



Making a difference

Community Network – the only telephone conferencing charity in the UK

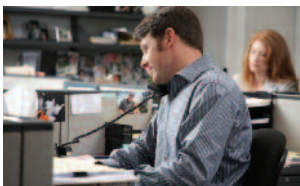


The power of speech



Community Network's Vision

Our vision is a world where telecommunications enables everyone to connect into their community so as to relieve isolation, overcome challenges and provide the opportunity for full participation and inclusion in civil society.



Community Network's Mission

To pioneer the innovative application of telephone conferencing technology, so that:

- **everyone has the opportunity to connect with their community**
- **marginalised people are reached through the delivery of an inclusive and affordable service**
- **third sector organisations are enabled to achieve their public benefit objectives – efficiently and effectively**
- **a way of working is promoted which is low cost and good for the environment.**



Making a difference

Community Network has been making a difference to the organisations and individuals with whom we work for over 20 years. This report is full of the wide range of uses people make of our telephone conferencing. We hope you enjoy reading about our customers as much as we enjoy serving them. The stories they have to tell are often nothing short of inspirational.

Last year, Community Network bade farewell to Terry Veitch, who led the organisation for 16 successful years. Under Terry's guidance, Community Network has grown to be an established service provider to the sector, pioneering new ways of working and delivering social care and well-being projects through telephone conferencing. Pat Fitzsimons took over as Chief Executive in April 2008 and with the talented and dedicated staff team, has continued to build on Community Network's previous good reputation.

As you will read in this report, telephone conference groups combat isolation amongst church goers, carers, ill people and those suffering from emotional distress. That's what makes Community Network unique in the world of telephone conference providers. Community Network also provides telephone conferencing to help you run your organisation, whether it's big, small, local, national or even international. This means that our sector can be run efficiently, effectively and in an environmentally sustainable manner.

This report marks the end of an era – we are looking forward to the next 20 years of providing a quality service with people at the heart of everything we do.

Hugh Smith
Chair, Community Network





What if you can't attend Mass?

"I'm more or less housebound now," explains Margaret Marshall, speaking on a chilly January morning from her Essex home. As a member of St Joseph's, Upminster, Margaret joins her fellow worshippers every Saturday evening for her regular Mass. But she does not physically visit the church – Margaret participates via telephone.

"I can't get there, you see," she explains. "I couldn't participate at all. Then one day, two or three years ago, I was asked 'do you want to listen to Mass on the telephone?' And of course I said 'yes' – and I thoroughly enjoy it."

The St Joseph's Faithlink is provided free for those who would like to attend Mass at the church but whose circumstances unfortunately make this impossible. Based around the Community Network charity's conference call technology, the weekly service reaches into the lives of people who might otherwise become isolated.

"There are a few of us who use the telephone service – sometimes it's the only way to communicate," she continues. "We've met up when our church has had a Christmas party, so we know what each other looks like now."

Veronica Hogan, representing Father Taylor at the church, is clear about the value of the Faithlink conference call to the congregation. "It is such a good service, making a lot of very old, sick and lonely people feel that they are not alone and can still join in the Mass," she says. "I can only say thank you from everyone at St Joseph's."

"It does make a lot of difference," agrees Margaret. "I've told a lot of people about it. And it's good to be able to tell you how much it's appreciated."

“ There are a few of us who use the telephone service – sometimes it's the only way to communicate ”



f3 – The local food consultants

Kathy Merrett is an Associate Director at f3 – The Local Food Consultants. They've been using Community Network's teleconferencing services for some years now, and have found that teleconferencing has become a foundation for their operation.

A non-profit co-operative of leading experts with experience of local food, sustainable supply chains and marketing, f3 provides market research, business planning and consultancy services to organisations and enterprises involved in local food and farming, and related sustainability initiatives.

Community Network's teleconferencing is key to f3's organisation and initiatives. "Our members are based all over the UK," says Kathy, referring to the network of both regular and occasional contacts and consultants that the organisation uses. "We meet face-to-face every quarter, but teleconference at least once a month. In addition, when we set up teams for individual projects we'll build teleconferencing into the plan."

On the financial side, aside from the clear cost savings against bringing people together for physical meetings, Kathy cites the foreseeable pricing as an advantage over the retrospective nature of transport costs.

Often, project teams 'pull in' third parties that can bring extra ideas or expertise to the project – inviting them to join a teleconference makes this a more attractive proposition for many than asking for their commitment to meet several times. "We can then organise everything for them," says Kathy, "and make it as easy as possible for them to join in."

There is clearly a 'green' imperative for an organisation that is part-dedicated to improving the food supply chain and reducing food miles, although the main driver is practicality and cost. As Kathy emphasises, "We have to keep in the forefront of our minds the most sensible and ethical way of operating. It works like a dream!"

“ We have to keep in the forefront of our minds the most sensible and ethical way of operating ”

Open University

In the Department of Languages, based at the Open University in Milton Keynes, staff have successfully introduced a new option for Intermediate-level language courses – the provision for students to take their End of Course Assessment (ECA) via group telephone conferences. Christine Sadler, Award Manager in the Department, has been working to make this happen, and is enthusiastic about how the telephony model has developed.

“We’ve had a relationship with Community Network for five years now,” she explains. “For those students who can’t attend our residential schools, we provide online or telephone alternatives, as we were keen to give students a fallback choice. And, although Community Network offered a competitive price, cost was not the main driver. They were chosen because of our past satisfaction and our experience of their reliability.”

The emphasis on choice has led to courses being developed that offer completely mixed methods of tuition – whether by phone, online or face-to-face. For students electing to use the telephone, it couldn’t be simpler – they’re given the date and time of scheduled calls, and then up to four at a time can call in to be connected to a group session with a tutor. The University hopes that this choice and flexibility will have positive effect in helping to retain students.

Community Network recognises the particular importance of each call to the end user, and is proud that its service is so trusted in these circumstances. “It’s a stressful time for them,” Christine reflects, speaking of those students approaching an ECA. “They are adults, and perhaps not used to being in an exam situation – we have to help them all we can.”

“ They were chosen
because of our past
satisfaction and
our experience of
their reliability ”



Citizens Advice

One of the 'household names' that benefits from using Community Network, Citizens Advice (CitA) is the umbrella charity that covers every Citizens Advice Bureau in the UK. Each of the Bureaux is also, in fact, an individual registered charity, with CitA providing their core systems, services and standards.

John Gillies is the Programme Manager for the Access Strategy at the organisation. "Our particular aim is to improve access to the service for the general public," he explains.

John's role involves him working with three geographically-spread teams. They use Community Network's service to hold their team meetings – usually there are three to four of these a month.

"As an organisation, we've used teleconferencing for a number of years, now with increasing regularity," says John. "The teams have members spread across the UK and it can be the most effective way of holding a meeting.

As a regular user, John finds the Community Network service fulfils all his requirements. "It's very good – easy to book, and they're helpful," he comments. "I've never had any technical problems, and it's very straightforward, with a real person to welcome us when we call."

So it's proved a financial benefit for the organisation? "That's a statement of the obvious!" he replies.

“ I've never had any technical problems, and it's very straightforward, with a real person to welcome us when we call ”



Breast Cancer Care

Committed to campaigning for better treatment and support for people with breast cancer and their families, Breast Cancer Care is the UK's leading provider of information, practical assistance and emotional support for anyone affected by breast cancer.

Suzi Copland is the Telephone Support Group Co-ordinator at the charity.

“We talk to all the clients, to ensure they'd be suitable for the telephone groups,” she says. “We want to make sure it works for them. We try to match peoples' experiences as far as possible. Breast cancer can be an isolating experience – this is the chance for people to talk about it in a safe and anonymous way.”

“One of the real strengths of the groups is that we have clients across the whole country. Many people in rural communities don't have a local support group, and there are people who, as a result of their treatment, are not physically fit enough to travel to a support group, or who have a disability. So the accessibility of the telephone is a major advantage for us,” she says.

Whilst many people might find the telephone awkward, clearly this could apply to any group discussion. “People talk about the telephone as a barrier, but the flip side is that to do this face to face would be very scary for many,” says Suzi. “The phone affords an anonymity that can make it easier to talk about upsetting, difficult issues. And they can do this from home, from their own front room, with a cup of tea.”

“With a normal teleconferencing system, setting up a call can be quite stressful,” explains Suzi. “You have to dial in, you get an automated voice, you have to remember a pass or PIN number. We are always aware that we need to make the process as comfortable as possible. With Community Network, our clients are telephoned themselves, and get a friendly human voice. ‘Hello, how are you today? I'm just putting you through to the support group now.’ It's the ease of human interaction.

“Because they work with other vulnerable client groups, we trust Community Network to deal appropriately and sensitively with our telephone groups. That's very important to us.”

“We trust Community Network to deal appropriately and sensitively with our telephone groups”



Action for Sick Children Scotland

“I guess people were a little ambivalent at first,” recalls Anne Wilson, Development Officer at Action for Sick Children Scotland (ASCS). “If you’ve not teleconferenced previously then it can be a little disconcerting – and it definitely helps if you’ve met the other parties face-to-face before.”

Having used Community Network’s teleconferencing facilities extensively in her previous job, Anne was keen to introduce the concept in her new role at ASCS, Scotland’s only charity that represents, promotes and safeguards the interests of all sick children, young people and their families.

“We have two people based here, but the rest work from their own homes all around Scotland,” says Anne, explaining why she was keen to trial the conference call facilities. “There is a huge saving if you take the cost of a train fare or a mileage allowance and multiply it by, say, six people.”

“Our people work part-time – perhaps up to twenty hours per week,” explains Anne. “So travelling time is a major issue for us. For a two hour meeting it may be a four-hour round trip. That’s a big chunk out of their week.”

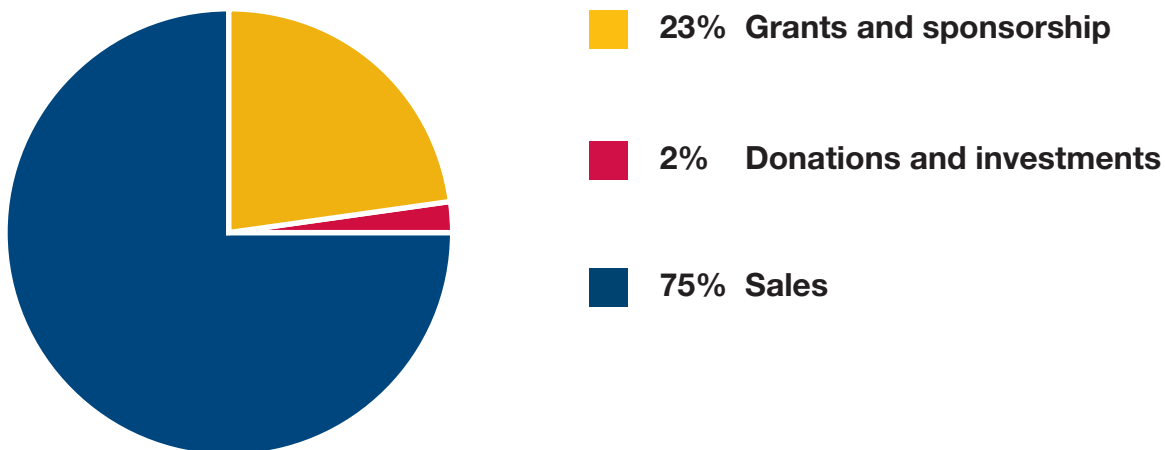
“It has also opened our eyes to new opportunities for involving parents and carers who may be restricted from attending meetings by their responsibilities and the needs of their sick child. These are the very people we aim to help and who are invaluable to us through their personal experience and expertise,” she adds.

Anne is enthusiastic: “If we did it more often it would free all of us up,” she emphasises.

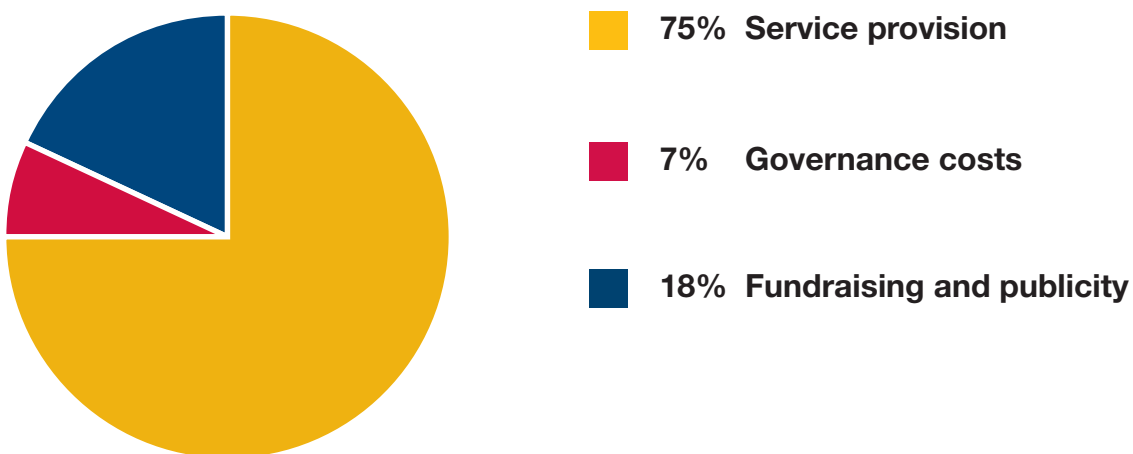
“ So travelling time is a major issue for us. For a two hour meeting it may be a four-hour round trip ”



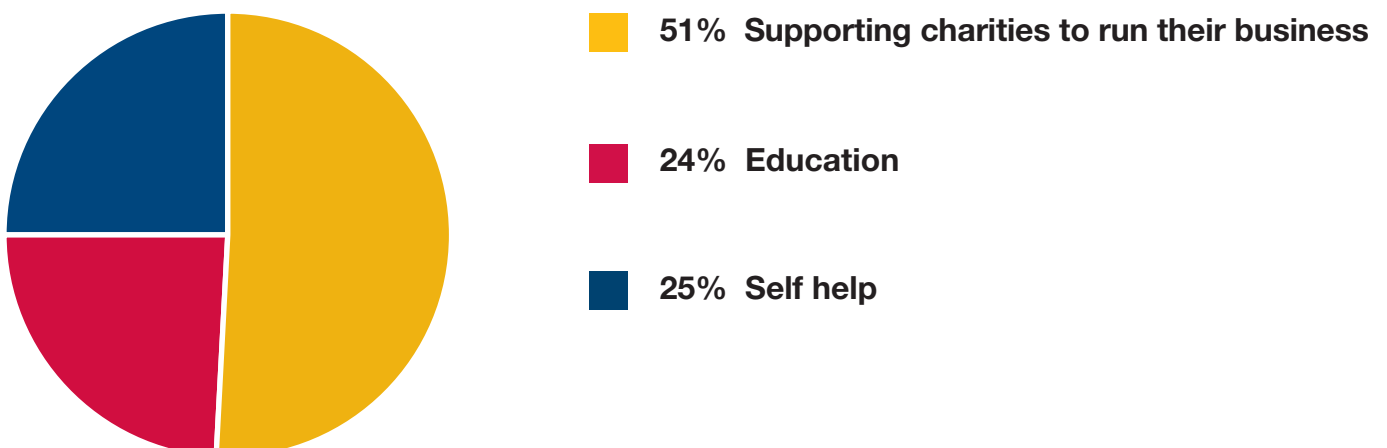
How we raise our income



How we spend our money



Who are our customers



Who uses us

Some of the organisations that benefit from our services

ACEVO
Action for Blind People
Action for Sick Children Scotland
Adoption UK
AFASIC
Age Concern England
Alzheimer Society
Anxiety UK
Arthritis Care Scotland
Baha'is Council for England
bassac
beat
Befriending Network Scotland
BOND
Brain Tumour UK
Breast Cancer Care
British Blind Sport
British Heart Foundation
British Stammering Association
Camphill Village Trust
Cancer Bacup
Cancer Research UK Scotland
Care & Repair Cymru
Carers Together
Carnegie UK Trust
Cass Business School
Charity Finance Directors Group
Charity Technology Trust
Children's Commissioner
for Wales
Childrens Hospice Association
Scotland
Children's Society
Chinese New Year Trust
Christian Aid
Citizens Advice
Citizens Advice Cymru
Community Council of Devon
Community Foundation Network
Community Matters
Contact A Family
Contact the Elderly
CPRE
Crossroads Caring for Carers
Development Trust Association
Devon County Council
Diabetes UK Scotland
Disability Arts Online
Disabled Living Centre Council
Distasters Emergency Committee
Dyslexia Action
Elizabeth Fitzroy Support
Employment Opportunities
European Network on
Independent Living
Family Action
Farm Crisis Network
Futurebuilders England
Gaia Foundation
Governance Hub
Guide Dogs for the Blind
Help the Aged
Help the Hospice
Helpage International
Home Farm Trust Ltd
Institute of Group Analysis
Int. Alliance of ALS/MND Association
International HIV AIDS Alliance
International Play Association
Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust
Kings College London
Learning Disability Wales
London Borough of Hackney
London School of Hygiene &
Tropical Medicine
Macmillan Cancer Support
Maharishi Foundation
MDF Bipolar Organisation Cymru
Meet A Mum Association.
MIND Cymru
Multiple Sclerosis Society
National Association for Colitis &
Crohns Disease
National Blind Children's Society
National Childbirth Trust
National Council for Voluntary
Organisations
Nature Friends UK
NAVCA
No Panic
North Wales Wildlife Trust
Northern Ireland Chest Heart and
Stroke Association
Novas Scarman Group
Off the Streets and into Work
One Parent Families
Open University in England
Open University in Ireland
Open University In Scotland
Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust
Parenting UK
Parentline Plus
Pioneer Health Foundation
Play Wales
Poverty Alliance
Princess Royal Trust for Carers
Quaker Voluntary Action
Reforestation Scotland
RNIB Talk and Support
RSPB Cymru
RSVP Bookclub
Ruralminds
Ruralnet UK
Samaritians
SANDS
Scottish Environmental Link
Shared Care Network
Society of Homeopaths
South Devon Carers Consortium
South West Forum
St Peters Hospice
Telephone Helplines Association
The Fawcett Society
Time Banks UK
Twins and Multiple Births Association
UK Public Health Association
Ulster Wildlife Trust
UNICEF UK
United Response
University College London
University of Bristol
University of Gloucester
Voluntary Arts Network
Wales Council for Voluntary
Action
Wales Environment Link
Wildlife and Countryside Link
Wildlife Trust Wales
Woodcraft Folk
World Association of Girl Guides
and Girl Scouts



**Once you
finish your
conference
call, our
charity work
begins**

Community Network
Ground Floor
12-20 Baron Street
London N1 9LL

Telephone: +44 (0)20 7923 5250
Fax: +44 (0)20 7713 8163
enquiries@community-network.org
www.community-network.org

Charity Registration No. 1000011

Community Network is a registered
charity and a company limited by
guarantee.

© Community Network 2009



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

The power of speech