

*We're not an arm of the state (or the private sector) – we have our own arms*

[www.independentaction.net](http://www.independentaction.net) ..... [info@independentaction.net](mailto:info@independentaction.net)

Newsletter No:42

November 2015

## **NCIA is closing... but the struggle will go on**

This is the last newsletter that you will receive from us as - after nearly 10 years - NCIA is closing. We are not going out of business - we're not a business. Our decision is an act of principle - we don't think we should continue.

We're stopping for two reasons. When we started, our message - that voluntary groups were in danger of losing their independence and must fight back - was seen as scare mongering and off beam. This message has now been accepted, with the consequences only too visible. We don't need to make the case any longer. We have done our job and sounded the alarm. Nobody can say they haven't been warned, but if they want to be reminded then browse our final attempt to spell out the damage and danger to charities and voluntary groups in the UK today - [Our Last Word: Fighting for the Soul of Voluntary Action](#).

However, we have failed in our other aspiration - to persuade mainstream voluntary services to speak out with others in pursuit of social justice and defend their autonomy as independent forces for change. We realise now that we are not in a position to rescue voluntary groups from co-option into the mess created by destructive state action and profiteering corporations - only they can do it, if they so choose. So we have decided to stop. Something else is needed now to occupy the space we have taken. We believe the future lies in grassroots activism and the re-imagination of voluntary action able to speak out its politics. There is no need for NCIA in this. Individuals involved in NCIA will continue the struggles in these different places.

We are not depressed about this, though a bit weary! We leave with pride and gratitude. We have met so many friends and allies over the last 10 years. And we can hear more and more voices of protest and calls for change to the status quo, sometimes from voluntary services, though mostly not. The future lies with new alliances and ways of organising amongst voluntary and community groups, activists, unions, academics and others determined to halt the erosion of our social

protections, the rise of gross inequality, the worship of profit and the demonisation of those damaged by such ideologies - both inside and outside the UK.

We want it to be known that although NCIA will disappear, others will continue to speak plainly on social justice, equality, and diversity. An open letter on NCIA's closure, [published today](#) and signed by over 65 groups and individuals, shows the breadth of those whose voices will not be silenced and the potential for future alliances. We hope that this will encourage the faint-hearted: that it is possible to speak up for better ways of doing things. We know that the challenges we have offered will continue through those who have inspired us and kept us going over the last 10 years.

Any help you can give us to spread our news and the open letter would be great - a final expression of solidarity, or perhaps even relief! We will circulate the letter as widely as we can. We'll be redesigning our website as a legacy resource, after we have closed, for those wanting to access the stories, evidence and connections we have gathered. For those wanting to be part of the 'Next Generation for Independent Action', the NCIA [facebook page](#) continues as does our [discussion space](#) on the National Community Activist Network.

## **THANKS AND GOODBYE from all at NCIA xx**

PS The full text of the open letter reads like this:

### **Open letter about the closure of the National Coalition of Independent Action**

Poverty, homelessness and inequality are increasing at break-neck speeds. Safety nets, rights and services are being eroded. Mean-spirited policies stalk the streets. Protest is on the increase. So we, the undersigned, are sorry to hear that the National Coalition of Independent Action (NCIA) is closing down ([www.independentaction.net](http://www.independentaction.net)).

Over the last 10 years NCIA has rung an alarm bell alerting us to the progressive silencing of charities and voluntary groups as a force to resist the impoverishment of people and communities, the loss of rights and the privatisation of public services. Whilst we have not always agreed with NCIA's positions, its voice has been essential in reminding us of the duty to dissent within civil society. A duty often lost in the clamour for public service contracts and insider influence.

But, as NCIA's closing statement says, "something else is needed to occupy the space we have taken". In particular, NCIA calls for continuing the alliances built between voluntary services, activists, unions, academics and others determined to halt the erosion of social protections, the rise of gross inequality, the worship of profit and the demonisation of those damaged by such ideologies - both inside and outside the UK.

We say thank you and goodbye to NCIA, and affirm that we will continue - in our own ways - to advance NCIA perspectives for voluntary groups independent from, and unfettered by, powerful outside interests, and committed to stand visibly and

practically in solidarity with those facing injustices; to speak plainly about these injustices; and campaign vigorously for their end.

November 2015

### Signatories:

- **42<sup>nd</sup> Street** - Simone Spray
- **Adur Voluntary Action** - Adrian Barritt
- **Mike Aiken** - independent researcher
- **Assemblies for Democracy** - Paul Feldman
- **bOLDr** - Steve Lancashire
- **Boycott Workfare**
- **Bradford Resource Centre** - Mike Quiggin
- **BRAP** - Joy Warmington
- **Bullian Community Resource Centre** - Belinda Lewis
- **Camden Voluntary Action** - Kevin Nunan
- **Centre for Welfare Reform** - Simon Duffy
- **Children England** - Kathy Evans
- **Chilypep** - Lesley Pollard
- **CO2Connections** - James Murphy
- **Communities Inc** - Shamsheer Chohan
- **Community Action Derby** - Kim Harper
- **Community Action Milton Keynes** - Alissa Pemberton
- **Community Development Network London** - Matt Scott
- **Community Sector Coalition** - Nick Beddow
- **De Montfort University** - Jonathan Davies (personal capacity)
- **Detention Forum** - Eiri Ohtani
- **Directory of Social Change** - Jay Kennedy
- **Disabled People Against the Cuts Steering Group** - Linda Burnip
- **Disabled People Against the Cuts, NE & Cumbria** - Gail Ward
- **Dudley Council for Voluntary Services** - Lorna Prescott
- **Edge Hill University** - John Diamond
- **Equanomics** - Karen Chouhan
- **European Services Strategy Unit** - Dexter Whitfield
- **Faiths4Change** - Laird Ryan
- **Glasgow Caledonian University** - Les Huckfield
- **Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit** - Denise McDowell
- **Hackney Unites** - Jane Holgate
- **Housing Justice** - Alastair Murray
- **In Defence of Youth Work** - Tony Taylor
- **Institute of Race Relations** - Jenny Bourne
- **Keep Volunteering Voluntary** - Penny Waterhouse
- **Lincolnshire Community Foundation** - Gordon Hunter
- **Livestroughfriends** - Bob Rhodes
- **London School of Economics** - Armine Ashkanian
- **Manchester Community Central MACC** - Mike Wild
- **Manchester Metropolitan University** - Carol Packham
- **Middlesbrough Voluntary Development Agency** - Dinah Lane
- **Migrants Resource Centre** - Ros Lucas

- **Muslim Community Helpline** - Sarah Sherif
- **National Community Activist Network** - Joe Taylor
- **Neighbourhood Networks** - John Dalrymple
- **North Tyneside Women's Voices** - Penny Remfry
- **Our NHS** - Caroline Molloy
- **People's Republic of Southwark** - Liliana Dmitrovic
- **Question the Powerful** - Henry Tam
- **Refugee Council** - Maurice Wren
- **Renters' Rights London & Waltham Forest Renters** - Rosie Walker
- **Sue Robson** - community development practitioner
- **Salford Star** - Stephen Kingston
- **Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations** - Ruchir Shah
- **South West Foundation** - Jan Crawley
- **Sussex Defend our NHS**
- **Unite the Union** - Sally Kosky & James Lazou
- **University of Northampton** - Bob Colenutt
- **Voluntary Action Harrow Cooperative** - Alex Buckmire
- **Voluntary Action Lewisham** - Tony Nickson
- **Volunteer Centre Lewisham** - Kay Kelleher
- **Volunteer Cornwall** - Ian Jones
- **Water Adventure Centre** - Lilian Pons
- **We Own It** - Cat Hobbs
- **West Northumberland Foodbank** - Jo Walker
- **World to Win** - Corinna Lotz