



Norfolk and Suffolk Health and Care Awards 2026

Partnership with People and Communities Award

Volunteering for Health: Get Involved Innovation Fund Stream

Voluntary Norfolk, Community Action Norfolk, Community Action Suffolk, and NHS Norfolk and Suffolk ICB

The Get Involved Innovation Fund is recognised for its pioneering, partnership-led approach to tackling inequalities in access to volunteering for learning disabled and autistic adults, and care-experienced young people. While volunteering is known to improve health and wellbeing, many who would benefit most are excluded by inflexible systems. This programme addresses that gap by providing small grants and tailored support to grassroots organisations, enabling them to co-design inclusive volunteering opportunities shaped by lived experience.

A key strength of the Fund is its commitment to co-production and shared power. Through initiatives such as the Community Voices project with Break, care-experienced young people have directly influenced programme design. The Innovation Manager has built strong, trusted relationships with organisations, particularly smaller and underrepresented groups, ensuring they can fully participate. Barriers have been actively reduced through flexible reporting processes, accessible tools and additional capacity-building support.

Unlike traditional funding models, the programme prioritises learning, allowing organisations to test, adapt and share innovative approaches. This trust-based model shifts decision-making towards communities themselves, fostering more relevant and sustainable solutions while strengthening cross-sector collaboration.

The impact has been significant. Participants report increased confidence, improved wellbeing and stronger social connections, alongside gains in skills such as communication and teamwork. To date, 32 individuals have been supported into volunteering, contributing over 742 hours.

By generating valuable insight into barriers and enablers, the Fund is shaping future system approaches. It offers a scalable model for inclusive volunteering that empowers communities, improves wellbeing and reduces health inequalities.