

MID DECEMBER 2008 - MID FEBRUARY 2009

Season's Greetings

to all our readers from the staff of Community Action Northumberland.
CAN offices will be closed at noon on Wednesday 24th December and will re-open on Monday 5th January.

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Community Action
Northumberland



NEWS

PUBLISHED BY COMMUNITY ACTION NORTHUMBERLAND, TOWER BUILDINGS, 9 OLDGATE, MORPETH, NORTHUMBERLAND NE61 1PY. TEL. 01670 517178

A RANGE OF OPPORTUNITIES



Presentation of the Calor Village of the Year shield. L to R: Alan Hedley, Chris O'Bee of Calor, His Grace the Duke of Northumberland, Margaret Williams, Norman Hooks, Cllr Julia Sayce and President of SICA, Mike Richardson all of Stocksfield.

COMMUNITY ACTION NORTHUMBERLAND'S AGM this year took place on 5 November in Stocksfield Institute. It was Bob Langley's last AGM in his role as Chairman of CAN's Executive Committee. As well as celebrating past achievements and acknowledging the instability and anxiety caused by uncertainties over funding, he also pointed the way forward for his successors. Here is an extract from his presentation:

The 'changing and shifting scheme' does create anxieties, but it is one which presents a range of opportunities which connect directly with CAN's vision of communities in Northumberland that are vibrant, inclusive, confident, effective and capable of sustaining themselves.

Perhaps the basic starting point for us now is the question: in the light of all the changes, what are the priorities in realising that vision which are not being tackled elsewhere, and in relation to which our commitment to local community development, promoting collaboration and networking and influencing decisions-makers can be fruitfully exercised?

Three areas occur immediately to me. Two of them follow closely on from initiatives in which we are already involved. The first is the continuing support for the VCS's engagement with the new partnership structures at local, area and county levels. If the vision of vibrant, inclusive, self-sustaining communities which is part of the new Council's vision too, is to be realised, there is a huge amount to be done in the development of inclusive community forums and of community planning. CAN knows about these things. It has been doing it for years. If the vision of partnership working at every level is to be a reality, the involvement of the VCS at every level is crucial to its success. Again we have been doing it. We have the networks and contacts.

The second is linked closely to the first. With the removal of the district authorities, the role of parish councils becomes ever more important. Again here is an opportunity for CAN through its longstanding NALC contacts and the work already done by David and Louise to support and encourage existing and new parish councils to develop the good work in leadership they already do and to work effectively within the wider partnership structures.

The third area is one which has not been mentioned so far- that of rural policy and advocacy. Here our role as a Rural Community Council would come more to the fore. Again with the shift of emphasis in DEFRA's concerns, a gap is opening up which needs to be filled. A recent Government Select Committee Report accuses DEFRA of marginalising rural affairs and urges them to produce a strategy for working with Regional Development Agencies, ONE in our case, local authorities and rural community councils to ensure that it achieves the best possible outcomes for rural areas. Again we have the local experience and the regional contacts.

In each case the opportunity is there and others out there are saying that the need is great.

Together with our continuing commitment to the support of local community initiatives, these opportunities provide the

context for CAN's new business plan which is now being prepared.

This AGM in particular was marked by thanks and acknowledgements. As well as thanking Bob for his enthusiastic and thoughtful support as Chairman over the last three years, the meeting paid tribute to 3 trustees who were standing down after between 14 and 16 years of service, and to Alan Hedley, CAN's retiring Assistant Director/Village Halls' Adviser. The meeting also gave special thanks to the Duke of Northumberland, for completing the first 15 years of what we hope will be a long and continuing commitment to CAN's work in his role as President.

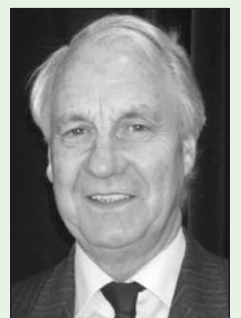
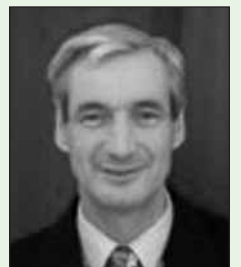
The AGM also: confirmed the new composition of CAN's Executive Committee; agreed some amendments to the Constitution, some of which will be implemented next April to coincide with the new Unitary Authority; considered and received the Annual Report and the Audited Accounts; congratulated the community of Stocksfield for winning the Village of the Year competition; and watched and discussed two DVDs concerning climate change and sustainable community initiatives.

Hard copies of CAN's Annual Report and of the full Audited Accounts are available on request from Tower Buildings. The full text of Bob Langley's presentation can be viewed on the CAN website www.ca-north.org.uk

CHANGE AT THE TOP

AGMS ALWAYS MARK a change in some of the members and officers in an organisation, but CAN's AGM this year saw some significant changes, as several long-standing and valued volunteers reached the end of their terms of office.

From our Executive Committee, three Trustees stood down after between 14 and 16 years' service. With a diverse experience which spanned from the Pre-school Playgroup Association to the national Parole Board, Sally Black served CAN in a variety of capacities, including Chairman, and she took a particularly keen interest in staffing matters: not only recruitment but also well-being, and trustee relationships. David Lockie, originally representing Berwick Borough Council, provided solid input on rural affairs and a far-Northern perspective from his Glendale farming background. David Woodard, representing NALC, brought a range of experience from the parish council world and wider local government scene, and provided a link with CAN's coalfield villages work in eastern Castle Morpeth.



Committee Chairman Bob Langley has now handed the reins to former Vice-Chairman George Scott. Bob remains on the committee, and will continue to play an active role both in CAN and in the Northumberland Strategic Partnership.

After many decades of solid service, covering a variety of walks of Northumberland life, Viscount Ridley retired as a CAN Vice-President. In reluctantly agreeing to his retirement, CAN's Executive Committee praised his dedication, enthusiasm and support in so many fields: the voluntary and community sector, local government, his Lord Lieutenantcy role, the University, nature conservation and much more.

Details of CAN's new trustees will be featured in the next edition of CAN News.

MEET THE FUNDERS

AWARDS FOR ALL PROGRAMME CHANGES



FOLLOWING ON FROM THE SUCCESS of last year's series of events, Community Action Northumberland put together another series of "Meet the Funders".

The events took place in November with funders such as the Big Lottery Fund and Community Foundation serving Tyne and Wear and Northumberland coming along to give support and advice on funding for community projects.

The three events, held at the Auction Mart, Hexham, on 6th November, at Alnwick Rugby Club, on 13 November and at Morpeth Rugby Club on 18 November attracted



representatives from more than 100 voluntary and community groups, who were able to ask questions of the funders face to face about their own specific projects and how to fund those projects. Most people found the events useful. Comments included: "(The) opportunity to put a face to the "corporate" name and ask specific questions some of which will save me lots of time and wasted effort".

There was also a workshop at each event on making better funding applications. The Hexham and Morpeth workshops were presented by David Carnaffan of BBC Children in Need and the Alnwick workshop by Penny Vowles of Northern Rock Foundation. Most of those who attended the workshops found them useful. Although some people felt that the BBC Children in Need workshop was too specific, one person commented that "(the) Children in Need workshop clarified a number of queries I had re (the) definition of disadvantage".

If you would like to be added to Community Action Northumberland's invitation list for future events please contact Jane Hart on 01434 607871 or via email to janehart@ca-north.org.uk

THE AWARDS FOR ALL programme is going to change its format from April 2009.

Awards for All is currently funded jointly by Arts Council England, Big Lottery Fund, Heritage Lottery Fund and Sport England. From 1 April 2009 each of the lottery distributors supporting the scheme will have their own small grants programmes up and running, meaning that applicants will have four separate and more tailored programmes of funding to apply to. As of April 2009 the Big Lottery Fund will run their own, new version of Awards for All, awarding grants of £300 to £10,000 to local communities for 2009-10.

The programme will retain its current broad eligibility and straightforward application process. It will focus on four outcomes, which will cover a very wide variety of projects:

- *People have better chances in life, with better access to training and development to improve their life skills*
- *Stronger communities, with more active citizens, working together to tackle their problems*
- *Improved rural and urban environments, which communities are better able to enjoy*
- *Healthier and more active people and communities.*

Projects with a specific art, sport or heritage outcome should direct their applications to other funders' small grants programmes; see www.lotteryfunding.org.uk for more information about these programmes as and when it becomes available.

From April 2010, small grants will form part of the new funding framework (which is the subject of a consultation that launched on 17 November see www.big-thinking.org.uk for more information). Please note that applications can still be made under the current arrangements until 31 March 2009.

CAN is working with the North East regional team and will organise a briefing event on BIG's revised programme in the New Year so that, before it opens for applications in April 2009, you will know how it differs from the current programme - the date/s will be in the next edition of Community Action News.

Community Forums

FOLLOWING the County Council's endorsement in September, work is progressing again on the formation of community forums, based on what were previously called Belonging Community areas. A variety of meetings of parish councils, development trusts and community organisations throughout much of the county have now received briefings on the current thinking, and the next stage will be to set up meetings to create the forums. A new training package and induction process is being developed for members of these new forums. Although this process is taking rather longer than originally expected, it is hoped that there will be forums in all 27 currently-defined belonging community areas, in the coming months.

Commission of the Compact Awards

HOT FOOT FROM THE VERY FIRST regional VCS awards event held in Sunderland, where Northumberland was shortlisted in the Compact of the Year category, the county had even greater success the following week at a national awards ceremony in London.

Janice Rose, the acting executive director of the NSP, received a Compact Excellence Award in the category of Compact Champion of the Year. This was in recognition of the leadership and commitment she had shown in establishing and nurturing the Northumberland Compact - the agreement setting out the shared commitments and guidelines for working between the voluntary & community sector and public bodies.

The awards ceremony is held annually between 1-8 November which is now recognised as 'Compact Week'. This year had more nominations than ever before and the ceremony took place in the prestigious BAFTA building more commonly associated with film and television awards.

Said Sector Development Officer George Courtice: "Every new initiative needs someone to drive it forward in its early years. Janice has done just that for

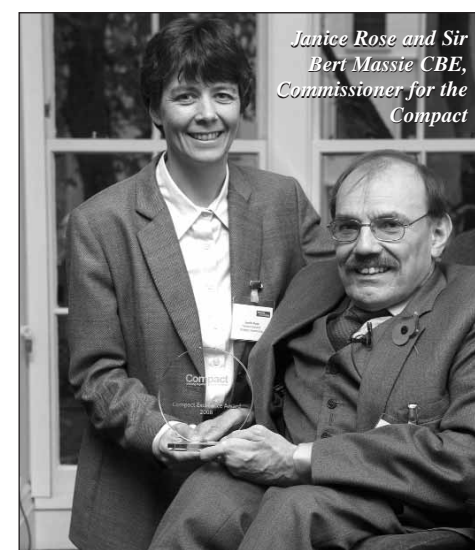
Northumberland's Compact and to great effect. The fact that she is highly respected and has the ear of senior people in both the public and voluntary sectors, made her contribution that much more valuable."

The Awards were presented by Sir Bert Massie CBE, Commissioner for the Compact, at a ceremony held to recognise the good work taking place across the country. Sir Bert said: "All our finalists demonstrate how the Compact can be a living document that influences action and encourages both sectors to work together to improve and enhance the services and support they offer to the public."

Cllr Alan Thompson, George Courtice and Lynda Watson, the Compact & Contracts Officer accompanied Janice Rose and were all delighted with the outcome.

There followed an early evening reception at Downing Street celebrating the 10th year of the Compact. Recently

appointed Minister of the Third Sector, Kevin Brennan MP, relayed good wishes from Prime Minister Gordon Brown and confirmed the government's commitment to the Compact.



COUNCIL SUPPORT FOR COMMUNITY GROUPS

SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS IS BEING MADE to confirm the financial support which voluntary and community groups will receive from the new Northumberland authority next year. Last summer, the County Council declared its intention to continue for next year (2009-10) the level of annual funding that voluntary bodies currently receive from the present principal authorities in Northumberland. Excluding certain contract payments and Children's Services VCS grants, this is approximately £1.7m. Compilation of a new database of prospective VCS grant recipients is well advanced and it is hoped to confirm to each voluntary body their prospective funding for next year before Christmas. Offers of prospective funding will, of course, be subject to the Council's overall medium term strategy and budget for 2009-10 being agreed in mid-February.

In addition, provision is being considered for a community chest: a grants scheme into which VCS bodies will be able to bid, for new or short-term pieces of work. The community chest could be allocated by the Authority's three Area Committees.

While these proposals should give some reassurance on funding for next year, the authority is also proposing a review of expenditure for future years. This is likely to result in a clearer focus on how the expenditure will achieve the council's and partners' objectives. It's also hoped that this can be agreed on a longer terms basis and move away from short term, annual budgeting.

As well as these programmes of direct financial support, policies are being developed regarding indirect financial help for the VCS. A new scheme of charitable rates relief is being finalised, which will enable a wide range of charitable property (such as village halls, community centres, VCS offices, etc) to continue to enjoy up to 100% rates relief: not only the mandatory 80%, but also the additional discretionary 20% relief. This will require a new application and assessment procedure, which will be launched early in 2009. VCS support bodies, including CAN and the Centres of Voluntary Service, will be working closely with council staff to support VCS applicants through the process.

GROUPS GROW WITH GRASSROOTS

£28,542 OF FUNDING has been awarded to 10 organisations in the first two months of the Grassroots Grants programme.

The level of grants awarded ranges from £583 to Spital Community Association for the purchase of tables for the community hall, to £5,000 awarded to Bomasund Welfare Cricket Club for replacement roofing and guttering for the cricket pavilion.

Grants from £250 to £5,000 are available to community organisation that have been in existence for over a year and have an average annual income of less than £20k over the last 3 years.

The Grassroots grants are intended to respond to the diverse needs of community organisations and be very wide ranging including the purchase of equipment, costs for putting on events, community activities, or training and staffing costs.

The fund is managed by the Community Foundation serving Tyne & Wear and Northumberland with groups supported in making applications by 3 support organisations CAN, Wansbeck CVS and CVA Blyth Valley.

For more information on Grassroots and to download an application form, visit the Community Foundation's website at www.communityfoundation.org.uk.

Alternatively contact one of the support organisations who will be happy to discuss your project and help you to make an application. A significant amount of funding is still available, so groups are urged to make applications as soon as possible.

Work is also progressing to address other indirect financial benefits for the VCS. These include the charges and discounts relating to the collection of refuse (recyclable and non-recyclable) from VCS property, where currently there is a mixed picture from district to district, and also the use by VCS groups of council property, usually on a sessional basis. It's too early at this stage to be clear of the outcome of the work.

Finally, the detailed staff structure of the new Authority is beginning to take shape, subject to consultation with staff and unions.

A wide range of services and directorates will continue to engage directly with the VCS: for example, leisure services, regeneration, youth work, etc. In addition a new Policy and Partnership Team, to be headed by Stuart Lawson, will lead and co-ordinate the Authority's relationship with the VCS, as well as with parish councils, community forums, partnerships and stakeholder organisations

Details of the emerging structure and policies of the new Authority can be viewed on the website www.northumberland.gov.uk

REGIONAL AWARD for Inspirational Champion

CONGRATULATIONS must go to Declan Baharini, manager of the Wansbeck Initiative (Wansbeck's Local Strategic Partnership), who won the Sector Champion Award at the prestigious North East VCS Regional award ceremony hosted by VONNE (Voluntary Organisations Network North East) in Sunderland at the end of October.

After an initial struggle for recognition, the voluntary and community sector is now fully included in all levels of the partnership operating in Wansbeck which has benefited hugely from that engagement. Voluntary organisations are leading on the delivery of several projects which is in no small way due to Declan's drive and enthusiasm. It also emphasises the contribution the VCS can make to deliver the outcomes of Local Strategic Partnerships if given sufficient support and commitment.

Ian Dodds of Government Office North East presented the award and confirmed Declan was "an inspirational champion of the sector who has delivered measurable impact".



Sector Champion Winner: pictured L to R: Ian Dodds - Head of Community Policy Government Office North East, Declan Baharini - Wansbeck Initiative, Dame Tanni Grey-Thompson seated at front.

Tendering as a Consortium

Training Opportunity

Date: Thursday 22 January 2009
Time: 9.30am - 4.00pm
Venue: Age Concern, The Round House, Ashington
Trainer: Lloyd Davis, Tendering for care
Cost: £50 (contribution towards cost)

Who should attend:

- VCS organisation who are, or are considering delivery of public sector contracts
- VCS organisations interested in setting up a consortium or who are likely to sub-contract through a consortium

Tendering as a consortium could be a successful route for contracting for the delivery of public services increasingly dominated by the view that the future consists of 'larger, fewer contracts, covering larger geographical areas'.

No matter what size your organisation, you may have considered tendering for public service contracts. What's involved in becoming part of a consortium as a sub-contractor?

This training will ensure you are in a better position to respond to future procurement opportunities.

- The rules on consortium tendering
- Consortium models, sub-contracting and mergers
- The standards which might be required by a lead contractor and/or consortium members
- Options for forming a consortium
- Avoiding potential risks
- New possibilities and opportunities which consortium tendering is opening up for third sector organisations both large and small
- Consortium and sub-contracting options for your organisation

Feedback from 'Public Sector Contracting' training held in July 2008 suggested that there was a growing interest to explore consortium and sub contracting from VCS organisations in Northumberland. Please take advantage of this opportunity to receive nationally recognised training with a regional context.

If you would like to find out more, or make a booking, please contact: Lynda Watson, Community Action Northumberland, Tel 01670 500815 or email

lyndawatson@ca-north.org.uk
or visit our website:
www.northumberlandvcs.org.uk

Burial Information Session - November 7th



A SECOND Burial Information event was held on Friday November 7th at Stanington Village Hall. The session was primarily for Parish Councils, but open to anyone involved with the management of cemeteries or burial grounds and was arranged by Louise Currie, NALC and Susanne Williams, Administration and Bereavement Manager at Castle Morpeth Borough Council.

Steve Clarehugh, proprietor of Northumberland Woodland Burials gave a fascinating presentation about his Woodland Burial site near Felton and Jim Thompson of Teleshore Ltd gave a detailed talk about Health and Safety matters, such as cemetery safety, duty of care, grave digging and other works and there was plenty of time for questions and queries. Seventeen people came along, from parish councils all over the county and the morning was a huge success. Yet again, the evaluation sheets proved that the session was of great value to the attendees. Thanks to all who came along.

Northumberland Pre-school Learning Alliance encourages...

FOLLOWING ON from the successful 'Healthy Smiles for Life' events, the Northumberland Pre-school Learning Alliance is busy planning more interactive information sessions centred around speech and language development for very young children. Continuing on our healthy theme these new events will be called 'Healthy Chatter' and will be held during the Spring Term 2009.

The Alliance Baby and Toddler Group Development team, Judith Bailey and Sandra Smales, are busy planning FUN practical activities that will encourage very young children to become effective communicators as well as support parents/carers with this learning through everyday play.

Also providing information at these events will be Health Service speech and language therapists and Northumberland Early Years and Childcare Service. Due to their popularity last time, the shops from North Tyneside and Gateshead branches of the Pre-school Learning alliance will also make a welcome return.

It is hoped that a grant will be secured to help with the cost of the events and provide a free goodie-bag for everyone attending!

Further information and details of the events will be advertised locally and sent to all Northumberland Baby and Toddler Groups in January 2009 or contact Judith Bailey on 07925 115667, Sandra Smales on 07934 499409 or Debora Lumley on 01670 511522.

PAY SETTLEMENT

COUNCIL SALARIES - including the recommendations for parish council clerks - are the result of national negotiations between the NJC - National Joint Council - and major unions. Negotiations this year have been protracted and not fully conclusive, and so they have been referred for arbitration. This will take time to be concluded, and so a set of interim recommendations have been made.

Recommendations re clerks' pay are available from David Francis at Tower Buildings.

WHAT'S IN A CUP OF TEA?

NEPACS is a long-established regional organisation which provides support for prisoners and their families. At prison establishments throughout the north east, NEPACS staff and volunteers run Visitors' Centres to welcome friends and families of serving prisons, provide play areas for the children, and serve refreshments for families within the prison visits rooms. We are always looking to recruit new volunteers, and we have a number of vacancies at HMP Acklington and HMYOI Castington in Northumberland.

NEPACS tea-bars are an integral part of a visit to prison and the service they provide is really appreciated by the prisoners and their families. If NEPACS staff and volunteers weren't there, the options would be no refreshments or vending machines on the back wall. Instead, visitors are greeted by a smile from a volunteer behind the tea-bar and know that they can count on a sympathetic, listening ear.

Families come into the visits hall and head for the tea-bar to purchase their refreshments before the prisoners join them. Sharing a cup of tea and a biscuit is a way of rebuilding family bonds that have been disrupted by a prison sentence. Visiting times are limited so it is very important that they are served as quickly as possible as not to encroach on their precious time together.

NEPACS staff serve with a smile, listen to families' requests and appreciate their comments on where we can improve our service. We are restricted by security as to what we can sell from the tea-bars but have, in the past few years, achieved many new healthy options.

One visitor commented, "You make what is a very daunting experience into a pleasant one - thank you for being here for us". Another said, "I sometimes feel so alone when I visit him but you always smile and treat me as if I'm a person not a criminal - thank you."

If you would like to become a volunteer, NEPACS will offer training, travel expenses and help with filling in the security clearance forms you need to complete before working in a prison. Please get in touch with Christine Morris on 01670 382066 or Sandy Anderson on 0795 1248945 for an informal chat about this opportunity.

TYNEDALE COMMUNITY RADIO

TYNEDALE will get its own radio station in November when TynedaleFM launches on a Restricted Service Licence (RSL), broadcasting on 87.7 FM with a power of 25 watts.

TynedaleFM is the call sign for Tynedale Community Radio, all of whose workers are volunteers, from the presenters, programme producers and technicians to the station managers. The station is temporarily located in Hexham's old swimming pool although its broadcasting facility is on higher ground on the edge of the town. The RSL enables TynedaleFM to broadcast for a month from November 27th to December 24th. If it is judged by Ofcom to be a competent broadcaster, the station will launch its permanent programme in the spring.

Although the station will be broadcasting from Hexham, its programmes will eventually be heard along the Tyne valley, from Prudhoe to Haltwhistle and it is keen to involve communities throughout Tynedale. Even those outside the station's broadcasting range will be able to access programmes over the Internet through its website <http://tynedalefm.org> and plans are already underway to include programmes from the North Tyne and the Allen Valley.

Plans are in progress for programmes to be broadcast during the RSL ranging from recordings of live performances by local bands, through advice sessions, current affairs and news, to local history and storytelling. Music played will cover all musical tastes from classical to country to pop and rock.

"TynedaleFM will be broadcasting around the clock so we are still keen to hear from anyone who is interested in any aspect of running a radio station", said Hilary Carter, leader of the project's steering group. If anyone would like to volunteer, please contact the station through its website at <http://tynedalefm.org/contact/> or phone (01434) 700789 for a volunteers form.



We are seeking

VOLUNTEER ADVISERS & TRUSTEE BOARD MEMBERS

We are always looking for volunteers not only to train as advisers but as Trustee Board members or to help with admin and IT. All we need our volunteers to be is non-judgemental, able to work as part of a team and care about the needs of the community.

Interested?

Contact **Linda Fugill or Tracey Tait** for further information on 01670 516264 Monday to Friday between 10.00am - 2.00pm

Castle Morpeth Citizens' Advice Bureau Tower Buildings, 9 Oldgate, MORPETH, NE61 1PY

The main bureau is open to callers Monday, Tuesday and Friday between 10am and 1pm, and Wednesdays between 10am and 3pm
Telephone 01670 518814

We also offer a number of Outreach sessions in the borough, as follows

Widdrington, Community Centre	10.am - 12 noon	<i>Monday</i>
Ponteland, Merton Hall	10am to 12 noon	<i>Tuesday</i>
Hadston, Community Centre	10.30 to 12.30pm	<i>Wednesday</i>

Specialist Advice can be provided in the following areas;

Debt - (including housing issues and negotiation with creditors) Telephone 01670 510094 & 01670 513853

Disability Rights, Attendance Allowance and Disability Living Allowance - Telephone 01670 505015

Welfare Benefits Advice to Cancer Patients Telephone 01670 512831

WHAT WE DO

Community Action Northumberland provides a range of advice and support services for community and voluntary groups to enable people throughout Northumberland to overcome disadvantages and improve their quality of life. These services include:

- Funding advice
- Management committee development
- Advice on constitutions, charity law and legal structures
- Support for village halls / community buildings
- Project management support
- Local regeneration
- Support for parish councils
- Employment services
- Production of community newspaper

Additionally CAN seeks to

- work in partnership to facilitate the development of new, and to support existing networks of local voluntary and community groups, in order to enable them to be a mechanism for developing collaborative work across the sector.
- influence and work with decision-makers to provide, with partners, conduits for the diverse views of the local voluntary and community sector to be voiced and heard within the decision making structures, regionally and nationally.

CAN is anxious to ensure that it effectively performs these roles and therefore operates a process of continuous evaluation. This requires feedback from our users and partners. Any comments on our performance are not only welcomed but essential to help us to make sure that we are meeting the overall needs of users and maintaining our quality standards.

CAN News is published bi monthly. It contains useful information on sources of advice and funding, helps to alert people to changes in legislation or service provision which may affect them, and passes on ideas and news from one community to another. Contributions and items of informative and newsworthy value are welcomed. Please get in touch with the editor at Tower Buildings, 9 Oldgate, Morpeth, NE61 1PY or email items direct to info@ca-north.org.uk

Copy deadline for the next issue is Tuesday 20th January 2009.

For more information on Community Action check out their website at :

www.ca-north.org.uk

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