



# Impact report

2024/5



Community First  
Yorkshire

# Who are we?



Our **vision** is a Yorkshire where strong inclusive communities thrive, and everyone has the opportunity to live well.

Our **purpose** is to champion and connect community and voluntary groups; providing leadership and practical support; encouraging volunteering and building collaboration.

We're guided by integrity, professionalism and consideration for others - values that shape how we work and who we are.

# Welcome and Executive Summary

Welcome to this year's Impact Report. At Community First Yorkshire, our vision is simple but powerful: a Yorkshire where strong, inclusive communities thrive and everyone has the opportunity to live well.

We've stood shoulder to shoulder with hundreds of community groups, helping them unlock funding, strengthen leadership and build confidence for the future - making this a year of growth, resilience and connection. From training and mentoring to governance and funding advice, our support has empowered hundreds of groups and thousands of people - turning everyday challenges into opportunities for change.

What shines through most is the spirit of collaboration. When organisations are confident and connected, communities flourish. And when communities flourish, people lead healthier, happier and more fulfilling lives. We've seen this in action - from volunteers discovering the joy of giving their time, to networks sharing ideas and inspiration, to partnerships that have strengthened resilience and wellbeing across Yorkshire.

Thanks to your commitment, more communities have been able to shape their own futures, more voices have been heard, and more people have found a sense of belonging. As we look ahead, we're excited to build on this momentum - expanding our reach, growing leadership, and supporting communities to take bold steps toward a fairer, greener, more connected future.

None of this would be possible without you. I want to thank every organisation, volunteer, trustee, leader, partner, funder and member of the team who has worked with us this year. Your passion is the heartbeat of our communities, and this report is a celebration of your achievements as much as ours.

**Jane Colthup**

Chief Executive, Community First Yorkshire



## Our impact areas

This year, we've helped VCSE organisations unlock funding, strengthen leadership and build resilient communities - driving positive change across Yorkshire.



# Providing leadership and practical support

Strong communities need strong leaders - and this year we've been proud to work with those who are making a difference every day.

From mentoring and training to digital tools and inspiring events, our support has helped voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) leaders across North Yorkshire grow in confidence, capability and connection.

**920**

organisations supported

**453**

priority groups were supported, helping people with protected characteristics

**1,418**

new support cases delivered

**55**

training sessions attended by

**614**

participants

## Ordinary Extraordinary Leaders conference

In the spring, we welcomed 100 leaders to our Ordinary Extraordinary Leaders conference - a day filled with inspiration, shared learning and real connection. From grassroots changemakers to seasoned CEOs, the event sparked new collaborations and gave space for reflection, celebration and bold ideas.

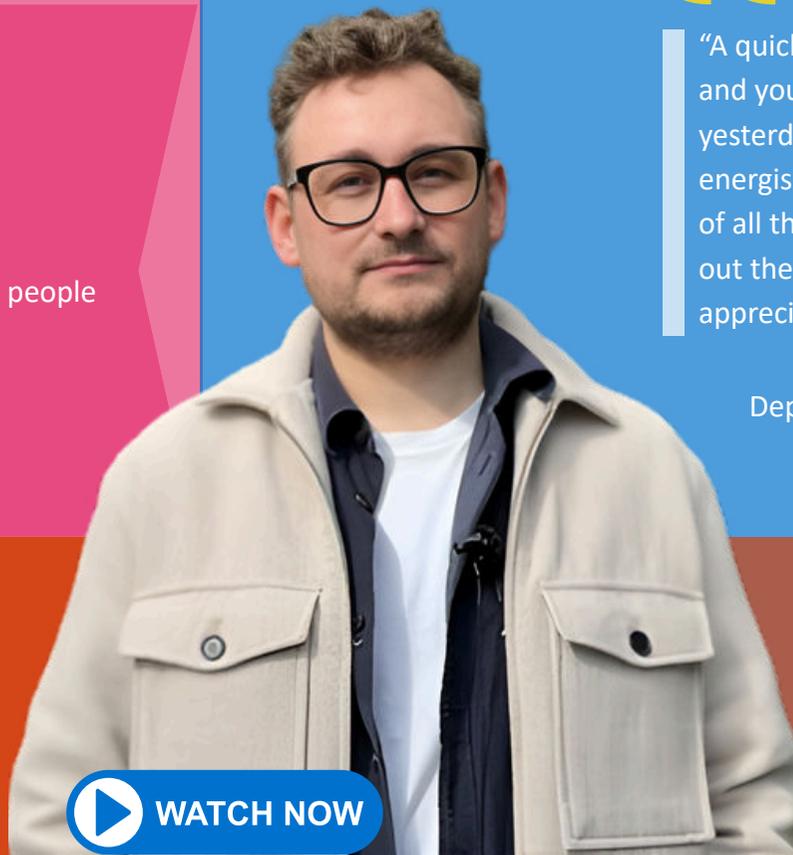


### Feedback

"A quick note to say a huge thank you to you and your wonderful team for the event yesterday. It was thought-provoking, energising and moving – a real tour de force of all the wonderful work and opportunities out there in North Yorkshire. Greatly appreciate the opportunity to be part of it."

Gemma O'Neil

Deputy Director, North Yorkshire Place



WATCH NOW

## Our impact

Enabling peer support helps to build confidence within the sector and is a platform to share good practice and collective growth.

## Mentoring that makes a difference

Our Leadership Mentoring Programme saw 28 mentees grow in confidence, governance knowledge and strategic thinking, with the support of 28 mentors and a steering group made up of previous mentors. With new podcasts and resources, the programme's reach extended beyond the cohort - offering practical insights to the wider sector.



**28**  
mentees were supported by  
**28**  
mentors

### Feedback

“Taking part in the programme gives you a sense of having someone to talk to, space to work through challenges and that was invaluable.”

Sally Steadman  
Mentee and mentor

## Our impact

We're helping to boost sector confidence and skills, enabling stronger, positive community interactions. When leaders thrive, communities grow.

## Practical tools for everyday impact

We believe that strong communities flourish with strong support - whether that's training, learning and sharing through peer networks or providing 1-2-1 advice.



### Feedback



“The network provides me with the opportunity to meet people in similar roles, hear what they're doing and get ideas for where I can go. It's useful to hear from speakers about the different ways of engaging different groups in volunteering and gives me ideas for how to implement these in my day to day job.”

Forestry England  
Volunteer Coordinator  
Network member

## Our impact

VCSE organisations and communities are empowered and better able to help their communities. Good governance strengthens organisations, enabling better community support.

## Specialist support and guidance

From governance guidance to funding advice, we've been busy helping groups build confidence and capacity. Our development officers were out and about - offering face-to-face support, providing essential specialist advice and working alongside organisations to develop skills and resilience. Building strong relationships with trustees, staff and volunteers is vital in ensuring organisations know where to turn when they need advice, training or peer support.

Our Funding Portal continues to be a go-to resource for VCSE organisations navigating the funding landscape. With clear guidance, timely updates, and accessible tools, it's helping groups unlock opportunities and build sustainability.



## Our impact

Boosting sector confidence and skills is key to enabling stronger, positive communities. When communities are resilient, confident and connected, people lead healthier, happier and more fulfilling lives.



Providing strong VCSE leadership and support means local services are better run, more inclusive and responsive to real needs. It helps individuals feel empowered, builds trust, and creates opportunities - turning challenges into progress and isolation into belonging.



## Feedback

"It was so lovely to meet you in person last week! I can't thank you enough for your support and advice. The information and resources you provided are incredibly helpful. I didn't realise how many things I was missing. Your insights will be invaluable as I continue to shape the document. Thank you once again, and I truly appreciate your help. I will keep you updated."

Maya's Club CIC



## Environmentally and financially sustainable communities

Sustainability starts with strong foundations. From funding to leadership, our support has empowered North Yorkshire communities to grow with confidence and care for the future.

**£1.6m**

in funding secured for VCSE groups

**574**

people used our free Funding Portal to access grants

## Investing in village halls and community buildings

Through the Rural York Community Buildings Fund, we partnered with City of York Council to support 11 buildings - investing £150,000 in capital improvements that enhanced sustainability, digital connectivity and infrastructure.

**11**

community buildings and village halls received

**£150k**

in capital funding to enhance sustainability, digital connectivity, and infrastructure



## Funding that fuels local impact

574 people joined our Funding Portal, unlocking free access to grants and guidance. Together, we helped VCSE groups secure £1.56 million - boosting local services and creating more opportunities.



## Feedback

“We have been successful in two bids for grant funding. They will make such a difference to the hall, ensuring more affordable running costs and making the hall a much more comfortable and welcoming community space.”

Bulmer Village Hall trustee



## Our impact

We're helping to channel funding into areas of need to create more resilient and thriving communities.



## Locally rooted support

Working with our partners, Better Connect, we supported 25 Community Anchor Organisations (CAO) with tailored training in impact measurement, volunteering, and safeguarding - helping them lead with clarity and care.



# 25

Community Anchor Organisations supported



## Feedback

“Having a named contact throughout the programme was fantastic. Face-to-face conversations let us share ideas openly and feel heard.”

A CAO that attended our support programme

## Our impact

Having **improved facilities** mean local people now have safer, warmer and more energy-efficient spaces to gather, learn and connect. **Enhanced digital connectivity** presents new opportunities for education, work and social inclusion - especially in rural areas. **Stronger infrastructure** ensures these buildings remain vital community hubs supporting events, services and local initiatives.

## Thriving social enterprise

Our Social Enterprise programme delivered 12 training sessions, resulting in lasting coaching relationships and a growing business network.

## Our impact

From community cafés to circular economy projects, we’re helping social enterprises to build stronger connections, create jobs and enhance skills. As a result, local people have great access to employment and training opportunities, and have a greater sense of community pride – tackling loneliness and increasing wellbeing.

A stronger, more confident VCSE sector across North Yorkshire - ready to lead, grow and deliver lasting change. This means individuals and communities gain better support, stronger connections and more opportunities to thrive, with trusted organisations driving an inclusive, resilient future.



## Case study: celebrating village halls

We marked Village Halls Week with stories, smiles, and a poem that captured the spirit of these cherished spaces.

# Access to better health and education

This year, we've continued to champion the power of community-led change in health and education across North Yorkshire, helping to connect, amplify and empower communities and individuals.

## Health equity through collaboration

We proactively led a North Yorkshire partnership approach in identifying barriers to vaccination uptake in communities less well-reached due to their rurality or lack of connection.

## Our impact

Better partnerships were forged and organisations were more empowered in helping to dispel myths and ensure vaccination decisions were made with 'the right' information.

## Case study: tackling health inequalities

Through our partnership with Craven Communities Together and local care networks, over £80,000 was distributed to tackle health inequalities. These targeted interventions – from mental health support to rural health access – are already making a difference.



## Men's Sheds: building health and connection

Our Bradford Men's Sheds programme creates community spaces that are more than workshops; they're lifelines for wellbeing and connection. We supported 14 Sheds, building a strong network that boosts mental health and social ties.

## Our impact

With our support, Bradford Men's Sheds are making a strong impact on men's health, wellbeing and social connection. They deliver cost-effective grassroots health promotion, easing pressure on public services.



## A stronger voice for VCSE in health systems

We facilitate the **North Yorkshire VCSE Health and Care Assembly**, a vital space for shaping system-wide planning. By bringing together voices from across the sector, we're ensuring that lived experience and local insight inform decisions at every level.

We also launched a **Health Outcomes Delivery Lead** role to tackle digital exclusion, especially in rural communities. From helping residents navigate the NHS App to strengthening relationships with primary care, this work is breaking down barriers and building confidence.

## Our impact

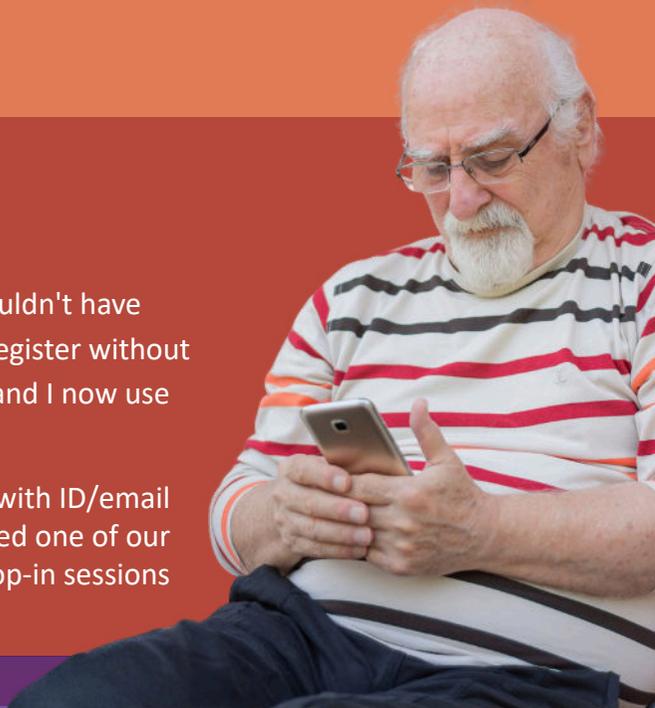
With our help, there is greater inclusion and increased access to care - especially for digitally excluded and rural communities.



### Feedback

"[I am] very happy and [I] wouldn't have been able to download and register without your help. It's a brilliant app and I now use it for everything."

An individual with ID/email issues who attended one of our NHS App drop-in sessions



## Mental health and lived experience

Our **Support to Engage** programme trained VCSE staff in coaching techniques to embed lived experience into mental health service design. We also co-hosted the **North Yorkshire Rural Health and Care Summit** with Healthwatch North Yorkshire, welcoming 80 leaders to explore rural challenges and solutions. The feedback directly shaped the Health and Wellbeing Board's priorities and sparked calls for a cross-sector rural health task force.

## Our impact

As a valued local care partner, we're able to share insights and bridge the VCSE sector so that leaders can share knowledge for improving health and care services.



### Feedback

"Rurality is a real challenge for health inequalities. Today is about what is in our sphere of influence to enact change to build healthy and thriving communities across North Yorkshire,"

Dena Dalton, Head of Health Collaboration, speaking at Rural Health and Care Summit.

# Championing and connecting communities

We know that communities thrive when they're heard, supported, and connected. This year, we've proudly stood alongside local groups, amplifying voices and nurturing ideas that make North Yorkshire a better place for everyone.

## Listening leads to lasting change

As the pathfinder for Leeds City Council's Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) programme, Rothwell became a hub of community-led ideas. A summer listening exercise sparked initiatives - from a support group for parents of autistic girls to a winter crafting circle. Strong partnerships deepened trust and connection across the community.

## Our impact

Our Rothwell ABCD programme helped residents feel more connected and empowered to shape their community.



## Digital Inclusion Programme: bridging the digital divide

Digital access is no longer a luxury - it's a lifeline. Our £600,000 UKSPF-funded partnership project tackled digital exclusion head-on across rural North Yorkshire.



## Feedback

"It's really been helpful for me to come somewhere where there's a friendly voice, people are understanding and they offer you help and advice."

John, user of Thirsk Library digital outreach support

**250+**

digital champions trained

**3k**

people supported with digital skills

**83**

training sessions boosted confidence and capability

**40**

projects delivered in 120+ venues

## Our impact

Our Digital Inclusion project has helped individuals gain vital digital skills, build confidence and access essential services.



## Digital engagement: reaching more people than ever

Our digital platforms have evolved into dynamic spaces that do far more than share information - they foster meaningful connections, spark collaboration and open doors to continuous learning.

**603**

podcast downloads

**41k**

website visitors

**1,135**

resource downloads

**8,600**

newsletter subscribers



### Feedback

Recording the podcast was a joy – it's a chance to share what matters in our community.

Emma Pears, SELFA



## Our impact

Timely access to news and insights helps VCSE organisations stay resilient and advocate better for community needs.

# Encouraging volunteering

This year we promoted 200 volunteering opportunities on our Volunteering in North Yorkshire (VINY) directory, helping people connect with causes that matter and strengthening local charities.

We've provided advice on volunteer management, ensuring groups can recruit and retain the people they need. Creative outreach and networking through our Volunteer Coordinators Network and informal Views and Brews for volunteers who manage volunteers has also boosted engagement.

## Our impact

Thanks to this work, more people have discovered the joy of volunteering, giving local charities the extra hands and hearts they need.

We have worked with organisations in line with the national Vision for Volunteering strategy, embedding themes of appreciation, equity and collaboration to create a positive volunteering experience.

**200**

volunteering roles  
promoted

**97**

people attended our  
Volunteer Coordinator's  
Network and informal  
Views and Brews  
network



## Building collaboration

We ensure the VCSE voice is heard loud and clear by taking active roles on strategic boards, forums and partnerships across health, local government and the wider system.

Rural advocacy runs through everything we do, helping to ensure that people and organisations in even the most remote communities have fair access to vital services - from digital connectivity to health and wellbeing support, and promoting economic stability.

### Our impact

We bring together key people to inspire change and give a voice to the sector. Helping to influence change and raise awareness with partners is critical to enabling community resilience (especially important in rural locations), social cohesion and better health and wellbeing outcomes in Yorkshire communities.

**193**

people attended 9 strategic meetings

We helped the sector take part in

**170**

strategic boards and task groups

## Looking ahead - our goals for 2025/6

In the coming year, we're committed to expanding our reach and visibility through events, digital storytelling and stronger impact monitoring. We'll continue to evolve our support for volunteering and leadership so that people and organisations feel confident, connected and empowered.

We aim to strengthen community resilience by working closely with partners to build VCSE capacity, with a particular focus on increasing our reach both geographically and into new communities.

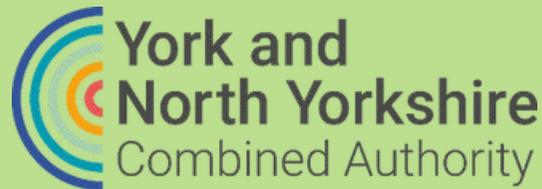
We will also deliver a rich programme of learning and development - from training sessions and peer-learning groups to mentoring opportunities and leadership development for young people - ensuring that skills, confidence and ambition continue to grow across our sector.



# Funders and partners



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

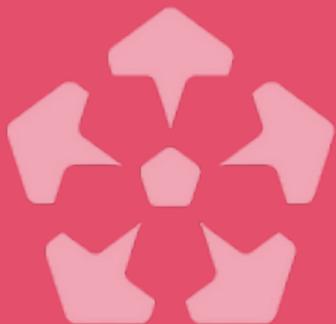


Bradford District and Craven  
Health and Care Partnership



## We couldn't have done it without you!

We'd like to thank our funders, partners, trustees and members of the team who have helped make our work so fulfilling – without you, we wouldn't have been able to help so many Yorkshire communities to thrive and in turn improve the lives of people living in the region.



## Funding secured for the future

### VCSE Support Grant secured from 2025 – 2028

We're proud to be continuing to provide support to North Yorkshire VCSE organisations, having successfully secured the VCSE Support Grant from North Yorkshire Council, NHS Humber and North Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (ICB) and Bradford District and Craven Health and Care Partnership.

### Village Green grant secured from 2025 – 2028

Village Green is an exciting new three-year project funded by the National Lottery Climate Action Fund, designed to put communities at the heart of climate action in North Yorkshire. We're looking forward to helping to inspire, empower and connect people across the region to take meaningful steps in the fight against climate change.





## Community First Yorkshire

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