

Spotlight

# Working Across Sectors

Featuring:

Home Group, Sunderland Software City, and Muckle  
LLP

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Cover photo: Two Connected Voice staff members having a meeting in one of the co-working spaces at One Strawberry Lane

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## About this magazine

Connected Voice Magazine is currently published four times a year. We aim to make sure all information is correct and up to date but we do not accept liability for any mistakes that may inadvertently appear. Views and opinions in this magazine are not necessarily those of Connected Voice.

Images: as part of our commitment to accessibility, we describe images for those using screen readers.

If you have any queries about this magazine email [connect@connectedvoice.org.uk](mailto:connect@connectedvoice.org.uk)

## Issue 20: Working Across Sectors

The Autumn 2024 issue of Connected Voice Magazine is all about Working Across Sectors, and how voluntary sector organisations can learn from and grow through their links with other sectors - and vice versa!

We hear from Connected Voice Chief Executive Lisa Goodwin about the value of developing relationships across sectors, and why we felt it important to celebrate these relationships in this issue.

For our first Spotlight feature, we speak to our neighbours Home Group about their projects, ethos, and how they are striving to create more social value through their

work. We also talk to our frequent collaborators Muckle LLP about their work with charities and social enterprises, and how this has grown.

In two guest pieces, we also hear from Sunderland Software City and RBC Brewin Dolphin about the various barriers that can be broken down through cross-sector collaboration. There are also insights from the Connected Voice team, including from our Sector Connector programme and our Advocacy service.

We hope you enjoy this issue and welcome any questions you may have! ●

# Working Across Sectors

**Lisa Goodwin**  
Chief Executive



Although a key focus of our work at Connected Voice is about bringing VCSE organisations together, clearly there is also great value in developing and strengthening relationships across sectors. For the past few years, we have been committed to ensuring that VCSE organisations benefit from input from the private sector through our Sector Connector programme, and several of our supporters, including Muckle LLP, feature in this issue.

As we face increasingly complex problems in our society, having access to the specific expertise available in other sectors becomes more and more important. A good example is the climate

**“ Although a key focus of our work at Connected Voice is about bringing VCSE organisations together, clearly there is also great value in developing and strengthening relationships across sectors.**

crisis, which is an issue of global importance. I regularly speak to charity leaders who feel helpless in the face of it, and have no idea where to start.

But there are organisations who can help us identify the steps we can take to at least reduce our organisation’s carbon footprint, and there are things we can learn from other organisations that we can use as a starting point - indeed, several of our contributors describe their net zero

and other ESG efforts in this issue.

Something I hear quite often from VCSE colleagues is that they feel relationships with other sectors - especially the public sector - can be quite extractive. They might want a view from a specific community of interest, or representation on a specific topic, which can feel quite tokenistic. Organisations don’t always hear back about whether their input or involvement has led to real change. So, we felt it was important to dedicate some space in this edition to demonstrating where partnerships and support across different sectors can have a positive impact.

We benefit hugely from a close partnership with Home Group here at Connected Voice. This has not only enabled us to provide a beautiful, energy efficient office space for our staff, but it has also enabled us to play an important part in creating a space for local VCSE organisations to meet, work and collaborate.

I don’t think for a moment that *all* private and VCSE partnerships are effective - some are very much focussed on providing positive publicity and a ‘feel good’ factor for the private sector partner - but, when you find an organisation that really aligns with your values and shares your purpose, the ‘magic’ that Jeffrey Ball from RBC Brewin Dolphin describes on page 16 really can happen.

I hope this edition provides some useful inspiration to organisations embarking on their own cross-sector partnerships ●

# Spotlight: Home Group

**Chris Thompson**  
Head of Strategy



**Chris is Head of Strategy at Home Group, a national housing association with a head office at One Strawberry Lane in Newcastle City Centre.**

**As part of their move to their new city centre home, Home Group worked with us to ensure the building brought benefits to local charities and community groups, with offerings including free room hire, co-working and collaboration space, Strawberry Soup events, and providing a new home for Connected Voice.**

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

## What does your organisation do?

Home Group was set up in 1935 as the North East Housing Association (NEHA) to help people during the Great Depression. We became the only housing association formed by an Act of Parliament.

Today, we are a national housing association with a head office at One Strawberry Lane in Newcastle City Centre. Connected Voice are our neighbours. Although we are national, our roots are very much in the North East, and have been for almost 90 years.

We have over 56,000 homes spread across England and Scotland, from Devon up to Dundee and from Cumbria across to Teesside. We have 120,000 customers, most of whom live in social housing. However, we build homes for sale, the profits from which then go towards building more social homes.

Around 11,000 of our customers are supported, living with a range of issues, from mild mental health and physical conditions to quite complex needs.

The work we do has changed a lot since the beginning, but over our 90 years we have adapted to meet the changing needs of people and their communities. We remain agile as an organisation for that reason. How we adapted to help customers deal with Covid and the recent cost-of-living crisis

are good examples.

## Tell us about your key projects

We build new homes and regenerate existing ones on an annual basis. Last year we delivered over 1,200 new homes across the country, the vast majority of them social or affordable homes.

We also redeveloped estates up and down the UK to ensure our customers have homes that are fit for purpose, especially in terms of being energy efficient, which not only supports our net zero aims, but also saves our customers hundreds of pounds per year.

**“Over our 90 years we have adapted to meet the changing needs of people and their communities.”**

Our Customer Promise is key to supporting the needs and expectations of our customers. We have six themes.

We promise...

- ...to provide a safe place to live
- ...to deliver a reliable repairs service
- ...to care about you
- ...to help communities grow
- ...to tell you where your money goes
- ...to work together with customers

and partners

These are our key drivers and what all colleagues work towards. Our performance against these promises, and other activities, is measured by our customers through the Tenant Satisfaction Measures, an annual independent survey.

**“Having Connected Voice as neighbours has been so helpful in our efforts to support our customers.**

We also ensure our customers have their voices heard outside of the survey - we have customers on our board, on scrutiny panels, involved in procurement and contract arrangements, and on recruitment panels. We listen to around 4,000 customers per year through a range of activities, and act on their views.

We support our customers in a variety of ways, from education and training to financial and

pastoral support. Many of our customers have found it difficult over the past few years, with the impact of Covid and the cost-of-living crisis, and we have worked hard to support our most vulnerable customers.

Fuel poverty has been a significant issue for thousands of our customers over the past few years. Our financial inclusion team have been working hard to alleviate this and have saved customers millions of pounds to date. However, we are also pushing Government and energy suppliers to make changes to policy and procedures, as this would make a huge difference to many of our customers.

**How has Connected Voice supported you?**

Having Connected Voice as neighbours has been so helpful in our efforts to support our customers. We can plug into the wealth of experience of its 800+ members and gain first-hand knowledge from Connected Voice colleagues.



**Photo: Two Home Group employees having a chat in a meeting room at One Strawberry Lane, Newcastle upon Tyne**

There is very much an 'open door' policy between the two of us and a constant sharing of information and expertise. This is something that was apparent from the first day we both entered One Strawberry Lane, and our relationship has gone from strength to strength.

**“Over the past few years, we have really increased the level of social value we have created, and we have received fantastic feedback on this work.”**

### **What do people say about your organisation?**

Like many large organisations, we don't always get things right, but we learn from them and move forward. What we do know is that the vast majority of our customers know that we care, and that we work very hard to make sure we meet their needs.

Our colleagues are fantastic in going above and beyond for our customers. Not just through testing times like Covid, but on a day-to-day basis. So, making sure colleagues are supported themselves and given the resources they need to support customers is central to our business.

Colleagues are well looked after at Home Group, which is probably why we have been among the top ten best places to work in the UK for the past six years in the Great Place to Work Survey. The positivity, drive and determination to support customers stems from the support we receive ourselves.

One of our aims is to increase the level of social value we bring to our communities. Over the past few years, we have really increased the level of social value we have created, and we have received fantastic feedback on this work from individuals, communities and charities ●



**Photo: Chris Thompson, Head of Strategy at Home Group, delivering a presentation at One Strawberry Lane, Newcastle upon Tyne**

# Providing small charities with free legal advice through Sector Connector

**Jenny Forrester**  
Sector Connector Coordinator,  
Connected Voice



**Our Sector Connector Coordinator Jenny Forrester discusses a second successful year of free legal advice clinics with Muckle LLP**

To mark Small Charity Week 2024 (which took place from Monday 24 - Friday 28 June), leading local law firm Muckle LLP once again delivered free legal advice clinics to local VCSE organisations via our Sector Connector programme.

As is explored elsewhere in this issue, Muckle LLP has the largest dedicated charities team of any law firm in the North East, and they have a genuine desire to positively impact our local communities. The support they provided through this year's clinics extended to cover property and real estate, adding to their existing offer of advice around governance, data protection, trading, corporate, Charity Commission queries, incorporation, restructuring, and mergers.

Giving back to local causes is of the utmost importance to the team at Muckle, and we were thrilled to work with them again to facilitate meetings with a record number of 21 small to medium-sized charities and not-for-profit organisations. The advice given is intended to assist them in their operations and, ultimately, to help them better serve the needs of their beneficiaries.

Of their record-breaking week of free legal advice clinics, Muckle LLP said: "It was a pleasure to support so many organisations doing great things in our region as part of Small Charity Week. The advice we provided during our

law clinics has hopefully helped these organisations go on to make an even bigger impact in the future."

Below are some thoughts from just a few of the organisations Muckle LLP was able to help:

**“We were extremely pleased to have the opportunity to talk through our current complex circumstances and focus on the legal implications. It was both reassuring and flagged up some steps we need to take, we are very grateful.**

**“We received relevant and helpful advice that addressed the issues we were concerned about in a friendly and accessible way.**

**“Muckle gave us excellent insight into our property-related query which included some actionable steps we could take, leaving us with a much better understanding of our legal position.**

# The importance of strong links between advocates and solicitors

**Jane Kingston**  
Head of Advocacy, Connected Voice



## Our Head of Advocacy Jane Kingston reflects on the importance of strong links between advocates and solicitors

While strong relationships between advocates and solicitors are nothing new, it is worth exploring how these relationships have evolved over time. Traditionally, at Connected Voice, our Independent Advocates have worked closely in collaboration with solicitors to support and represent individuals who are under Mental Health Detention and seeking legal advice to challenge a Section in a Mental Health Tribunal (to give you one example).

**“At Connected Voice Advocacy, it is important that we listen and effectively respond to the needs of the communities we support.”**

In recent years, however, we have expanded our relationships with solicitors, and we now liaise often with Family Law and Personal Injury Law teams when supporting and representing advocacy clients in such cases - including, for example, Child Protection cases, and cases where an individual has experienced life-changing injuries. We now have close links with a number of local law firms as a result of this work.

At Connected Voice Advocacy, it is important that we listen and effectively respond to the needs of the communities we support. We go beyond the statutory role - i.e., providing the advocacy

support that people are legally entitled to - to help with matters like negotiating contracts to support people to achieve their goals, make sure their voices are heard, and be able to access services that they are entitled to.

Our recent collaborative work with solicitors ensures that people with additional needs, whatever exactly these may be, are given appropriate support and guidance to navigate Child Protection hearings. This often results in parents feeling better equipped and able to deal with court appearances, which can understandably be very stressful for many, and it also often results in better outcomes for families.

Here is some feedback from a solicitor we worked with on a Child Protection case (edited for anonymity):

“I just wanted to pass on my thanks to yourself and your service for the help and assistance you provided to our client X within care proceedings. I know that X has felt extremely reassured by the support of yourselves and feels she has had her voice heard for the first time.”

“X can become overwhelmed and confused upon hearing a lot of information and this was especially apparent within care proceedings, where the situation is already stressful.”

“X has commented that she has felt

more confident and able to understand by having you present in the Local Authority meetings, court hearings and appointments with myself. It has meant that, if she hasn't fully understood something, she can reach out to you and feel supported that way."

**“ Solicitors have seen the work of advocates such as ours and now consider these professionals in the process as they would any other key service.**

Elsewhere, following a life-changing or near-fatal accident, a person's insurance claim will provide for the development of a team around them to plan and deliver their care and treatment. Our strong relationships with Personal Injury Law teams means that, in this context, we are a key part of the 'person-centred' planning process, to help ensure their rehabilitation is compliant with the Mental Capacity Act, is 100% focussed on them, and is in line with their views and wishes.

Our Independent Advocates support people post-accident to rebuild quality of life and recover. Solicitors have seen the work of advocates such as ours and now consider these professionals in the process as they would any other key service, such as physiotherapy. In turn, solicitors often tell us that they welcome our advocates' expertise on brain injury support, understanding legislative Codes of Practice, and working well with other professionals in the rehabilitation care team.

They also know that we run specialist training for people working to support those with neurological conditions, which aims to make sure these individuals are heard and protects their rights. More information about this training can be found [here](#).

To find out more about the range of services we offer - including Statutory Advocacy, Spot Contract Advocacy and more - please visit [www.connectedvoice.org.uk/advocacy](http://www.connectedvoice.org.uk/advocacy), or contact us directly at [advocacy@connectedvoice.org.uk](mailto:advocacy@connectedvoice.org.uk) or on 0191 235 7013. ●

Photo: Connected Voice Head of Advocacy Jane Kingston and another of our Independent Advocates in a meeting at One Strawberry Lane, Newcastle upon Tyne



# Why cross-sector collaboration is crucial for digital inclusion

**Nathan Rowland**

Digital Adoption Specialist, Sunderland Software City

**Nathan Rowland, Digital Adoption Specialist at Sunderland Software City, outlines why cross-sector collaboration is so crucial in digital inclusion work**

Following various talks that Sunderland Software City attended at TechNExt, the annual festival celebrating the North East tech sector which we co-organised in June, and from our own experiences supporting VCSE organisations, it is evident that there is a growing recognition of the need to embrace digital adoption across the VCSE sector.

In the North East, VCSE organisations of all sizes have shown a real willingness to improve their knowledge and build their confidence around both new and established technologies. However,

**“ It is evident that there is a growing recognition of the need to embrace digital adoption across the VCSE sector.**

despite this enthusiasm, many still feel somewhat hesitant, often due to past experiences of poorly implemented technology projects and being ‘burned’ one too many times.

As mentioned, one of the key challenges for VCSE organisations has been a legacy of failed or incomplete digital initiatives. These situations often leave organisations unsure of what went wrong and, crucially, how they might approach digital solutions more safely

and incrementally in the future. This lack of confidence in adopting new technologies is particularly concerning as the pace of innovation continues to accelerate, and VCSE organisations can easily find themselves out of their depth, overwhelmed by the very tools designed to support them.

Part of the solution to these challenges lies in fostering long-term collaboration between sectors. Companies in the tech sector possess the knowledge and expertise to help the VCSE sector navigate digital transformation, but this expertise is often locked away in commercial ventures.

By building lasting relationships between local infrastructure organisations and tech experts, we can bridge this gap, enabling the VCSE sector to benefit from shared knowledge, insights, and experience. This could create an ecosystem for sustainable support, rather than the short-termism of one-off projects.

Connected Voice is particularly well positioned to facilitate these cross-sector collaborations. And, by bringing the right people together, we can develop a structured approach where VCSE organisations not only have access to the technology they need but also receive guidance on how to implement and sustain it effectively.

A more strategic, structured intervention - one that encourages continuous learning and digital upskilling - would go a long way towards ensuring that the communities our VCSE organisations support are not left behind in this increasingly digital age.

“A more strategic, structured intervention would go a long way towards ensuring that the communities our VCSE organisations support are not left behind in this increasingly digital age.”

more effectively, ensuring that no-one - especially the most vulnerable among us - is excluded from the opportunities that technology brings.

To find out more about how Sunderland Software City supports digital inclusion through their work, visit [www.sunderlandsoftwarecity.com](http://www.sunderlandsoftwarecity.com)

To find out more about our digital inclusion work in Newcastle and Gateshead here at Connected Voice, visit [www.connectedvoice.org.uk/health-equity](http://www.connectedvoice.org.uk/health-equity) ●

Ultimately, by working together across sectors, we can support digital inclusion



# Connecting social enterprise to specialist support

Jenny Forrester  
Sector Connector Coordinator,  
Connected Voice



**Jenny Forrester recounts a recent success story for our Sector Connector programme, in which we connected a social enterprise to specialist support**

Connected Voice's Sector Connector programme offers VCSE organisations the opportunity to benefit from skilled in-kind support from the local business community by seeking out relevant expertise and making connections. The skilled volunteering involved can take the form of mentoring sessions, training, or even just advice.

Primary Enterprise World North East recently got in touch with Sector Connector as they were keen to develop a sponsorship brochure to attract new partnerships and help generate funds.

**“The skilled volunteering involved can take the form of mentoring sessions, training, or even just advice.”**

Primary Enterprise World is a not-for-profit social enterprise that educates young people through the delivery of interactive and engaging programmes using real-life contexts.

The Sector Connector programme introduced CEO of Primary Enterprise World, Alison Wilkinson, to local award-winning communications and PR consultant Jule Wilson, who has a wealth of experience helping charities write and deliver their communications strategy.

Jule was able to advise on content and imagery to help convey the essence of the organisation to their target audience. Alison and Jule were also able

to come together again at a later date to complete text amends and review the final version, and Alison was delighted with the outcome. She was quoted as saying: “This was a fantastic opportunity for Primary Enterprise World to work with Jule to help create a sponsorship package for potential sponsors. Jule’s vast knowledge and experience in this field helped guide us to what potential businesses would look for and gave us a better understanding going forward. Thank you, Jule and Jenny, for giving up your time to assist us, as by doing this you have played an important part in making a difference to young people’s lives.”

Jule also enjoyed helping Primary Enterprise World, and being part of the Sector Connector programme more broadly. She wrote to Connected Voice saying: “It was a privilege to offer my skills to support Primary Enterprise World to change more young lives with their comprehensive enterprise education programme, by helping Alison and her team to better capture the attention of potential sponsors and tell their story more powerfully. This is the sort of work I really enjoy doing and it demonstrates how the impact of even light-touch amends can be huge for organisations like Alison’s. Jenny from the Connected Voice team also helped make the process straightforward and comfortable for both of us.”

If you have any questions about skilled volunteering, please contact Jenny Forrester at [jenny.forrester@connectedvoice.org.uk](mailto:jenny.forrester@connectedvoice.org.uk) ●

# Spotlight: Muckle LLP



Muckle LLP is a successful law firm which has been operating in Newcastle since 1920. They also have a hub in Cumbria.

[www.muckle-llp.com](http://www.muckle-llp.com)

## What does your organisation do?

Muckle LLP is a highly successful commercial law firm based in Newcastle, with a hub in Cumbria, too. We've called the North East home for a long time, and have been operating as a law firm in Newcastle since 1920! Fast-forward to 2024, and we still predominantly work out of a single-site office in the city, helping clients (both local and national) with their legal needs across many areas of law.

We pride ourselves on our down-to-earth and friendly approach that prioritises straightforward, responsive and professional advice, as well as the understanding that service and client relationships are crucial to our success.

One of the many sectors we support, and one in which we're seeing a lot of growth and opportunity, is charities and social enterprises. In fact, our group of lawyers who specialise and work with charities and social enterprises is the largest team of its kind in the North East.

Our charities group, led by charity law experts, provides advice on all aspects of charity law and regulation. Thanks to the diverse legal specialisms of the group, we can also support clients' wider needs through employment, real estate/property, data protection, intellectual property, disputes,

banking, and corporate law.

Our work is vital because it enables charities and social enterprises to focus on their core missions while we take care of the legal aspects. The laws for charities and social enterprises can be complex, so we support our clients in ensuring their compliance with regulations and protection from legal risks, ultimately helping them operate compliantly, and more effectively and sustainably.

Aside from our fee-earning work, we have a genuine passion for making a positive impact on the communities and people we serve.

**“ We have a genuine passion for making a positive impact on the communities and people we serve. ”**

From volunteering to providing funding through our grant-giving, being a responsible business is at the heart of everything we do. We are a legal business with a conscience.

We are proud to be a B Corp Certified law firm - the first law firm in the North East and Cumbria to achieve this certification. B Corps are companies verified by B Lab to meet high standards of social and environmental performance, transparency, and accountability, balanced with profitability. B Corps are redefining what success looks like in business, modelling the kind of organisations we need to create an inclusive, equitable and regenerative economic system.

Every new B Corp demonstrates that businesses thrive when they act for people, communities and the planet.

Our commitment to the sector is further demonstrated through our free bi-monthly e-newsletter, the launch of our podcast 'Charity Matters', and our firm-wide commitment to pro bono work. Some of our lawyers have also proudly featured on the inaugural Pro Bono Recognition List of England and Wales.

### **Tell us about your key projects**

We support charities and social enterprises operating across the entire charity and not-for-profit sector, and also have particular specialisms in community sports, education, arts, culture and heritage. Generally speaking, if a charity or social enterprise has a legal query, chances are we will have seen it before and be able to help! So do get in touch.

We support over 400 active charity clients nationwide. We work with charities and social enterprises of all sizes, including national organisations such as the Football Foundation and Parkrun Global, and regional charities like CHUF and Tyneside Cinema, along with the regional Community Foundations, and local charities supporting their communities.

A particular highlight for us this year has been advising our long-standing client The Alnwick Garden Trust on Lilidorei, the largest play structure in Europe. We have

have been advising the charity on this large-scale multi-year project for several years across a wide range of practice areas.

We also featured Lilidorei on a recent podcast episode, where we were joined by Mark Brassell (Chief Executive Officer of The Alnwick Garden Trust), who discussed what charity leaders need to be thinking about when planning a major capital project.

### **What do people say about your organisation?**

**“ Thank you deeply and sincerely for the work that you conducted on the charity’s behalf. I can’t imagine what it would have been like with different people. They would have had the legal knowledge, of course, but it was such a unique and intense situation that needed solicitors with emotional intelligence as well as legal expertise. You provided both and, particularly for me, that was deeply appreciated.**

**from the Chair of a regional charity**

“ As someone who’s worked for a range of charities, including a multi-million-pound national charity and smaller charities like the one I’m in now, this type of pro bono support is not only appreciated but vital to the success and continued operation of charities like ours, and ultimately the people and other causes our communities are helping.

from the Manager of a local charity

“ I wanted to say a huge thank you to you on behalf of the trustees. We have employed you for your services, but you added additional humanity to our dealings; coupled with your excellent advice and prompt responses and reminders, we have finally crossed the finish line.

from the Chair of a regional charity

Contact details for Muckle LLP:

[www.muckle-llp.com](http://www.muckle-llp.com)

[advice@muckle-llp.com](mailto:advice@muckle-llp.com)

0191 211 7777 ●



Photo: Some of the team from Muckle LLP pictured in their colourful office space in Newcastle upon Tyne

# RBC Brewin Dolphin: Together We're Stronger

**Jeffrey Ball**  
Investment Manager, RBC  
Brewin Dolphin



**Jeffrey Ball, Investment Manager at RBC Brewin Dolphin, reflects on the importance of collaboration with infrastructure organisations like Connected Voice, and why connecting people and ideas is at the heart of making an impact**

Why do we get involved with charities? It's a question with a thousand different answers that, in the end, are all the same. A moment of clarity, a spark of belief. You think, "I can make a difference". And suddenly, you're in.

What I am sure of is that no-one jumps into charity work thinking: "I can't wait to hear stock market updates from RBC Brewin Dolphin". That's not the magic, and we know it.

**“We've worked with charities for decades, managing investments and helping them make the most of what they have.**

And that's fine. For us, the magic is in the connection. The idea that what we do - managing investments, offering advice, developing trustees - can help charities do the work that matters. It's the same instinct that drives us all, to use what we're good at to make things better. For us, it's about building relationships. It always has been.

At RBC Brewin Dolphin, we've been at this a while. Since 1762, actually. We've worked with charities for decades, managing investments and helping them make the most of what they have. But it has always been about more than the money. Yes, we're good at making funds

work harder, but it's the relationships, the conversations, and the knowledge we can bring that really adds value.

That's why our support of Connected Voice is so important to us. Based just a short walk from our own office in Newcastle, Connected Voice is an infrastructure charity, and they are what makes this region special. They're the glue that holds the charity sector together, helping us all navigate the tricky waters of governance, fundraising, compliance and more. When we get asked questions outside our realm of expertise, we simply point people towards their front door. We know they'll help.

## **It's about being connected**

There's something about the North East. The friendliness, the willingness to support one another. It makes building networks here easier, and more meaningful too. Charities are full of good people trying to do good things, and when we come together, we're stronger. That's the beauty of supporting Connected Voice - it allows us to make an even bigger impact by combining what we do best with their deep understanding of how charities thrive.

For us, making an impact isn't just about investments. It's about being relevant, useful, expert, and accessible. No trustee

ever looks at the mountains of financial data we comb through every day and feels a pang of jealousy. But they know that having us on their side means they can focus on their mission, while we take care of the investments. It's about trust.

**“Charities are full of good people trying to do good things, and when we come together, we're stronger.”**

There's also a growing movement towards responsible investment - investing in a way that's not just about profit, but about positive change. It's something we believe in, that's possible even for smaller charities here in the North East. It's a conversation that's happening more and more.

### **What does “acceptable level of risk” really mean?**

When we talk about investments, it always comes back to maximising returns at an acceptable level of risk. For charities, this is more than just financial. It's about ethics, reputation, and public perception. We could bring a portfolio full of investments in alcohol, tobacco and gambling and say, “look, it'll make you more money”. But what's the cost? Charities can't afford to be associated with areas that don't align with their values. So, it's our job to find that balance - to help them invest in a way that works financially, without compromising who they are.

And that's where collaboration comes

in again. We're not just ticking boxes. We're sitting down with charities, understanding their goals, their challenges, and helping them navigate a complex landscape. That's why Connected Voice is such a valuable ally. Their expertise in the nitty-gritty of running charities allows us to do our job better, and together, we're helping charities in the North East not just to survive, but to thrive.

So, while Connected Voice have taken ownership of the Sector Connector mantle - a great service worth checking out - it's a phrase we use privately for ourselves, too. Being a connector means knowing when to step back, when to introduce the right people, and when to let others take the lead. It's about quiet support, a steady hand, and a shared goal. Together we're stronger. And that's what matters most.

**“It's about quiet support, a steady hand, and a shared goal.”**

Jeffrey Ball is an investment manager in RBC Brewin Dolphin's North East Charity Team. To find out more about how they can help your charity, visit [www.brewin.co.uk/charities](http://www.brewin.co.uk/charities), or email [jeffrey.ball@brewin.co.uk](mailto:jeffrey.ball@brewin.co.uk)

*The value of investments, and any income from them, can fall and you may get back less than you invested. We will only be bound by specific investment restrictions which have been requested by you and agreed by us ●*

## Contact us

### Connected Voice

Support and  
Development

Expert support services that enable voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations to set up, be sustainable and informed, achieve their objectives and come together.

[connect@connectedvoice.org.uk](mailto:connect@connectedvoice.org.uk)  
0191 235 7021

### Connected Voice

Advocacy

Free professional support to individuals to help them be aware of their rights and choices, make informed decisions, advocate for themselves and facilitate their voices being heard.

[advocacy@connectedvoice.org.uk](mailto:advocacy@connectedvoice.org.uk)  
0191 235 7013

### Connected Voice

Business  
Services

Quality and cost-effective financial support services that meet the growing needs of charities, community organisations and social enterprises.

[cbsteam@connectedvoice.org.uk](mailto:cbsteam@connectedvoice.org.uk)  
0191 235 7020

### Connected Voice

Haref

Working with communities and organisations throughout Newcastle and Gateshead to reduce health inequalities linked to ethnicity and culture.

[haref@connectedvoice.org.uk](mailto:haref@connectedvoice.org.uk)  
0191 235 7022

### Connected Voice

Health Equity

Connecting charities and community organisations to health services to improve digital inclusion, mental health support and social prescribing.

0191 235 7022

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

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### Connected Voice

Volunteering

Supporting volunteering across Newcastle and Gateshead through employee volunteering (Sector Connector), promoting volunteering opportunities and offering advice.

[volunteering@connectedvoice.org.uk](mailto:volunteering@connectedvoice.org.uk)  
0191 235 7038 (Gateshead Volunteer Centre)  
0191 235 7039 (Sector Connector Newcastle)