

Case Study 1: Invigor8 (East)

Over the past 12 months, Sunderland Volunteer Sector Alliance (SVSA) has provided tailored support to Invigor8 North East CIC, helping the organisation strengthen its foundations, expand its network, and secure essential funding to achieve its goals of community development and engagement.

Areas of Support

1:1 Support with a Sector Support Development Worker

SVSA's dedicated Sector Support Development Worker collaborated closely with Invigor8 North East CIC, offering personalised guidance in several key areas:

- **Business Planning Development:** Supported the creation a robust business plan to guide strategic growth and operational decisions.
- **Policy and Procedure Development:** Assisted in developing essential policies, including safeguarding, to ensure compliance and promote best practices.
- **Project Planning and Budgeting:** Supported the development of detailed project plans and associated budgets, enabling structured and effective project execution.
- **Funding Identification and Bid Writing:** Identified relevant funding opportunities and provided comprehensive support in crafting compelling funding applications.

Networking Opportunities

SVSA facilitated meaningful connections for Invigor8 North East CIC through a range of networking opportunities:

- **Face-to-Face Events:** Provided platforms for direct interaction with other community organisations and stakeholders.
- **Volunteer Coordinators Quarterly Events:** Enabled connections with peers and professionals, fostering collaboration and shared learning.
- **Themed Networking Events:** Encouraged relationship-building with other VCSE organisations, broadening Invigor8's network and potential for partnerships.

Training Support

SVSA delivered a variety of training sessions to equip Invigor8 North East CIC with vital skills and knowledge:

- **Bid Writing Training:** Enhanced the organisation's ability to craft strong funding proposals.

- **Governance Structures Training:** Provided insights into effective governance models to improve organisational resilience.
- **Safeguarding Training:** Ensured adherence to safeguarding standards, prioritising the safety of beneficiaries and staff.

Funding Support

SVSA's efforts contributed to Invigor8 North East CIC's funding success:

- **Meet the Funder Events:** Participation in five funder events, enabling direct engagement with funding organisations.
- **Regular Funding Updates:** Access to SVSA's E: Bulletin, providing timely and relevant funding information.

Outcomes

Thanks to SVSA's comprehensive support, Invigo8r North East CIC achieved significant milestones:

- **Stronger Organisational Framework:** Improved governance, safeguarding, and operational structures.
- **Enhanced Project Delivery:** Clear and actionable project plans with well-defined budgets.
- **Increased Funding Success:** Leveraged SVSA's guidance to secure vital funding for key initiatives.
- **Expanded Network:** Built connections with other VCSE organisations and stakeholders, laying the groundwork for future collaborations.
- **Skill Development:** Improved internal capacity through targeted training sessions.

Conclusion

SVSA's multi-faceted support has positioned Invigor8 North East CIC for continued growth and success. By strengthening their organisational foundation, facilitating funding opportunities, and fostering valuable relationships, SVSA has empowered Invigor8 to effectively serve their community and achieve their goals.

Case Study 2: District Youth ABC (Washington)

Overview

District Youth ABC is a long-established community boxing club based in Concord, Washington. Since opening in 2013, the club has provided a lifeline to young people in the area through discipline, structure, and belonging. In 2021, the club moved into its current premises, supported by a 25-year lease from Washington Stove and Fireplace.

The club is a constituted group and registered with Boxing England, ensuring all coaches are DBS checked, safeguarding trained, first-aid qualified, and supported by a Welfare Officer. Up to 60 young people attend sessions weekly, with many boxers progressing through the England Boxing Pathway.

Support Provided by Sunderland VSA

Sunderland VSA has worked closely with Michael (club founder) to help strengthen the club's foundations and plan for long-term growth and sustainability. Key areas of support included:

- **Governance Advice:** Guidance on transitioning to a Community Interest Company (CIC) to formalise operations, secure new income streams, and enable Michael to take on a paid gym manager role—allowing the gym to open during the day for expanded programming.
- **Funding :** Initial research into relevant funding opportunities, including Sport England grants that could help with a proposed that could support with the purchase of new equipment and travel to competitions. An application was sent and the project was called “More Than Boxing” and £5980 has been award from Sports England.
- **Letter of Support Development:** Co-developing a £750 funding bid to support travel and entry fees for an upcoming national competition—ensuring that financial barriers don't prevent local talent from competing on a national stage.
- **Long-term Visioning:** Helping to shape a broader vision for the club, including new income streams through daytime fitness classes, and an inclusive community offer for all ages. This would be part of the income raised whilst as the CIC model.

Impact

District Youth ABC has become a safe haven for young people facing disadvantage, bullying, or low confidence—offering not only sport but structure, inspiration, and belonging.

Thanks to Sunderland VSA's intervention:

- The club is actively pursuing CIC status, unlocking future sustainability.
- Michael is exploring paid management options, increasing capacity and reach.
- Funding routes have been identified to support elite competition and international travel.
- The club now has a clear, compelling narrative for future funders and stakeholders.
- They have received £5,980 from Sports England
- Michael has been nominated for volunteer of the year in the BBC regional awards.
- VSA has also made the club aware they can apply for the boxers as individuals under a scheme called Sunderland Sports Fund Grant.

Conclusion

District Youth ABC is more than a boxing club—it's a community asset. Under Michael's leadership, and with guidance from Sunderland VSA, the club continues to grow stronger, more sustainable, and better equipped to serve the next generation of young people in Washington. Sunderland VSA will continue to support District Youth ABC for a period of time until they become more self-sustaining.

Case Study 3: The Old rectory (Coalfield)

The Old Rectory is an historic building in the heart of Houghton-le-Spring, providing a space for community groups and social entrepreneurs to work together to create a vibrant hub and co-working space. It offers a range of services, activities and events for the community.

VolkerStevin is an industry-leading civil engineering company helping to improve neighbourhoods across the UK by building infrastructure that transforms the environment. They are currently building the new Wear footbridge, part of regeneration scheme for the banks of the River Wear in Sunderland:

What was offered?

A call came into Sunderland Voluntary Sector Alliance one Friday morning – *“we have a large fridge-freezer and under the counter fridge and free delivery if you can find a home by 12 noon today!”*

The difference it made to The Old Rectory

Time was of the essence and an email to our members quickly found a deserving recipient in The Old Rectory in Houghton le Spring.

The fridges helped store food for the warm spaces and youth activity sessions. Food is an important part of engagement for people in the community who often either eat alone or struggle to eat healthy hot meals on a regular basis. The fridges provided added value incorporating food into the sessions to help more people to thrive.

Corporate social responsibility isn't about grand gestures - it's about meaningful ones. When done through the right channels, even the smallest contribution can create lasting change. A small act of corporate kindness can create a ripple effect into society. For a company, it may just be a couple of fridges and a few hours of staff time. For an organisation with finite resources and a community in need it can make a big difference.

For enquiries on how SVSA can support you regarding social value and corporate volunteering please email volunteer@sunderlandvsa.co.uk

Case Study 4: Grindon Community Church Project (West)

Social Value Offer

About the corporate organisation

Hadrian Technology are a local company based in Newcastle and are one of the UK's leading CCTV security design, supply and installation companies. They combine pioneering security camera technology with expert knowledge, and act as consultants for a diverse range of well-known retail, leisure, hospitality and public sector companies and organisations across the UK and Ireland.

Through collaborations with Sunderland City Council and Sunderland Voluntary Sector Alliance, Hadrian Technology showcases a significant dedication to social value. They have gone the extra mile to support the local voluntary and community sector, aiding in enhancing outcomes for the community.

What was offered?

Hadrian Technology provided a £550 cash donation to a voluntary or community sector organisation committed to enhancing the local environment or contributing to Sunderland's goal of becoming Carbon Neutral by 2040. The Social Value initiative was enthusiastically embraced by local organisations, leading to numerous applications from diverse groups.

Grindon Community Church project based within the United Reformed Church (URC) was successful. The church actively engages with the community in numerous ways. Grindon URC serves as both a church for everyone and a bustling community centre. The £550 contribution from Hadrian Technology will help the Grindon Community Church Project enhance its energy efficiency and eco-friendly practices, ultimately benefiting the local community it serves.

How the Donation was delivered

Hadrian Technology's generous donation replaced the outdated heaters in the Sanctuary Hall, which have been in service for over 30 years and are inefficient, non-eco-friendly, and prone to breakdowns. This upgrade addressed the challenges faced by groups utilising the hall, such as toddlers, participants in the over 50's long-term illness exercise class, and those attending free sound baths.

The donation covered 25% of the total cost needed to rewire and replace the faulty heaters, with the rest of the funds coming from the church's reserves and matching

funding. By installing new heaters, the church aims to reduce environmental impact, enhance efficiency, and cut costs.

It's great to see Social Value positively impacting local communities. This serves as a prime example of how corporate organisations can benefit the voluntary and community sector whilst encouraging other organisations to contribute their resources to the VCSE in Sunderland.

Case Study 5: Airedale Forestry exceeds expectations to deliver Social Value to support local Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Organisations (VCSE). (Citywide)

About the corporate organisation

Airedale Forestry offered to provide advice and skilled labour to an organisation to support their garden, land development or maintenance, they also pledged to supply the necessary materials for the project. Their offer was cascaded to local VCSE organisations through Sunderland Voluntary Sector Alliance (SVSA) which generated an enthusiastic response.

What was offered?

Jim Kelso, Managing Director at Airedale Forestry identified 6 potential organisations that could benefit from the offer. He visited each site to assess the work required. After careful consideration and discussions with other Directors at Airedale, they agreed to assist five organisations, while the sixth would receive surplus plants and bulbs for their Mediterranean Garden.

How the Donation was delivered

The organisations Airedale Forestry selected to support were:

- Chapel of Light - to fell and remove Ash Tree
- Fulwell Library - to supply surplus plants for Mediterranean Garden
- Harraton Community Association - to cultivate area to rear of the building & apply herbicide
- 2nd Herrington Scouts - to clear area of scrub and lay landscape fabric and stone
- St Marks Community Association - to provide labour to assist with erection of paladin fence

Overall, Airedale Forestry has contributed £7,978 in social value, far surpassing their initial commitment of £1,000.

Sharon Quinn, Social Value and Investment Officer from SVSA said:

“These are fantastic examples of how working together to develop social value, attracting, and distributing funding and in-kind resources across the sector can maximise outcomes and deliver sustainable investment.”