

# **Action and the future: What happened at the last NCIA Assembly?**

Exactly 50 people came to the NCIA Assembly on Friday 17th April 2015 at the London Welsh Centre and we had apologies from almost the same number again. People came from as far as Scotland and Wales, from Durham, Bristol, Manchester, the Midlands, London and the South East.

What happened? We had lightning speakers including Armine Ishkanian, Penny Waterhouse, Andy Benson, and Kathy Evans. We had facilitated small group discussions and we had some dynamic Forum Theatre/ Theatre of the Oppressed led by special guest, Angela El-Zeind. There was a 'Talking Wall' covered with examples of NCIA's work over nearly 10 years and a display of all your comments from the NCIA on-line discussion (further down on this tab).

## **Keep involved post-NCIA**

Whatever happens next will happen because of your involvement! So there is still (just!) time to get involved and take forward the next stage for independent voluntary action and activism in a life after NCIA.

## **Top Ten actions for the post-NCIA future**

Most important: by the end of the afternoon we had a Top Ten of ideas for what happens post NCIA. These are in addition to three legacy projects arising from work NCIA has been engaged in, or supported: Localism Watch, Keep Volunteering Voluntary (KVV) and a new journal: Critical Studies in

Voluntary Action (see later in this post).

A quick summary of the Top 10 action points is below. Get involved and draw in new people to these initiatives (some are modest, some are ambitious). As a first step, If **YOU** wish to be on an email list (cc'd – so visible to others in the group) to develop these ideas and action and stay involved, simply email [mike@independentaction.net](mailto:mike@independentaction.net) and write 'yes, share my email with this NCIA next step group' in the subject line. We will add you to the email list.

Don't forget you can still post a comment on the Forum below (scroll down to the bottom) over the next month or two.

### **...and Roadshows on NCIA's linking NCIA's work to local voluntary action**

NCIA, is now putting together three or four final 'roadshows' in conjunction with local groups in Durham, Sheffield, Brighton and another location in June and July. Watch for updates about the Roadshows on the NCIA website

### **Actions arising from the last NCIA ASSEMBLY on Friday 17th April:**

Here are the top ten actions:

1. Develop an email distribution list for all NCIA supporters and those interested in sharing and keeping in touch about the issues NCIA on which NCIA has been active.
2. Develop a social media presence (e.g. new website/google group/Linkdin, Meet Up)
3. A re-union one year on for a party, convivial space, dance! April/May 2016.
4. Explore novel funding ideas and continuing to develop a successor

organisation to NCIA – clarify aims and actions in the light of the (worsening) context for voluntary action and activism.

5. Explore and develop an inter-generational interchange to reach out and link constituencies together (in particular making links between young people and older people involved in voluntary action and activism). And generating specific ideas on thematic issues to collaborate/ undertake joint work (e.g. as with Keep Volunteering Voluntary)

6. Generating a list of speakers/facilitators with a critical perspective to provide a resource to groups involved with voluntary action and activism.

7. Developing a skills audit among us about the individual and collective expertise and resources within the supporters of current NCIA people.

8. Support and work as local hosts for ‘small’ NCIA groups in different towns who want to develop mutual support, share ideas and develop common independent voluntary action.

9. Work to organise/support Assemblies for Democracy (in different towns and villages in the UK).

10. Make links and support others working on, or interested in, civic activism.

**The Top 10 ideas from the Assembly aim to be in addition to, and complement, three existing ‘legacy’ projects arising from, or supported by, NCIA:**

### **1. Localism Watch:**

This is aiming to do what the government can’t and won’t – reclaim localism for the people. Localism Watch is an online resource, owned and led by activists, helping local people make sense of the government’s localism agenda – and to challenge it.

<https://www.opendemocracy.net/ourkingdom/collections/localismwatch/a>

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## **2. Keep Volunteering Voluntary:**

Keep Volunteering Voluntary (KVV) is a campaign, launched in April 2014, in response to the implementation of the government's 'Help to Work' programme, which included mandatory six month placements in voluntary groups linked to benefit sanctions for non-compliance. The idea of KVV emerged at the Welfare Action Gathering in London in February 2014. The purpose is to end the use of workfare in the voluntary sector by encouraging as many organisations as possible to make a commitment not to participate in it, and to publicise that commitment.

<http://www.keepvolunteeringvoluntary.net>

## **3. Critical Studies in Voluntary Action: a new journal:**

A group of academics and practitioners – and some who combine both roles – have decided to do something about their growing dissatisfaction with the current state of voluntary sector studies. In the hope of developing 'a different narrative of voluntary action' they will in 2015 launch a new journal to be called Critical Studies in Voluntary Action. Contact the Editorial Board's convenor, Colin Rochester for more information –

[colin@practicalwisdomr2z.co.uk](mailto:colin@practicalwisdomr2z.co.uk) .

## **NCIA is changing: About the Transition Work**

In the coming months you are going to hear about the NCIA Transition. We also hope you are going to be involved in it. This introduction aims to let supporters and allies know what the NCIA Transition means, why it has come about and how you can get involved.

In short, NCIA is not going to exist in its current form by the time British

Summer Time comes to an end this autumn. That is what the NICA Transition is about.

## **Endings...**

The end of NCIA as we know it may sadden our founders and active supporters as well as some of our quiet admirers on the side. It may hearten our detractors who have seen us as noisy irritants disrupting a cosy consensus. We have warned of the loss of the distinctive role of voluntary organisations as advocates for the disadvantaged. We have rejected the wholesale privatisation of the welfare state. We have spoken out against the slow incorporation of voluntary action into corporate business behaviour. Even those who disagree with our analysis and actions, have sometimes grudgingly welcomed our existence.

## **...and beginnings**

We have not changed our mind on the issues we stand for. If anything, the issues NCIA have been arguing about have grown bigger, become more pressing and began to capture more widespread attention. But we do not need to celebrate a 10th birthday to prove our argument. Indeed, our arguments about the *causes* that are undermining an independent voice of advocacy and dissent – privatisation, deregulation and financialisation – are international in scope and becoming apparent in much wider fields. In places they have even begun to touch the formal political stage (in Greece and Spain).

The issues continue but the organisation does not need to become an institution. Our funding comes to an end. We have lived and breathed this for nearly a decade. Some of us need to do some gardening.

It is time for new actors to take the stage. We want to find you, work with you, and pass on what we have done. The space is there. There is plenty that needs doing. That is also what the NICA Transition is about.

## What next?

Over the next five to six months NCIA will be talking to you – current and new supporters, noisy activists and quiet admirers, the committed allies working in parallel campaigns, organisations and activists.

We are not stopping working, yet. For example, we will be organising meetings and discussion forums in different parts of the country to discuss the conclusions of our Inquiry into Voluntary Service Groups

(<http://archive.independentaction.net/category/inquiry-voluntary-services/>).

We want to find out what the next steps should be. But we'll also be talking NCIA Transition.

We will also be ringing and emailing you. We'll be organising on-line forums.

You can contact us – you don't need an invitation. We want to know:

What still needs doing next?

Who needs to do it?

How it will be done?

What you might be able to contribute?

So – watch this space for updates and opportunities to take part in the NCIA Transition. But also do get in touch with us direct about what you are doing and where it links to what you might want to do. Don't be shy about sharing crazy. We have ideas like that too. And we might even have a party before the summer ends.

## Practicalities

The practical work of the NCIA Transition is being carried out by Mike Aiken. Mike has worked on the Inquiry into Voluntary Services, has taken part in assemblies and has been involved in NCIA for nearly three years. He is part of a Working Group, which is responsible for the direction of the NCIA Transition, composed of: Bernard Davies, Frances Sullivan and Laird Ryan

who will support and manage the work on behalf of the directors' group. Penny Waterhouse and Andy Benson will also be actively supporting the process. You can contact Mike at: [mike@independentaction.net](mailto:mike@independentaction.net). The on-line discussion group about the NCIA Transition will be available here shortly.