navca
local focus national voice

Annual Conference 17th November 2022

Conference write-up

Thinking Space: Tackling poverty locally

King's House Conference Centre, Sidney Street, Manchester, M1 7HB
17th November 2022
9:00am - 4:30pm

Our conference is kindly sponsored by:

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Thank you!

Thank you to everyone who was able to attend our annual conference in Manchester on 17 November 2022. We were excited (and a bit nervous!) to be hosting our first in-person conference in three years, aiming to provide a valuable space for our members to learn, network and to strengthen the voice of local infrastructure.

At the conference, attendees heard from us at NAVCA, with input from our Chair, Judy Robinson, and our CEO, Maddy Desforges. Our two keynote speakers, Greg Fell and Jake Ferguson, shared their valuable perspectives on health inequalities and racism respectively. Attendees had the opportunity to contribute to four workshops, with space to reflect, learn and commit to taking action.

We hope that you enjoyed the conference and the opportunity to network with your peers from other NAVCA member organisations.

On the day

We held our conference at King's House Conference Centre in Manchester. We would like to say a huge thank you to the very helpful staff at the venue, who were always on hand to help us.

The conference was open to all NAVCA members and stakeholders. The conference was kindly sponsored by AideCRM, Volunteer Plus and the National Cyber Security Centre, who also hosted a workshop for attendees. Photographs were taken by Ed Jones and Melody Peacock, two students from Manchester Metropolitan University.

Conference write-up

We welcomed attendees to the conference and handed out name badges, tote bags and personalised schedules for the day. We also gave everyone an action card - a space to write down key actions they will take based on what they learnt in the different workshops at the conference. Lively and productive discussions took place throughout the day with space for networking and our AGM.

Keynote speech: Health inequalities by Greg Fell, Director of Public Health in Sheffield

Key learning points:
- Health is not 'what is the matter' with people, but 'what matters' to people.
- We need to change the status quo when it comes to talking about and acting on health.
- What societal changes should be made now to drastically improve public health?

We know that health is greatly impacted by poverty, and Greg gave the opening keynote speech on broadening our perceptions of what health and health creation are.

Health is not working backwards from avoiding hospital admissions, but needs to be framed as creating health and wellbeing and then working forwards from there. He wants us to see wellbeing as economic, social, ecological and personal.

Inequalities are inherent throughout society including the health system. Austerity and neoliberalism are major contributors to health inequalities, with the privatisation of profit and socialisation of risk.

Workshop: Making the most of an ethnically diverse Britain by Stella Mbubaegbu from the Black Leadership Group

Key learning points:
- Black people, communities and businesses make a huge contribution to society, but this is limited by the effects of entrenched racism.
- We need to be genuinely inclusive rather than tokenistic.
- When it comes to anti-racism, it is better that people are open to exploring their shortcomings.

The core of the presentation focused on the UK's Black Dividend, the contribution of Black people, communities, and businesses, to society. These contributions are limited however by the effects of entrenched racist practices, especially in education.

Stella emphasised the importance of publicity and accountability when it comes to anti-racism and explained that, in order to progress on our own anti-racism journeys, we must be willing to be vulnerable and open to exploring the shortcomings we all have.

Finally, participants were tasked with bringing some action points back home with us so that they could continue their anti-racism journey within their respective organisations.

Trans inclusion is for everyone, hosted by Christopher Owen, Inclusivity Development Manager at Manchester Pride

Key learning points:
- There is a lack of employment opportunities for transgender people, and unemployment can lead to poverty.
- 25% of trans people have experienced homelessness or discrimination when buying or renting property.

This was an incredibly useful, engaging, and thought-provoking session. Christopher made it clear from the start that this workshop was a safe space to not know things and ask questions without judgement. This is particularly important as a lack of confidence in understanding trans issues can lead to a lack of inclusion, even by those with good intentions.

LGBTQ+ inclusion in general is quite common now, but trans inclusion (and work towards it) in particular is still lacking. Transphobia means that no-one, including cisgender people, can safely explore their identity and authentic self-expression.

The group learnt a lot about how we can support trans people in our organisations and in our communities.

Food Insecurity and Cultural Awareness workshop, hosted by Atiha Chaudry from the Rafiki Food Network and Graham Whitham from Greater Manchester Poverty Action

Key learning points:
- Organisations should be culturally aware and sensitive to different needs.
- Organisations should talk to communities and individuals first about what is needed.
- A 'cash first approach' may be most appropriate for some and evidence suggests that it is not misused.

Food insecurity is an important issue in many of the communities that our members work with. Atiha and Graham, who work in Manchester to support vulnerable and marginalised people access food, hosted a workshop on alternative models to foodbanks that seek to empower underrepresented communities and develop capacity and solutions.

Participants shared their own local experiences and solutions of distributing food aid and other support services. The common thread was the importance of talking to individuals and communities about what is needed and what works.

Participants left with a sense of purpose and motivation to do something in their own communities to support food insecurity in a culturally sensitive way.

Health Inequalities workshop, hosted by Hugh Stultz and Christopher Evans from Community Links Bromley

Key learning points:
- Only through effective co–production are the best services designed and the best results achieved for beneficiaries.
- It is important that diverse experiences and stories are told.
- Seek funding for dedicated VCSE representational roles, and where this funding exists use it strategically.

For many of our members, health and wellbeing is a key aspect of their work. This workshop, hosted by a team from NAVCA member Community Links Bromley, explored how people are impacted by health inequalities and what NAVCA members can do to tackle this issue locally.

The group looked at how the development of new Integrated Care Partnerships (ICPs) can help tackle poverty locally, and at the role local infrastructure organisations can play.

The group also looked at how NAVCA might focus its efforts to support members' work to embed the VCSE in new emerging systems, such as facilitating resource-sharing.

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Workshop: Poverty Truth Commissions, hosted by Ali Bodley, Gary Everett and Alison Semmence from York CVS

Key learning points:
- People who have experienced poverty have a central role in achieving change.
- Developing genuine relationships within the Commission is a key part of success.
- Being able to see positive outcomes and action, rather than just financial compensation, is seen as very valuable.

Poverty Truth Commissions seek to answer the question, 'what if people who have experienced poverty were involved in making decisions about tackling poverty?'. Collectively, each local Commission works to understand the nature of poverty, the underlying issues that create poverty and explore creative ways of addressing them.

A PTC seeks to build a relationship between those experiencing poverty and those with power to make a difference. This is not standard coproduction, but involves bringing people together to start by sharing their experiences of poverty.

Many participants left feeling inspired and empowered to set up a Poverty Truth Commission in their local area.

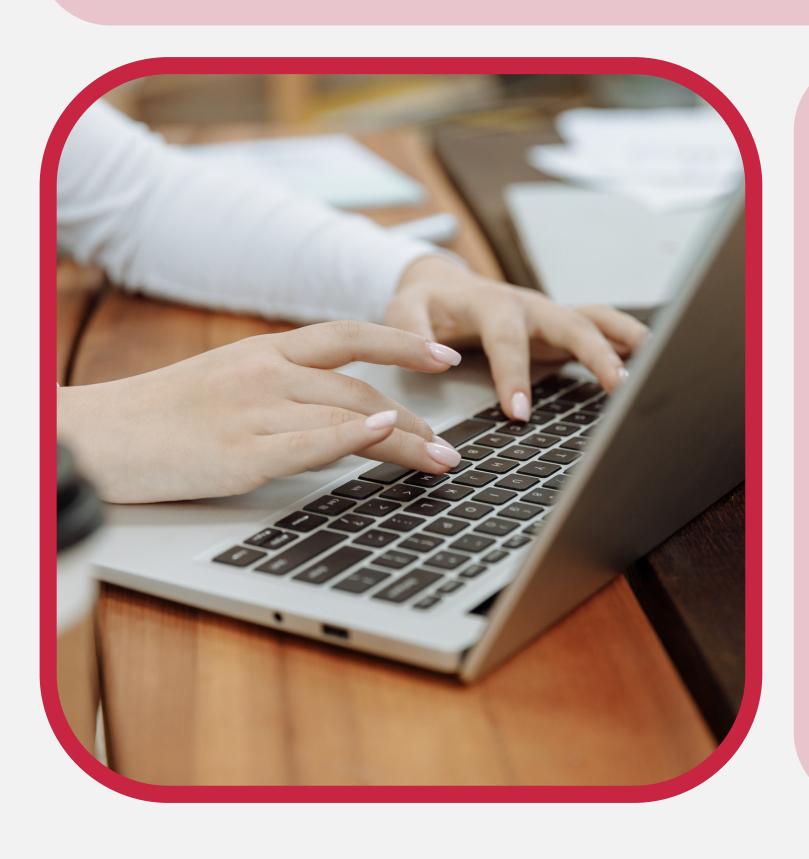# Workshop: Research, hosted by Dr Rob Macmillan from Sheffield Hallam University

Key learning points:
- It is essential to show the value and impact of local infrastructure to funders, VCSE sector and strategic partners.
- There is value in working other members of the NAVCA network to share ideas, good practice and knowledge.

Connecting Locally: local voluntary and community infrastructure in England shows that NAVCA members directly support community based VCSE organisations at place, working in partnership with local councils, health and care systems and other statutory organisations. Local infrastructure organisations give strategic leadership for the VCSE sector and advocate for its role within and contribution to communities and wider systems.

The research paves the way for strategic conversations between local infrastructure, local government, local and national partner organisations, independent funders and policymakers.

Workshop: Keeping your organisation safe, hosted by the National Cyber Security Centre

Key learning points:
- Small charities are often at a higher risk of cyber attack due to limited resources and capacity.
- Maintaining strong cyber security helps improve trust from funders, volunteers and service users.
- The NCSC has lots of useful and quick tips to keep your organisation safe.

Cyber security is important in the context of tackling poverty locally, because NAVCA members and the groups they support are often working with vulnerable people.

If a cyber attack does occur, there can be a loss of trust in the organisation from funders, trustees, volunteers and service users. The recovery process can also be a source of stress for staff and volunteers. It is important for people working in the voluntary and community sector to have an increased understanding of cyber security.

Participants left with some practical tips on how to keep their organisation safe.

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Workshop: Resilience, hosted by Bruce Mann from the National Preparedness Commission

Key learning points:
- People experiencing poverty are also likely to suffer the most during times of crisis.
- Local infrastructure organisations are well-placed to help people during emergencies.
- Organisations should work together and coordinate emergency responses.

In emergencies, such as the pandemic or extreme weather events, it is people in poverty who are likely to suffer most.

One way for NAVCA members to help the most vulnerable and marginalised communities is through involvement in their local resilience forum (LRF).

Local infrastructure can contribute to local risk assessments because they have a good understanding of the communities they work in. As NAVCA members are also well connected to their communities, they can communicate key messages in times of crisis.

Keynote speech: How NAVCA members can proactively develop measures to centre Black voices and radical thinking, by Jake Ferguson, Strategic Advisor at Black Equity Organisation

Key learning points:

- The voluntary and community sector has a key role to play in tackling racism.
- -Black- and Brown-led organisations get a disproportionate amount of funding.
- NAVCA members should reach out to local Black-led organisations.

Jake Ferguson rounded off the conference by giving a keynote speech on how NAVCA members can proactively develop measures to centre Black voices and radical thinking on operations to build wealth and power creation for Black people.

The voluntary and community sector needs to lead on issues of inclusion and addressing racism. Jake gave the example that a disproportionately small number of Black and Brown-led organisations get a fair proportion of funding.

Jake shared a lot of useful tips for NAVCA members, a key one being to reach out to local Black-led organisations to find out how to work together.

Thank you!

The NAVCA staff team would like to say a huge thank you to everyone who made our conference possible. Our sponsors (AideCRM, Volunteer Plus and the National Cyber Security Centre), all our workshop hosts and keynote speakers, our Board of Trustees and the new trustees elected at our AGM, and everyone who attended the conference. We hope you found it as valuable as we did, and we look forward to strengthening our network and building more connections.

From left to right: Alex Boys (Deputy CEO), Lydia Lowther (Projects Officer), Anne-Marie Morrison (Health and Wellbeing Manager), Maddy Desforges (CEO), Emily Lewis (Communications Officer), Conor Smith (Projects Officer), Jill Hopkinson (Policy Manager), Beck Vickers (Resources Officer) and Cheng Ee Kok (Membership Officer).