



The Power of Small

A Small Charities Week Gathering

What we heard, and where we go next.

Compass Wellbeing CIC · Thursday 25 June 2026 · Online

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THE DAY AT A GLANCE

10:00

Welcome – Compass Wellbeing

10:10

Guest speaker – Jane Williams, The Magpie Project

10:20

Panel discussion – the hard stuff

11:15

Break

11:25

Students' Union UCL presentation

11:35

Spotlight presentations – four small organisations

12:00

The Power of Exchange Lab – structured networking

12:40

Closing reflections

BY THE NUMBERS

~100

participants

~75

organisations

WHO WAS IN THE ROOM

Charities & CICs

Grassroots & community

Social enterprises

Local authority

NHS

Universities

Our first ever Small Charities Week gathering – held online on Thursday 25 June 2026, with small grassroots charities and VCFSE organisations at its heart.

WELCOME · 10:00



Mathew Sheehan
*Chief Executive,
Compass Wellbeing CIC*



Every monumental shift in civil society starts with two or three people who refuse to accept how things are.

Mathew Sheehan

KEY TAKEAWAY This is the start of something ongoing – not a one-off event.

GUEST SPEAKER · 10:10



Jane Williams
*Founder & CEO,
The Magpie Project*



When small organisations come together, we're not small at all.

Jane Williams

"If you imagine civil society as a body, small charities are the microbiome – essential to the health of the whole system."

KEY TAKEAWAY Lived experience must anchor the conversation from the start.

PANEL DISCUSSION · 10:20



Chaired by Caroline Verdant
Citizens UK



Farah Dualeh
Women's Inclusive Team



Jerry During
Money A+E



Peter Laing
The Renewal Programme



Sandra White
Compost London



If you're not at the table, you're on the menu.

Caroline Verdant

THE SCALE OF SMALL



5,500

VCFSE organisations across North East London



61%

with income under £100k – about 3,400 grassroots groups



43%

receive NHS referrals – but only 20% receive funding

Source: NE London 'State of the Sector', cited by Peter Laing.

KEY TAKEAWAY

The system already relies on small organisations – funding must catch up.

NEW VOICES · 11:25–12:00



Ella Page, Students' Union UCL

Student volunteering, research partnerships and the Hatchery programme.



Spotlight presentations



The Crook'd Smile

Charli & Zenab



You Press

Farah Mohammoud



You Vs You

You vs You

Ahmed Mohammed



WIILMA

JJ Khun

KEY TAKEAWAY Small organisations carry outsized impact and energy.

VOICES FROM THE DAY

“Girlhood isn’t a waiting room for womanhood – it’s a powerful chapter in its own right.”

The Crook’d Smile

“We can’t tackle health inequalities on the pavement. We need roofs over our heads.”

WIILMA

“We meet young people where they are, rather than where society says they should be.”

You vs You

“We weren’t thinking about funding or business plans or anything else – other than giving our people a voice.”

You Press

VOICES FROM THE FLOOR

In their own words – grassroots organisations who joined us on the day.

“In a system so stretched it mostly responds at crisis, how do small organisations like ours actually shift things toward prevention?”

Zey Binboga · Displaced CIC

“We make theatre with people who have lived experience of homelessness – their stories, on their terms.”

Kithmini Wimalasekera · Cardboard Citizens

“Every family deserves support in navigating the sudden loss of a child – that’s the work we exist to do.”

Aisha Peters · Damali Beautiful Vision CIC

“We’re NHS healthcare professionals teaching young people emergency life-saving skills – focusing on areas affected by youth violence.”

Natasha Warner · Yourstance

“Collaboration versus competition – true collaboration can often be more impactful.”

Sarah Laing · Bonny Downs Community Association

“We use therapy-trained animals to reach people through anxiety, isolation and low confidence – meeting them somewhere words can’t.”

Amy Louise · Animal Assisted Wellness CIC

THE POWER OF EXCHANGE LAB · 12:00

NEEDS

Fair, sustainable funding · Capacity & headspace · Clearer access into systems · A stronger collective voice

OFFERS

Community insight · Trusted relationships · Shared spaces, skills & training · Mutual amplification

WHAT NEXT

Regular connection spaces · Conversation into action · Linking grassroots, system & corporate partners

THE SIX C'S

Connection

Collaboration

Coordination

Community

Co-production

Co-design

These came through across every breakout room – the shared language of the day.

TRENDS & COMMON GROUND

The threads that ran through the chat, the panel and every breakout room.

KEY ISSUES RAISED

Fair, sustainable funding – not just access; small, niche groups feel edged out by larger providers

Referrals without resource – NHS referrals arrive, but funding doesn't follow

Capacity & headspace – one or two staff, no time to build partnerships

Voice that shapes, not ticks boxes – community insight must influence decisions

From collaboration to co-design – trust first, communities in from the start

PUBLIC HEALTH COMMON GROUND

Prevention over crisis – shifting effort upstream before breaking point

Poverty, housing & exclusion – named repeatedly as public health issues, not side effects

Mental health runs through it all – young people, men, migrant & racialised communities

Health inequality is tied to place – isolation, lost space, post-COVID strain

Small charities as the “microbiome” – not glamorous, but essential to the health of the whole system

KEY TAKEAWAY

Funding, capacity, voice and prevention surfaced everywhere – health inequality the common ground.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR COMPASS WELLBEING

**The power of small is already there.
Our role is to connect it, strengthen it, and help it
translate into real change.**

- Connect and broker across VCFSE, NHS and corporate partners
- Create ongoing, structured spaces for collaboration and collective voice
- Help unlock access to funding, partnerships and opportunity
- Ensure community insight shapes system decisions
- Build towards a more sustainable, reinvesting model over time

KEY TAKEAWAY

Compass Wellbeing supports and helps convene the system – alongside partners.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

1

Ongoing connection spaces

Regular forums and gatherings to keep grassroots, system and corporate partners talking – beyond a one-off event.

2

A founder & CEO wellbeing space

An idea that emerged on the day – a peer-support space for leaders, which we're exploring how to convene.

3

Share what you can offer

Space, skills, networks, training – tell us what you can give as well as what you need.

Stay connected: info@compasswellbeing.co.uk

THANK YOU



Sponsors



With thanks to our panel, speakers and spotlight organisations

Accessibility BSL interpretation by Diane & Suzy · Visual scribing by Carrie Lewis

More resources coming soon.



The Power of Small · Small Charities Week 2026 · Compass Wellbeing CIC