able to support organisations by:

- Attending community events to share practical water saving tips and bill advice.
- Helping customers access financial support to reduce water bills.
- Promoting the Priority Services Register, offering extra help for customers who need extra support due to age, disability, mobility issues, medical conditions, mental health, life changes, communication needs, or have children under five.

By working alongside local organisations, Essex & Suffolk Water aim to raise awareness of the support it offers and make sure help reaches those who need it most.

For more information, email together@nwl.co.uk ■

MOVERS & SHAKERS



Alice Sim is the new CEO of Rural Coffee Caravan, taking over from Ann Osborne BEM.

Her career has involved roles in project management and community engagement, including at Suffolk County Council and Community Action Suffolk.



Anthony Missen became Chief Executive and Creative Director of DanceEast in the Autumn.

Anthony trained at Northern School of Contemporary Dance and has taught at major dance institutions throughout the world.

Photo Credit: Foteini Christofilopoulou

Kevin Ward has been announced as a new trustee at Suffolk Mind.

Speaking of the appointment, he said he was very excited to be joining the team and supporting its great work.



Bruce Leeke has become the new CEO at Ormiston Families.

Previously CEO at Suffolk Libraries, Bruce was officially appointed in February.

Sam Hopley is ihAg's new CEO.

He has a strong track record of working with those experiencing homelessness.

The Mix welcomed John Blair as its CEO in October.

He has significant experience in the voluntary sector and his former roles include being a CEO to an Essex based charity, and being Head of Centre at Flatford Mill.



October 2025 saw the arrival of Tony Chasteauneuf as CEO at Emmaus Suffolk.

Tony has 30 years' experience in the charity and homelessness sector.

Bows and Arrows

Specialising in outdoor learning, Bows and Arrows is a Suffolk charity with seven nurseries across the Ipswich area.

Here, its CEO Anne Denny writes for Our Suffolk about how Oak Wood Nursery and Forest School is re-thinking early years education.



“WE have always believed that children thrive when they are given the space, time and freedom to explore the world around them.

Oak Wood Nursery and Forest School provides an environment which is designed to immerse children in outdoor learning, combining high quality early years education with daily experiences in nature.

The concept was born from a simple but powerful question: what would early years education look like if it were designed around children’s natural curiosity and capability, rather than walls, routines and constraints?

As a voluntary and community sector organisation used to responding creatively to challenge, we chose to think differently.



Learning in nature supports physical development, emotional wellbeing, resilience and confidence. Children learn to assess risk, collaborate with peers, solve problems creatively and build independence.

We see children who arrive hesitant and unsure transform into confident explorers, proud of their muddy boots and newly mastered skills.

Parents regularly tell us how this learning travels home. Children sleep better, talk more about their day, and show a growing respect for the natural world.

What makes Oak Wood Forest School special is that it was shaped by the people who deliver it.

Our early years practitioners were not handed a finished model; they were creators and active collaborators from the outset, ensuring the forest school would not be an add on, but a fully integrated part of our provision.

To support this ambition, we looked beyond our own borders. A pivotal moment came when members of our team travelled to Finland to research outdoor education.

Finland’s approach – where outdoor learning is embedded in early years practice and trusted as a foundation for lifelong learning - was deeply inspiring.

This learning shapes our delivery every day, for example, with literacy developing through storytelling around the fire pit, numeracy through counting and measuring natural materials, and social skills through shared tasks such as shelter building.

We are proud to be demonstrating what is possible when a charity is bold, collaborative and child centred.

Even in challenging times, belief in people – especially our youngest – can create something extraordinary.” ■

www.bowsandarrowsgroup.co.uk

Photos with thanks to Big Fish Photography

NEWS IN BRIEF

Network Expansion for The Mix



THE MIX has expanded its community coffee shop network across Suffolk, with two new locations in Ipswich and Hadleigh helping to generate income for free youth services across the county.

The charity has brought two Paddy & Scott's Coffee sites – on Ipswich Waterfront and Hadleigh High Street – into its growing social enterprise network, now operating under the name The Mix Coffee Shops.

It marks the first time the organisation has extended its café presence beyond Mid Suffolk into Babergh.

Income from the coffee shops helps fund a range of support for young people aged 9 to 25, including mentoring, employability programmes, alternative education, life skills sessions and safe youth spaces.

The network now includes four Suffolk locations, with existing venues Cabbages & Kings and Duck & Teapot set to adopt the new branding later this year.

John Blair, CEO of The Mix, said the move would help create a sustainable future for the charity and allow it to continue supporting young people across Suffolk.

The expansion has been made possible through partnerships with Paddy & Scott's, University of Suffolk and East of England Co-op. ■



EXPERT VOICE

Are You Facing Change with Intent and Action?

RECENT comments from major charity CEOs highlight something many in the sector will recognise. Change is hard. And, that honesty matters.

Voluntary organisations are being asked to meet rising demand in a world that is moving faster, more complex, and often more uncertain.



Stephen Norris

If there is something the sector could borrow from the private sector, it is not its values. It is its disciplines around change.

The challenge is that many of the sector's strengths can quietly resist adaptation. A deep sense of mission can lead to protecting what has worked in the past.

Governance ensures accountability, but it can slow decisions when speed is required. High levels of scrutiny encourage caution, even when the moment calls for movement.

None of this is wrong. It is part of what makes the sector trusted and respected by the communities it serves every day.

But it does mean that change must be approached deliberately and with intent, rather than reactively or reluctantly when pressures become unavoidable.

The most effective organisations treat change as a constant rather than an interruption. They create space for honest conversations at leadership level, where assumptions are tested and challenge is welcomed.

They recognise that debates about process are often questions of identity and address them directly. They also make decisions with imperfect information.

Waiting for certainty can feel responsible, but it often carries more risk than acting without it. They stay close to the people they serve, using that insight to guide what must change and what must not.

The voluntary sector's role in offering hope has never been more important.

But hope is something we demonstrate through our ability to respond, adapt, and move when it matters, especially when circumstances demand clarity, courage, and decisive leadership from those responsible. ■

Stephen Norris is a leadership advisor and Chair who works with CEOs and founders to think more clearly, move faster, and lead with conviction. He is the creator of Punk Rock Media and The Punk Rock Playbook, with his book for Business Misfits launching in Summer 2026.

Trailblazing the 'Swap' Mindset

Swap Shop Suffolk is an ambitious CIC already making impact in the Lowestoft area. We caught up with the founder



YOUR NAME: Molly Gooderham
YOUR ROLE: Director of Swap Shop Suffolk CIC
WHERE IN SUFFOLK YOU LIVE: Kirkley, Lowestoft

Tell us a little about Swap Shop Suffolk and how it came into being?

I founded Swap Shop Suffolk to bridge the gap between “consumers” and “caretakers.” By shifting the focus from “shiny and new” to community-donated and repaired items, we provide a radical yet accessible alternative to fast fashion, turning a wardrobe into a platform for sustainability and unique local craftsmanship

What’s the core focus of the CIC and who is it intended to serve?

Swap Shop Suffolk focuses on textile waste reduction and the revival of traditional repair skills. We serve the local community by providing a space for swapping goods and sharing knowledge.

Why do you think it’s such a necessary initiative now?

We are at a tipping point where the ‘convenience’ of fast fashion is costing us our planet and our community connection. With the cost-of-living crisis hitting people hard, we need sustainable alternatives that don’t feel like a sacrifice.

What have been the challenges you’ve encountered, or things you’d not anticipated in starting the CIC and getting to this stage?

Navigating the transition from digital and events marketing to a physical Community Interest Company was a steep learning curve. I hadn’t anticipated how much ‘red tape’ exists for social enterprises, but the biggest surprise was the sheer volume of high-quality items people want to save from landfill. The appetite for a circular economy in Lowestoft is even hungrier than I imagined.

How big is your current team, and are you currently looking for volunteers to join you in your mission?

Currently, I am steering the ship, but I’m supported by a growing network of volunteers and creatives. We are absolutely looking for volunteers – specifically those with repair, sewing, or organisation skills, as well as anyone passionate about community building. If you want to help bridge the gap between consuming and caretaking, we have a place for you.

What’s your current reach across the county?

While our physical heart is in Lowestoft, our mission reaches across Suffolk through our digital community. We are working to open our doors to a broader audience through inclusive repair and handicraft workshops, collaborating with local artists and practitioners to celebrate regional craftsmanship.





What will Swap Shop Suffolk look like 12 months from now, if all goes according to plan?

Ideally, we will be a thriving community hub with a regular calendar of ‘repair and wear’ workshops. I envision a space where swapping is second nature to local residents, a robust volunteer team is in place, and we’ve demonstrably diverted tonnes of textiles from Suffolk’s waste stream. We want to be the ‘go-to’ example of a modern, practical circular economy.

What are you most excited about since seeing the initial reaction?

What excites me most is seeing the shift from passive concern to active participation. So many of us want to help the planet but don’t know where to start.

How can people get in touch with you?

There is plenty more to discover on our website swapshopsuffolk.co.uk or you can visit us in-person in Lowestoft every Wednesday & Friday. If you’d like to discuss collaborations or volunteering you can email Molly at swapshopsuffolk@gmail.com. ■

Follow Swap Shop Suffolk on Facebook and Instagram @swapshopsuffolk



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Funding Focus

Trying to source a funding pot for a new project? Keen to find out about new and revised funds made available across the county?

Here's our round-up of some of the available opportunities for Suffolk-based groups and organisations.

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils

Sustainable Communities Food Fund

Capital grants to support small, community-led food projects in Babergh, with a particular focus on community pantries, community fridges and food pop ups.

- **Status: Open for Applications**
- **Maximum value: £5,000**
- **Current deadline: 31/08/2026**



Suffolk Community Foundation

Sizewell C Community Fund

The Sizewell C Community Fund will provide up to £23 million over the next decade for local charities, community groups and social enterprises who are delivering projects that benefit local communities in East Suffolk.

Grants of more than £10,000 for up to three years are available.

Applicants requesting more than £50,000 should contact the Foundation to discuss the proposal before submission.

The next 2026 closing dates for applications are at 23:59 on 5 July and 27 September

Green Hall Foundation

Grants for UK registered charities to fund special projects or the purchase of equipment that will benefit their charitable purposes.

Preference will be given to projects that will benefit a number of beneficiaries rather than just a few. Trustees meet twice yearly to consider applications, in May and November.

The next application round opens on 1 September 2026 at 9am.

Postcode Places Trust – East of England

Unrestricted grants are available for registered charities, community interest companies, and community benefit societies based and working in the east of England whose main activities address the current themes of the Trust.

Grants of up to £50,000 in total over a three-year period are available, depending on the organisation's income.

The next round opens 24 June and closes 1 July 2026.

Children in Need

Core and Project funding with no application deadlines, so you can apply at any time. Available grants range from £1,000 to £40,000 per year and can be awarded for up to three years.

Children in Need aim to give quicker decisions for grants of £15,000 or less per year.

People's Postcode Lottery

Small Grants to Small Grassroots Groups / Organisations

The People's Postcode Lottery / Trusts Grassroots fund is being managed by Groundwork UK.

Grants up to £2,000 to small Constituted Not for Profits with an annual income below £25,000.

Geoffrey Watling Charity

Grants are available for local charitable organisations in the Waveney district of Suffolk so that they can continue and develop their work in the community.

The Geoffrey Watling Charity, established in 1993, distributes grants for charitable purposes to organisations throughout Norfolk and the Waveney district of Suffolk.

Grants of £1,000 normally up to £30,000 are available.

The Trustees usually meet four times a year. Decisions will normally be communicated to the applicant within 10 working days of the meeting.

If you're aware of a fund or source we should feature here, or you want to share your story of success in securing funds, please contact our editorial team.

EXPERT VOICE

Opportunity Beyond the Data

“THE FINDINGS of Suffolk’s ‘State of the Sector’ survey make striking reading: reduced income, increased costs, and demand that is not easing.

Charity Commission figures show Suffolk charities’ gross income fell by £33.4m (from £499.5m to £466.0m in the last recorded financial year).

Respondents also reported rising costs across the board, with staff salaries, energy and insurance the top three pressures.

We see the same pattern in our client work: sustained pressure on costs and demand, in a tougher funding environment.

Added to this is uncertainty from local government reform and devolution, bringing a changing landscape of funders and commissioners.

The State of the VCFSE Sector Report highlights concerns about funding uncertainty, disruption to commissioning and continuity of support, and unclear responsibilities as structures change.

Transition brings risk, but it can also open up opportunities for charities that are ready to respond.

Many boards are making fundamental decisions.

I have not seen this pace of restructuring in the sector before: charities reviewing their activity mix and, in some cases, whether they can continue at all; some merging, and some choosing an orderly closure.

This is especially evident in charities funded largely by user fees (take counselling services and independent schools).

However, while threats are real, there are also opportunities, which should be planned for.



Giles Kerkham
– the partner
leading
Larking
Gowen’s Not
for Profit
team.

The Report notes that 9% of respondents had no reserves and felt they had only weeks before closure, with a further 4% unlikely to meet contractual obligations if the worst happened. At the same time, 32% used reserves in the last year in response to increasing costs or decreasing funds.

A reserves policy is a core trustee tool for staying in control during volatility. It should cover the cost of an orderly closure if that becomes necessary. But it should also aim to prevent closure, by giving the charity time and options.

If an opportunity appears – a partnership, a new contract, or investment in income generation – do you have the headroom to take a measured risk, rather than defaulting to no?

Trustees should consider three questions: First, what obligations do you have if things go wrong?

Second, what level of reserves would give you time to redesign services if income drops or costs spike?

Third, what level of reserves would let you invest carefully if a new funding or commissioning opportunity arises?

This is not about holding money without purpose.

It is about understanding your reserves level, your risks and obligations, and what you want reserves to do for your charity.

Get that right, and trustees can decide with confidence, whether the next 12 months bring further shocks, or a chance to grow impact in a changing environment.” ■

Got something to say that could inspire, challenge or support others across Suffolk?

Our Expert Voice column is your opportunity to share insights, ideas and lived experience.

We’re seeking perspectives on leadership, volunteering, budgetary matters and the future of the sector.

To pitch your Expert Voice column or find out more, get in touch today.
Email oursuffolk@communityactionsuffolk.org.uk



LOOKING AHEAD...

Your Sector Diary for Suffolk

Here's a quick summary of some of the forthcoming awareness days, major sector related events, and key dates we think you might want to have a in your diary.

Pride Month

Throughout June

Volunteers' Week

Monday 1 to Monday 7 June

Small Charities Week

Monday 22 to Monday 29 June

Ipswich Dragon Boat Festival

Saturday 6 June

Returning for its seventh year, this lively event is organised by and for Brave Futures.

10am-4pm at the Ipswich waterfront

Quiz Night

Saturday 13 June

For Lighthouse Women's Aid.

6:30pm at Church Hall, Kirton



About Suffolk, By Suffolk, For Suffolk

Sunday 21 June

Music, song and spoken word – An event in aid of Suffolk Community Foundation and promoted by The High Sheriff of Suffolk, Oliver Paul.

7pm at St Edmundsbury Cathedral (tickets from £75)

The Bigger Breakfast

Tuesday 23 June

A free breakfast event for the Armed Forces Community, led by Combat 2 Coffee.

9:30am-12 at Ipswich UM RUFC, Rushmere St Andrew

Colour Rush

Saturday 27 June

3 or 1.5k run in aid of Suffolk Mind.

Starting at Venue 16

The Orwell Challenge

Sunday 28 June

Walk between 3 and 25 miles for charity on this scenic Suffolk route.

Norfolk and Suffolk Health and Care Expo and Awards

Friday 3 July

9:30-3:30pm at Rowley Mile Racecourse, Newmarket

Last Night at the Proms

Sunday 7 July

A special concert led by Ipswich Hospital Band in aid of Cancer Support Suffolk.

2pm-4pm at Venue 16

Charity Golf Day

Friday 10 July

Organised by Cancer Support Suffolk.

At Seckford Golf Club

*Book a team or sponsor a hole

Nominations Close for Suffolk Community Awards

Sunday 12 July

Find out more about how to nominate:

www.suffolkcommunityawards.co.uk/the-awards

Community Action Suffolk Annual Conference

Thursday 16 July

'Being More Pirate: Thinking Differently in Challenging Times!'

9am to 4pm at Kesgrave War Memorial Community Centre

Tickets from £50

For more information on Be More Pirate, go to:

www.bemorepirate.com

We know how much the voluntary sector thrives on a sharing of skills, of contacts and of services. Our marketplace is an opportunity to share both what you're willing to donate and offer, and, what you're in need of, or would love support with.

Please email our team with your 'ask' or 'offer' to feature in the next issue.

A Gentle Ask...

Costume Donations Wanted



Quay Theatre in Sudbury has relaunched its Costume Department and is keen to receive donations of items which could feature in this great community resource.

Run by volunteers, the department is accessible for the public, or theatre groups. You can donate wigs, clothes and accessories by emailing: costumes@quaysudbury.com

Could you be a Lofty Friend?

Lofty Heights is seeking volunteers keen to support young people in their community.

Becoming a Lofty Friend could make a real difference in helping a youngster to build skills and confidence.

For information, email info@lhskillsacademy.org

A Willing Offer... Are You IT Secure?

DPS Tech have kindly offered a free IT and Cyber Security Audit to any VCFSE organisation keen to ensure they're secure and compliant.

Contact Dean Willingham for information about what the audit entails.

Email: dean@dpstech.co.uk



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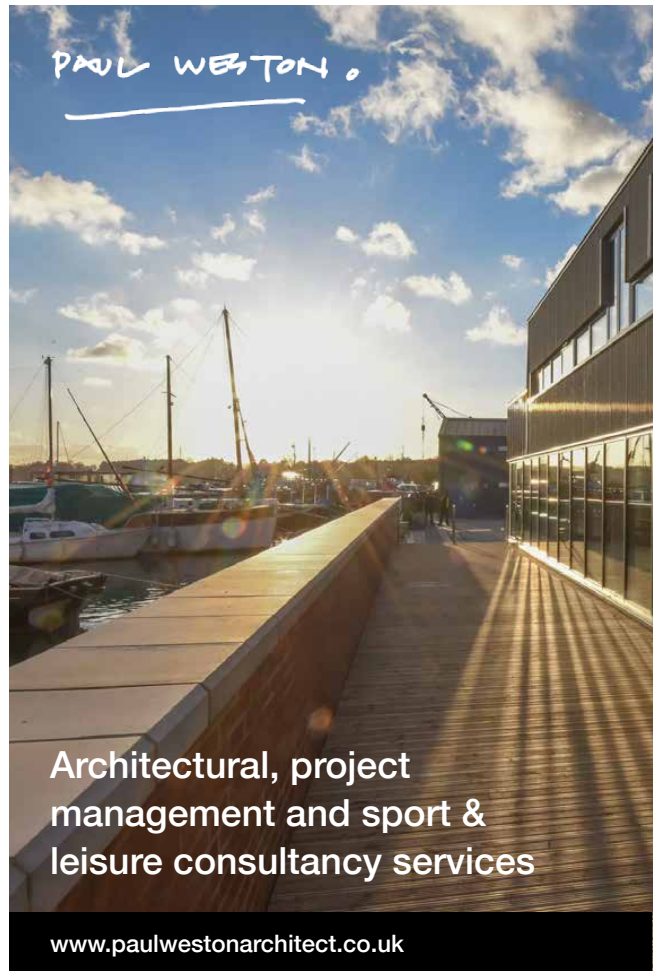
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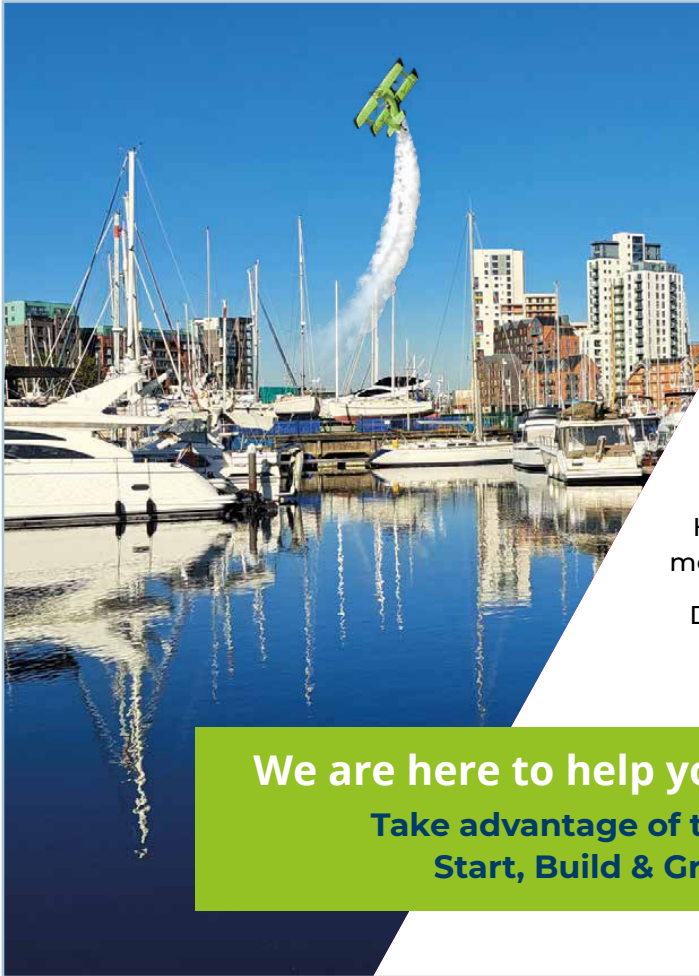
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NEXT ISSUE:

Our Suffolk's Autumn edition will shine a spotlight on the power of volunteering, the realities of crisis management, and the vital role trustees play in guiding organisations through challenge and change.

Featuring expert insight and stories from across Suffolk, we'll be asking:

- How do organisations respond when crisis hits?
- Why are volunteers and trustees more important than ever?

Contact our editorial team to contribute: oursuffolk@communityactionsuffolk.org.uk

POLICY UPDATES

What Suffolk's voluntary and community sector leaders need to know



New Government Giving Initiative

The government has launched Our Place to Give, a £1m initiative aimed at directing philanthropic investment into England's most disadvantaged communities. The programme hopes to unlock more place-based giving and connect philanthropists with local priorities. This could create future opportunities for Suffolk partnerships and local fundraising initiatives.

New Powers for the Charity Commission

The government is considering expanding the powers of Charity Commission for England and Wales, largely linked to tackling extremism. Proposals include faster investigations, stronger closure powers, trustee ID checks, digitised accounts and tougher enforcement around unlicensed fundraising. Further consultations are expected on banning individuals convicted of hate crime from senior charity roles.

Updated Conflicts of Interest Guidance

The Charity Commission has updated its trustee guidance on conflicts of interest after a rise in cases involving private benefit. The revised advice is shorter, clearer and includes practical examples to help trustees identify financial conflicts and conflicts of loyalty. For boards, it is a timely reminder to regularly review declarations of interest and governance processes.

Crime & Policing Bill Nears Completion

The Crime and Policing Bill is in its final parliamentary stages and expected to become law soon. Organisations working with vulnerable people, delivering public events or involved in campaigning activity should monitor developments closely, particularly around safeguarding, public order and regulatory compliance.

Civil Society Covenant Moves Forward

Implementation of the new Civil Society Covenant is now underway, with a new Civil Society Council established to oversee progress. Resources have been published to help charities, councils and public bodies work more effectively together. Funding of £11.59m will support local covenant partnerships in 15 authority areas across England.

**Know of more policy matters you think we should cover? Want to share what you've heard or are looking out for? Do get in touch and let us feature the update here.*

BE MORE PIRATE!



Community Action Suffolk Annual Conference 2026

16 July 2026 | 9am–4pm

at Kesgrave War Memorial Community Centre

Earlybird VCFSE tickets £50 until 31 May

Full price £65 | Non-VCFSE £80

Places are limited – book now!

www.communityactionsuffolk.org.uk/casevent/3826

