

# Community NEWS

From Amber Valley CVS



Foundation Derbyshire



February 2026  
Making Connections

Amber Valley CVS, a local front door, open since 1989 and working together to benefit and strengthen our community, groups and volunteers

## Welcome

Can I have a last word about the Festive Season of 2025— thank you to all those who visited our office with food or toys and gifts to help others with some extras to enjoy.

This made me reflect on all the connections that we make as a Centre for Voluntary Services across the year. Some are obvious, like people who wish to volunteer or members of local groups who need development support.

However, we are also a “Safe Space” so people can call in for a quiet seat and drink.

We are a great source of information about Amber Valley. Many of our staff team are local residents and all our teams focus on gathering details of regular activity to provide to the people we support intending that everyone in Amber Valley Feels Connected.



Launched in January is new grant money for connecting people—see more on page 13.

Our work boundaries in Amber Valley may change with news of government suggestions of change, an East Midlands Combined Authority and ICB cluster for managing health services. We will need member and other organisations to give voice to the impact this has on themselves and this organisation.

In the meantime, 2026 is busy as ever with a report back from a Baseline Workforce Analysis that connected groups to a wider piece of work that health undertook to identify the whole workforce available that supports people in our community and future developments that might be possible.

Thank you to those organisations that responded, we hope to build on this through the year.

### Connecting with Partners

Look out on the events page of our website [www.avcvcs.org](http://www.avcvcs.org) and e bulletin for meetings and training sessions to connect with other voluntary groups and partners in statutory organisations:

- Amber Valley Partnership
- Front Line Meeting
- Recruiting Volunteers , Safely.
- Writing Funding Bids , Successfully
- Meet the Chair—planning CVS future
- Living Well Collaborative
- Feeling Connected Action Group
- ARCH Wellbeing events

In this Issue	
Connecting through Volunteering	2
Connected in Funding	4
Connecting through Physical Activity	6
Befriending Connections	7
Belper Community Transport Scheme	8
Help at Home Connections	9
Social Prescribing Connections	10
Mental Health - Connection & Empowerment With The Derbyshire Recovery & Peer Support Service	11
Engaging the Voluntary Sector - One Workforce with JUCD	13

# Connecting Through Volunteering

## Connecting and Volunteering: Building Stronger Communities Together

Volunteering is more than giving time—it's about creating meaningful connections that strengthen both individuals and communities. In today's fast-paced world, where isolation and disconnection can easily take root, volunteering offers a powerful antidote. It brings people together, fosters shared purpose, and builds networks that last well beyond the initial act of service. At its heart, volunteering is a two-way street. While organisations benefit from the skills, energy, and commitment of volunteers, those who give their time often discover something equally valuable: a sense of belonging. Whether it's helping at a local food bank, supporting community events, or mentoring someone in need, volunteers experience first hand the impact of their contribution. These moments of connection create bonds that ripple outward—strengthening neighbourhoods, inspiring collaboration, and nurturing resilience.



For organisations, embracing volunteering is not just about filling roles; it's about cultivating relationships. When volunteers feel valued and supported, they become ambassadors for the cause, sharing their experiences and encouraging others to get involved. This creates a cycle of engagement that benefits everyone.



Strong volunteer networks can transform communities, turning challenges into opportunities and ideas into action. Technology has made connecting easier than ever, but true connection still relies on human interaction. Volunteering provides that essential human touch—face-to-face conversations, shared experiences, and the joy of working toward a common goal. These connections often lead to unexpected outcomes: new friendships, career opportunities, and a deeper understanding of the diverse lives within our communities.

As we look ahead, the need for connection and collaboration has never been greater. Volunteering is not just an act of kindness; it's an investment in the social fabric that holds us together. By encouraging more people to step forward and by supporting organisations to create inclusive, welcoming spaces, we can ensure that volunteering continues to be a cornerstone of community life.

Together, let's champion the power of volunteering—not only to meet immediate needs but to build lasting relationships that make our communities stronger, more vibrant, and more connected.



# Connecting Through Volunteering

## Volunteering at the Heart of the Pond Project

How local people are bringing Ripley's historic ponds back to life.

The Pond Project began with something simple but powerful: a local resident noticing something worth saving. Four historic ponds—Greenwich Field, "A Ponder Pond," Carr Lake, and the Butterley fishpond—had slowly fallen into shade and silt. The resident began walking the area, taking photos, researching the history, and asking questions. From



those early steps, the project has grown into a community driven effort with real momentum.

Recently, a volunteer who has just retired has stepped forward, offering to use their new free time to help take the project further. They bring skills in research, project development, and the willingness to roll up their sleeves when the practical restoration work begins.

As the project moves into its next phase, volunteers will play a vital role in:

- Surveying and monitoring water quality, plants, and wildlife
- Supporting scrub clearance and desilting days
- Helping design the Rosary Route, a gentle walking trail linking the ponds
- Sharing local stories and heritage to deepen community pride

Anyone wanting to get involved, whether through skills, enthusiasm, or just a pair of wellies, will always find a warm welcome, there is still much work to do.

## STOP PRESS!

## Funding Workshop Information



One of the most popular volunteering opportunities recently has benefited Belper Community Transport with their team of Volunteer Drivers growing to 17 ladies and gentlemen, including 2 people with the ability to drive a mini bus.

Volunteers have also used their IT and finance skills to create systems for BCT.

At the AGM ( 9<sup>th</sup> Feb 6-7.30pm at Strutt Centre) they will be seeking volunteers with new skills as board members, booking administration, vehicle valeting, marketing and publicity.

If you can give a few hours for any of those roles please request an application form from : [davidbrough@avcvs.org](mailto:davidbrough@avcvs.org)

### Applying for Grants Advice Workshop

Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> February, 2-4pm  
CVS Office, Market Place, Ripley

If you wish to apply for funding, we will be running an advice workshop at the CVS office.

If you have any queries about where to find funding, how to apply and what makes your application successful, come along and have a chat.

The session will be informal and aimed at answering the questions you have, to enable you to find the right fund and put together an application that suits you and your group.

To book a place, please contact Glynn at:

[glynnwilton@avcvs.org](mailto:glynnwilton@avcvs.org)

**AVCVS is pleased to say that Enriching Communities CIC has been awarded a £175,000 grant from The National Lottery Heritage Fund to record, preserve and tell the amazing story of Albert Hand from Heanor, Derbyshire.**

Glynn Wilton worked with Andy Quinn of Enriching Communities to create a project which will tell how Albert Hand, a record shop owner from a small Derbyshire town, brought Elvis' music to Britain and became friends with the King of Rock and Roll.

Albert's influence was felt across the world, supplying British records and Elvis fan magazines, which he printed himself above the record shop, to America and beyond.

Albert was Andy's granddad and the project will tell his story and record people's memories of his shop. These will form a central thread around which Enriching Communities will create a travelling exhibition and a programme to raise awareness of the huge cultural changes which took place in the 1960s, driven by rock and roll and the influence of Elvis Presley's music.

Enriching Communities want to hear from people who have memories of the Heanor Record Centre and Albert, to record those memories before they fade. We also want to hear from people who are fans of Elvis' music and what that means to them.

Andy Quinn is a singer himself and has appeared on national television on the Michael McIntyre Show. Andy wanted to tell the story of how his granddad became a major influence in the British music boom of the 1960s. Albert not only brought Elvis' music to Britain but promoted many famous 1960s acts at the Palais de Dance in Nottingham.

The funding will also preserve photos, telegrams and other memorabilia which are in danger of decaying and being lost.

For further information, or if you have memories you wish to share. please contact Andy Quinn at: [mygranddadknewelvis@gmail.com](mailto:mygranddadknewelvis@gmail.com)

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cp84p7686zeo>



### About The National Lottery Heritage Fund

Our vision is for heritage to be valued, cared for and sustained for everyone, now and in the future. That's why as the largest funder for the UK's heritage we are dedicated to supporting projects that connect people and communities to heritage, as set out in our strategic plan, [Heritage 2033](#). Heritage can be anything from the past that people value and want to pass on to future generations. We believe in the power of heritage to ignite the imagination, offer joy and inspiration, and to build pride in place and connection to the past.

Over the next 10 years, we aim to invest £3.6 billion raised for good causes by National Lottery players to make a decisive difference for people, places and communities.

[heritagefund.org.uk](http://heritagefund.org.uk)

Follow @HeritageFundUK on [Twitter/X](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) and use #NationalLottery #HeritageFund





## Connecting Through Physical Activity



In a busy world of technology and screen time it is vital to look after yourself and take a break.

We are permanently 'connected' to the world through phones and laptops but those human connections are very important.

One of the simplest and most uplifting ways to do this is through physical activity. Something as gentle as walking can create space to breathe, reset, and enjoy the fresh air that so many of us crave during the week.

But movement isn't just about wellbeing; it can be a doorway to socialising. Whether it's a gentle stroll with a friend, joining a local walking group, or simply greeting familiar faces along your usual route, these small moments help us build and strengthen relationships. Every shared smile or conversation is part of making connections that enrich our daily lives.



Annual Walk Leader catch-up



Duffield Walking Group – walk every Tuesday and Wednesday, meet at 9.25am at Weston Centre, Duffield.

RunWalkTalk event in October at Shipley Park – the walking group and accessible walks



Staying connected doesn't require grand gestures. Sometimes, it's as simple as lacing up your shoes, stepping outside, and letting movement bring you closer to the people and places around you.

We have lots of opportunities to join walking groups across Amber Valley. Head over to [walkderbyshire.org.uk](http://walkderbyshire.org.uk) to find the best one for you!

## Befriending Connections

Every week, at the same time, a small but meaningful visit takes place. A volunteer arrives at the home of a remarkable lady who will soon be celebrating her 100th birthday. The kettle goes on, the cups come out, and over a simple cup of tea, two people sit down to talk.

On the surface, it might not seem extraordinary. But these weekly visits have become something truly special.

For the volunteer, it's a chance to slow down, step away from the rush of daily life, and share an hour of genuine connection. For the lady, it's a highlight of her week — a friendly face, a listening ear, and the joy of conversation. Together, they share laughter, memories, and reflections on life, past and present.

She talks about growing up in a very different world, about changes she has seen across a century, and about the small moments that have shaped her life. Sometimes they talk about the news, sometimes about family, and sometimes about nothing in particular at all. What matters most is simply being there.

This is what befriending is all about. Volunteering doesn't always mean doing something big or dramatic. Often, it's the quiet acts of kindness that make the greatest difference. A regular visit, a cup of tea, and a conversation can ease loneliness, build trust, and create meaningful relationships that benefit both people involved.



For older individuals, especially those living alone, social connection is vital. Having someone to look forward to seeing each week can lift spirits, bring comfort, and remind them that they are valued and remembered. For volunteers, befriending offers a sense of purpose, perspective, and fulfilment that is hard to find elsewhere.

As this volunteer says,



*“Befriending is Magical, to see her smile when I visit each week.*

*Volunteering brings me pleasure knowing I've given a little time to have lovely chats and reminisce”*



If you've ever wondered whether volunteering makes a difference, this story says it all. You don't need special skills or lots of spare time — just a kind heart and a willingness to listen.

By giving a little of your time, you could become someone's weekly highlight. Sometimes, changing a life starts with something as simple as sitting down together for a cup of tea.

**Why not consider becoming a volunteer and making a difference — one visit, one conversation, one connection at a time?**

**Please contact Clare Salmons – [claresalmons@avcvs.org](mailto:claresalmons@avcvs.org) or call 01773 512076 you could even pop along to our weekly volunteer “drop in” coffee morning at The Salvation Army, Heath Road, Ripley 10am – 12 noon**

## Belper Community Transport Scheme

We're proud to be supporting Belper Community transport who are at the heart of the community—helping people stay connected, independent, and active by providing friendly, reliable transport for those who need it most.

Whether it's a trip to the shops, a medical appointment, or a social outing with friends, we're here to help you get **out and about**.



Over the past few months, our vehicles have been busy!

- Trips to local cafés and garden centres
- Transport to exercise classes
- Helping residents attend vital appointments safely and on time

These journeys are more than just transport—they're about **companionship, confidence, and community**.

*"It's not just the ride, it's the friendly faces and the chat along the way."* –

Our volunteer drivers and helpers are the heart of what we do.

They give their time, care, and local knowledge to make every journey welcoming and safe.

Feedback from one of our lovely volunteers – "I really enjoy volunteer driving for Belper Community Transport, which is run in association with Amber Valley C.V.S., as it is so very rewarding. B.C.T. Helps residents get to essential appointments, social activities, and shopping trips. Drivers provide not just transport but independence as well.

An example of which is a request I responded to one Sunday in December for an elderly gentleman living in a local care home. He's a local ex farmer and wanted to go see the beginning of the Belper tractor run. I picked him up, along with two lovely carers who had also given their time for free, and off we went to Kedleston to see the start. The carers kindly asked me to join them, so I tagged along. It was an amazing sight and the gentleman seemed impressed by all the effort put into lighting up the tractors. We had a lovely hour or so watching the tractors arrive and line up. I then returned them back to the care home"

We're always happy to welcome new volunteers!

### Together, We Keep Belper Moving

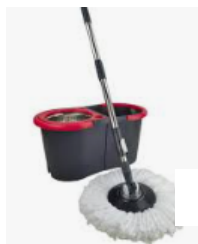
to find out more contact Clare Salmons – [claresalmons@avcvs.org](mailto:claresalmons@avcvs.org)  
or ring 01773 512076 / 07982 376697



## Help at Home Connections



Across Amber Valley and Erewash, we have a combined population of 244,700 residents, so it is sometimes a huge surprise to hear what a small world we live in!



A couple of months ago, we had an enquiry about Help at Home from a lady in Heanor, who wanted some domestic work on a regular basis. We set about going to visit her at home to undertake the usual assessment to find out what tasks she required help with and to get to know a little bit about her and her home situation. Whilst we were there, we were also requested to fill the time with some Bespoke Befriending.

Once the assessment was complete, the forms were sent back to the office in Ripley, where Alison, the Help at Home Co-ordinator for Amber Valley found her a suitable slot and appointed her a regular cleaner. The cleaner went for her first visit and had a short chat with the lady on arrival, to get to know her a little, introduce herself and confirm the tasks that were to be done that day.

As she was sitting on the settee, the cleaner noticed a photograph of a lady on the wall who she recognised as her Great Grandma. She mentioned it to her client, and it turned out, quite by coincidence that they were related to each other! They were both happy to continue their working relationship – the cleaner cleans alongside catching up on family news.



*Sandy & Jean*

When our cleaners go to a new client, connections are made and they get to know each other a little along the way. Sometimes, however, it turns out that the connections are even stronger than we ever imagined.



*Sadie & Margaret*

If you are finding it difficult to manage to keep on top of the housework or gardening or fancy a bit of company, either in the home or to go out and about and you live in Amber Valley or Erewash, don't hesitate to give us a call on 01773 512076 and, subject to assessment and availability, we can provide you with a cleaner, gardener or Bespoke Befriender to visit you on a regular basis to help you out. We can't guarantee you'll end up knowing your worker on arrival, but you can be sure to be greeted by a friendly face and get to know each other a little as you go.

# Social Prescribing Connections

As Social Prescribers we strive to create and strengthen connections on all levels.

We develop and maintain connections with community groups and organisations across Amber Valley.

We do this on a day-to-day basis in our role:



Each member of the team has their own area to focus on, as we are linked to specific surgeries. We are familiar with that area and what is available within it. For example, as the Social Prescriber linked to all of the Heanor Surgeries Helen has made a strong connection with The Potteries, Aldercar and Langley Mill Community Hub, she knows what they offer so that she can signpost appropriately.

We accompany clients to groups and activities. For example, Claire recently went with one of her clients to the Bereavement Support group.



We are always on the lookout for new venues and groups, whether that is through checking notice boards at supermarkets or scrolling on Facebook.

In addition to this we have met with several organisations over the past year: Aebal Leisure – F.I.S.H.Y.S (Stoma Support) - Derbyshire County Council Financial Inclusion Support – Mentell – National Energy Action – Creative Connections – Choices DCCT – Public Living Room Spaces – Low Level Support – Sewing Sanctuary – Marches Energy Agency – Talking Therapies – Ingeus – Anxiety Stop – Revive Counselling and Wellbeing.



All these factors ensure that we continue to develop and nurture a strong connection with community groups and organisations across the Amber Valley area.

This gives us a solid foundation on which to build strong connections with our clients.

We offer a bespoke service:

- Connecting with them through listening
- Creating a support plan focusing on what matters to them
- With our knowledge of what is available in their area we can signpost appropriately
- Supporting to attend/engage with groups and activities if required



One of the connections that, as a team, we are most proud of came through our Live Well with Pain workshops.

Last year we undertook the training for Live Well with Pain, Ten Footsteps so that we could deliver the programme.

At the end of 2025 an invited group of clients attended the Ten Footsteps programme at Amber Valley CVS. It ran over six weeks and there were lots of opportunities for the participants to connect with each other and share their experiences. At the end of the six weeks there was a core group that had formed a strong connection and wanted to keep meeting on a weekly basis. Helen and Sarah were able to facilitate this; and the group have continued to meet at Amber Valley CVS every week.



This illustrates the power of connection and why it is vital to Social Prescribers and the service. Connecting with groups and organisations across Amber Valley, building our knowledge and understanding of what is available. Connecting with our clients and building a bespoke support plan for them. Each link is necessary in reaching the end goal of empowering our clients to improve their mental health and wellbeing through social connections.

# Mental Health - Connection & Empowerment With The Derbyshire Recovery & Peer Support Service

## Small steps

With the right support

With the new year well under way, its often easy to put big goals on ourselves- climbing mountains, running marathons, learning new languages, and all the other resolutions we feel pressured to achieve. Sometimes we need to reflect on what we truly feel we can work towards. It may absolutely be that marathon! But it may also be getting on a bus, leaving the house to visit a shop, or making that phone call we've found so difficult to complete.

When we recognise the smaller (but no less significant) goals we want to focus on, half of the battle can be knowing where to start. A bit of support to get going can make all the difference, and were here to help you move forward at a steady, manageable pace.

## Connection

Connecting with people is an important part of wellbeing, Loneliness and isolation can have a negative impact on both our mental and physical health. Being around others- even if its just for an hour a week- can improve mood, increase motivation, and trigger the release of "happy" chemicals in the body.

Our service really values connection, offering around 60 peer support groups across the county. Groups can seem daunting if you've never been to one before, but if being around others, to talk or simply be present, interests you please contact us and we can guide you through your options.

Peer support is for people who want to reduce isolation, and be around other people who may have been through similar experiences. This can be through an activity like walking, crafts, music – or through something more tailored like a neurodiversity group, a younger adults group, or a group specific to a diagnosis - like bipolar. The list goes on!



## Empowerment

Empowerment is important for many reasons, it helps you make informed decisions, grow confidence, work on goals, and develop a deeper understanding of yourself and where you want to be in life.

Empowering yourself isn't always easy. Self doubt, low self worth, poor mental or physical health and limited resources can all create barriers. But the ability to grow, change and move forward – bit by bit – is already within you. With our 1-1 support, you can work with a mental health recovery worker who will help you break your goal into **achievable, practical steps**- like getting out in your local community and feeling that confidence grow!

# Mental Health - Connection & Empowerment With The Derbyshire Recovery & Peer Support Service

## Goal setting

When your thinking of a goal to work on, its important to think of how you will be able to do achieve this. Taking a moment to reflect before you begin can make the process feel more manageable and increase your chances of success.

Here are some helpful questions to guide you:



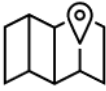
### Define your goal

*What is my goal?  
Why is it important to me?*



### Imagine the impact

*How will this make me feel if I complete this?  
How might this improve my life?  
How will I feel If I don't try?*



### Practicalities

*Is there a day of the week or time of day that I feel most motivated?  
Where will the goal take place?  
What do I need to get started?  
How long might this take me to complete?*



### Support

*Is there someone I could talk to about this, and ask for their advice or encouragement?  
Who could help me stay on track?*



### Barriers

*What barriers might get in the way?  
How could I plan for or work around them?*

Derbyshire Recovery & Peer Support Service



Looking after your mental health is about taking small, meaningful steps that feel right for **you**. And remember, the power to begin is already within you - but we all need someone to walk alongside them, *sometimes*.

Please call 01773 734989 or email [derbyshirerecoverypeersupportservice@rethink.org](mailto:derbyshirerecoverypeersupportservice@rethink.org)

to have a confidential talk through your options, check our referral criteria and explore what's next. If we can't help, we'll make sure we find the best pathway for your support.

We are a FREE service, so a conversation is the place to start. You can self-refer, or any one in your support circle can do this for you, as long as there is permission from yourself.

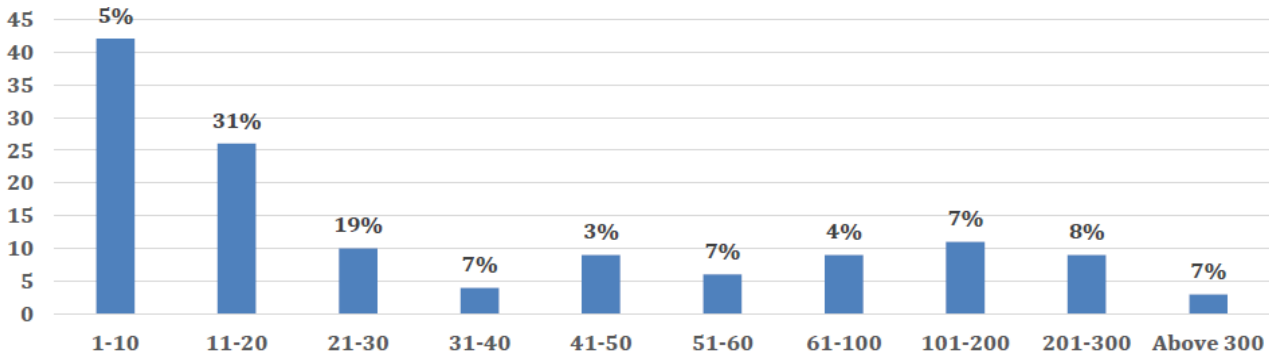
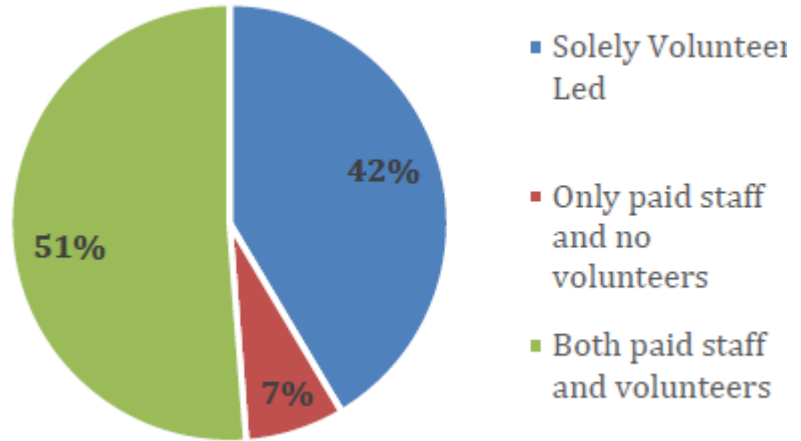


# Engaging the Voluntary Sector—One Workforce with JUCD

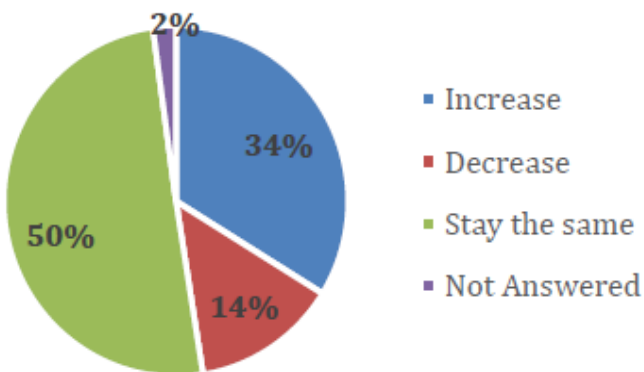
The analysis undertaken for the final report gave many insights into the volunteer and paid workforce within the voluntary sector.

One of the key aims of the engagement was to ensure the survey gathered insights from a wide and representative range of VCFSE organisations, including those supported by both paid staff and volunteers, in order to reflect the sector's diversity.

As illustrated, the responses received represented a mix of organisations.



The table above highlights the breadth of volunteer hours contributed each week to the organisations that responded to the survey who are either solely volunteer led or rely on both paid staff and volunteers.



Projected workforce changes over the coming year point to limited stability, with some concerns regarding staff retention. Respondents highlighted ongoing challenges such as volunteer recruitment, funding uncertainty, limited paid staffing, and the sustainability of services. Despite a clear ambition to expand service provision, growth is frequently constrained by financial, resource limitations and the way services are commissioned.

The majority of VCFSE organisations who responded to the survey identified sickness rates between 0–5%. This suggests that, despite differences in structure and resources, sickness absence levels in the voluntary sector are broadly comparable to those in the NHS.

In collaboration with VCFSE colleagues, the team also reflected on the design, delivery, and collection of the survey. This reflective process aimed to strengthen future practices around co-production, data quality, and partnership working.



The views expressed in this newsletter should not be taken as Amber Valley CVS policy. Whilst every care is taken to provide accurate information, Amber Valley CVS does not accept liability for any error or omission.

