

National Coalition for Independent Action

Celebrating voluntary & community action to change and challenge the world around us
www.independentaction.net indyaction@yahoo.co.uk

Want to talk back to the Coalition? Sign up to our Google group, have your say and share your experiences <http://groups.google.co.uk/group/ncia-discussions>

Newsletter No: 6

June 2008

News from the Coalition

Community Activist Support Group

We are able to offer FREE places on our Community Activist Support Group. We now have a core membership for the group but have space for 1 or 2 additional members!

If you would value a constructive thinking space in order to support your active engagement with Coalition ideals and are keen to commit to a session every month or so, based on an Action Learning model, then please don't delay! Contact us at indyaction@yahoo.co.uk. The set facilitator, Jan McHugh, will contact you to explain what's on offer and to learn more about your particular interests and requirements. Looking forward to speaking with you!

Widen the net

We want to widen our network and would welcome suggestions from readers about how we might do that. One simple thing that you could all do is forward this newsletter to one person who you think would want to read it..... why not do it right now?

Regional Co-ordinators wanted

Our office in London is now seriously busy and we are close to our capacity to handle the volume of enquiries, networking and other activities. We would like to move to a system of regional co-ordinators to organise locally and pick up on local actions and opportunities. Anyone interested in taking on this role, please contact the office at indyaction@yahoo.co.uk

Independent Action – here's what it looks like

(send us your own examples)

Black Sisters win High Court injunction

On 24 April 2008, a High Court judge granted permission to women involved with Southall Black Sisters to proceed with legal action against Ealing Council for its failure to have proper regard to its duties under the Race Relations Act. The Council has failed to consider the adverse impact that its decision to stop funding SBS will have on black and ethnic minority women. The judge also granted an injunction to stop the Council making any decisions on the funding of domestic violence services until the case is concluded. The hearing is expected to take place by July. SBS are supported in the legal proceedings by the Public Law Project

The outcome of the case will have major ramifications not just for specialist services for black and ethnic minority women but for all those struggling for equality for key excluded groups. The case will also be significant because the Council's decision represents a political attack on the right to self-organisation for secular black and minority groups. The case will therefore be keenly watched not only by the voluntary sector but also by all those who are concerned about how we are moving away from an equalities and human rights culture, that has yet to be properly embedded within public bodies.

Meanwhile Black Sisters are short of funding (well they haven't got their grant!) and need support to meet shortfalls in their budget for the provision of domestic violence services to women in Ealing. If you want to send them something you can contact them via their website:

www.southallblacksisters.org.uk/campaign_kiranjit.html

And the potential to use the Equalities Legislation

Louise Whitfield from the Public Law project writes:

"One of the concerns about single issue funding and the current move towards cohesion policies that fund only mainstream groups is that this fails to give appropriate weight to public funders' statutory duties under the equalities legislation. Specifically, there are duties on public authorities to have due regard to the need to eliminate race, disability and gender discrimination, to promote equality of opportunity, good race relations and more. However, any decision to stop single issue funding and to fund all services via a mainstream provider risks breaching these duties, if the public body in question does not consider the adverse impact such decisions may have on the protected groups (i.e. disabled people, BME groups and women).

PLP has advised on a number of cases recently where decisions based on a cohesion strategy or similar has led to a possibly unlawful decision that does not address these duties, and withdraws services unfairly from particular groups. It is a worrying trend that PLP is keen to tackle. Voluntary sector organisations can contact us for free advice on 020 7697 2198, Monday to Friday 10 am to 4 pm, or at evs@publiclawproject.org.uk."

Fighting for human rights in Darlington

A stirring story comes to us from Darlington of a long running struggle between the local advocacy organisation and their Social Services Department. Faced with embarrassing and repeated reports of abuse of people with learning difficulty and mental health problems, the Council withdrew the group's funding and is still trying to evict it from its premises. Far from taking this, Advocacy in Darlington has fought back and survived. As the Group's manager puts it "We are now poor in money but rich in spirit and in camaraderie. This is our community and not the property of a self appointed few who happen to have power and money. With a will and shared knowledge, we really can reclaim our communities and take power back from people only interested in themselves, and not in the community they were paid to serve". You can read the whole story on our website [here](#).

Sector fights back against Newham Council spin merchants

We have previously reported on the struggle of Newham VCS groups faced with the Council's plans for the sector. Now the Council has jumped on the 'thriving third sector' bandwagon by naming its latest report - yes you guessed it, 'A Thriving Third Sector in Newham'. Bold new world stuff this, proposing a "joined-up approach", "a strategy for support and engagement, that is clearly based on the needs of the sector through consultation", the creation of a "voluntary sector forum" and the suggestion that everyone goes off on a 'Partnership Improvement' day-long jolly, organised by IDeA.

What it doesn't mention is that they have been trying to close down the existing arrangements whereby the sector talks to itself and the Council, because they don't like the messages that have been coming from there. VCS agencies have been upset about, for example, the LAA section on the VCS having been written by the Mayor. Or the Voluntary Sector Consortium (yes there already is one) being told that it needed to submit the contents of its newsletter to the Council for approval. We think it might be about time that the VCS headed for the 'exit' option - leave their 'partners' to talk to themselves - and get on with their own business.

Meanwhile, to up the anti, Newham activists are marking national 'Sector Independence Day' on 4th July 2008, by issuing a 'declaration of independence' of Newham's voluntary, community and faith sectors. Groups are asked to sign up to the declaration, which will "endorse and celebrate the independence of voluntary, community and faith organisations in Newham and recognise the legal and moral responsibility that local groups have to:

- Advocate for the needs of communities and those that we represent.
- Encourage local people to give voice to the issues that concern them and influence the improvement of services.
- Campaign fearlessly and responsibly for the causes we were set up to further.
- Uphold our independence, decide for ourselves who acts as our representatives and how our networks and representative structures are organised.
- Resist external interference in our work and remain focused on our aims & objectives.

Those who sign up also reaffirm the importance of the undertaking made by local statutory sector partners in the Newham Compact "to respect the independence of the voluntary, community and

faith sector and its right to campaign, within the law, irrespective of financial relationships."

You can add your name to the declaration by visiting <http://www.thepetitionsite.com/1/third-sector-independence> . It's also on Facebook, at <http://apps.facebook.com/petitions/view?pid=553052462>
Groups wanting to add the declaration of independence to your own website, visit <http://www.thepetitionsite.com/my/widget/553052462>

Groups are also asked to take part in a relationships poll to gather views on relations between voluntary, community and faith groups and public bodies in the borough. Copies of this can be obtained kevin.blowe@aston-mansfield.org.uk. All responses will be treated in the strictest confidence.

SMASHEDO movie tour goes ahead despite censorship attempts

Extraordinary story of Police attempts to stop activist group Smash EDO showing their film, *On the Verge*, across the country. The film tells the story of the four year campaign against EDO MBM, Brighton's un-favourite bomb-builders and the involvement of the Sussex Police in trying to close down the protests.

Venues that have scheduled showings of the piece have received threatening phone calls both from the Police and from Council officials indicating that legal action may be taken on the grounds that the film does not have the right certificate. Not exactly the most serious crime in the world and one that the combined resources of Constabulary and Council are not normally committed to.

But the show goes on and if you want to know if there is to be a screening near you then check www.smashedo.org.uk/diary.htm#tour

For the time being SchMOVIES is resisting the urge to put the film in any easily downloadable format because in the words of Steve Bishop, "We want people to watch this film together - to weep, to laugh, to be inspired and empowered - to meet others and take action together. Whether that's going to be achieved by people sitting in their bedrooms gawping at Youtube is debatable." Despite this, the film will be available in a variety of formats shortly...

Women against Rape secure High Court victory

An asylum seeker who was raped and tortured in her native Cameroon should have been referred for proper assessment instead of her claim being rejected, the High Court has ruled. This ruling could have far-reaching legal implications for others making the same claims whose applications for asylum have been refused. The woman concerned arrived in the UK in 2006 and was held at Yarl's Wood detention centre, near Bedford. In the course of her interview to assess her grounds for asylum status, she gave details of torture she said she had suffered at the hands of gendarmes in Cameroon. She should have been referred to the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture (MF) to see whether there was evidence to support her claims, but this did not happen. Following the intervention of WAR her deportation was stayed. After a judicial review of her case,

she was released from detention and will now receive damages estimated at £15,000 for unlawful detention because of the length of time she was held without having the correct assessment.

"[The] ruling is a fantastic victory and sets a crucial precedent for many other women in detention," said a WAR spokeswoman. "Like PB, many women have had their cases fast-tracked and been detained, denied legal representation, medical and other expert help, and implementation of the Home Office's own rules which should have secured their release."

A Home Office spokesman said: "We are committed to a fair and compassionate asylum system. Where a review of our procedures in a particular case shows that we need to do things differently we will learn those lessons." Yes and pigs might fly.

Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform bricked up by protestors

A group of 12 Lincolnshire villagers, campaigning to save the post office in Langworth, travelled to London by coach, bringing wheelbarrows and breeze blocks with them. They built a five-foot high wall, blocking the doors to the building, before Susan Bragol, correspondence manager at the department, came to meet them and suggested they write a letter instead. After a discussion, the group loaded the blocks back into the wheelbarrows and returned to the coach.

"We've written four letters about the closure of our post office and each time we got a pre-formatted letter back," said campaigner Terry O'Halloran. "It's like hitting a brick wall, so we decided to build one."

A spokesman for the department said a consultation on the future of the village's post office was in progress.

Government in Court over fuel poverty

Friends of the Earth and Help the Aged have launched court proceedings against the Government for not doing enough to eradicate fuel poverty. The charities say that the Warm Homes Act, passed in 2000, requires the Government to end fuel poverty for vulnerable people by 2010, and for everyone by 2016. But the Government has confirmed that it will miss the 2010 target and is likely to miss the 2016 target.

The two charities have filed a judicial review application with the High Court, claiming that the Government has not provided a plan of action or minimum standards as required and demanding that it explain how it will meet its obligations.

"When fuel costs fell, the Government was happy to take the credit for falling fuel poverty figures," said Mervyn Kohler, special adviser for Help the Aged. "Now that the energy market has changed and the importance of domestic energy consumption has grown, it must take responsibility for its inadequate and passive response."

A Government spokeswoman said: "The Government remains committed to seeking, so far as reasonably practicable, an end to fuel poverty within vulnerable households by 2010. This target is challenging due, in part, to high fuel prices, but we believe that we have a strong package of measures in place to tackle fuel poverty".

Protests target refugee deportation dawn raids

We can report lots of brave direct action from groups around the country fighting dawn raid seizures and deportation of asylum seekers. The second UK-Wide Day of Action Against Immigration Snatch Squads took place on 1st May. Groups in Portsmouth, Newcastle, Cardiff, North Shields, and Leeds intercepted snatch squads as they attempted to leave on dawn raids to forcibly take asylum seekers into custody for deportation, blocked offices and car parks, and handed out leaflets to the public.

The Cardiff blockade was drawing attention to the recent deportation of Ghanaian woman Ama Sumani, who was being treated for cancer at the University Hospital of Wales when she was forcibly sent back to her homeland in January.

In this case, Home Office minister Alun Michael put the blame on Ghana for not providing free medical care and told the public that the real question was, "whether it's right for somebody who has no right to be in this country to be given medical treatment" - well, yep, down here at the Coalition we'd say yes to that. The Lancet medical journal called the removal "atrocious barbarism" and even rock guru Sting was up in arms.

More information on the No Borders Campaign at : www.noborders.org.uk

Unite wins collective bargaining rights at Victim Support West Yorkshire.

Here's a rare piece of news of the voluntary sector these days. Non-managerial staff at Victim Support in West Yorkshire have fought and won union recognition. The charity, which has just restructured into one single national organisation, shutting down the autonomy of local branches, was said to have resisted a request for union recognition and the case went to the Central Arbitration Committee.

VSWY said that there were no plans for redundancies as a result of the restructure and that it "welcomes this opportunity to work with Unite."

Traveller's see off Basildon Council

A long running dispute at the traveller's site at Dale Farm near Wickford, Essex took a turn for the better when the High Court halted Basildon Council's plan to evict the 86 families - effectively a village of 1000 people - and also ordered them to find an alternative site for the residents. The Council has been trying to evict the community - which owns the site - since 2005 because the travellers didn't have planning permission.

Justice Andrew Collins came out against the draconian and ethnic-cleansing aspects of the Dale Farm eviction, saying that the travellers are victims of a 'high degree of prejudice', and were only on this site because they couldn't find land elsewhere. Collins rebuked Basildon Council for not finding alternative land for the community, and also urged the Council to not use the bailiff firm Constant & Co - the self proclaimed 'Gypsy eviction specialists' - after seeing their violent handywork in a video of another eviction.

Meanwhile at Dale Farm, a new community/IT centre has also opened, called St Christophers, which has been built using a £12,000 grant from the Essex Racial Equality Council - without planning permission, yet opened by a member of the House of Lords, and blessed by a local Catholic priest.

Information and news about gypsies and travellers can be found at: www.gypsy-traveller.org

Ivan Lewis promises to extend the Human Rights Act to cover both private and voluntary sector care homes.

Following a House of Lords ruling last year that the Act covered only people in state-run institutions, Ministers have announced that they will amend the Health and Social Care Bill currently going through Parliament and reverse the ruling.

"Finally we have a cast-iron guarantee that the Human Rights Act loophole for care homes will be closed right away," said Katie Ghose, director of the British Institute of Human Rights, which has campaigned on the issue.

"Older and disabled people who face malnutrition, abuse or forced evictions cannot afford to wait a moment longer for the protection they need."

Lewis also announced proposals for an independent adjudicator to rule on complaints against private homes by people who fund their own care, and a major investigation into abuse of the elderly in state care homes.

You couldn't make it up!

Nosey Parkers sought by the Police

Want to move your curtain twitching habits into the digital age? Well Derby Police are asking for nose parkers willing to keep their beady eyes firmly on the real goings on down Derby way.

Yes, Police have now got so many cameras keeping Britain under surveillance at all times that they can no longer keep up with actually watching them all, so are having to beg the public to step in and do the job (unpaid, of course) instead. Unsure potential citizen snoopers needn't worry either - you'll get twenty hours training on how to watch a computer monitor... Anyone interested (or with an interesting comment and access to a public phone booth), should contact Vicki Marriott on 0115 9072019 or 0115 9512027.

Benefit Of The Doubt

The latest in the slew of government hi-tech IT projects pretending to save millions - but in fact costing a whole lot more - hits a sinister note with £1.5 million going to fifteen local authorities to test voice analysis technology (that's lie detectors to you and me) in order to detect alleged benefits fraud.

The technology supposedly detects tell-tale changes in a caller's voice - using mathematical formulas - and telephone operators will be trained in questioning techniques and behavioural analysis. A trial run by Harrow Council and Capita in 2007 claims that people withdrew from benefits - potentially to avoid fraud cases.

The anti-fraud minister at the Dept of Work & Pensions, James Plaskitt, said that "We need to continue to do more to make sure that the taxpayers' money always goes to those who need it most." By which he presumably means corporations hoovering up privatisation contracts, such as Capita...

A chance to have dinner with Stephen Bubb

The Adventure Capital Fund, which recently won the tender to run the Government's £215m Futurebuilders fund, has started a drive to find new candidates for investment by holding roadshows and having dinners (yes dinners!) with ACEVO members (voluntary sector chief executives). The dinner meetings began a few weeks, enabling Lewis and Stephen Bubb, chief executive of ACEVO and chair of Futurebuilders, to meet "leaders" from the sector.

"We're running chief executive dinners with ACEVO not to be exclusive, but because we want to get on with it, and it's easier to get them together if it's run with ACEVO," said Jonathan Lewis, chief executive of the fund and the new head of Futurebuilders. "We will form partnerships with anyone who will help us to make the fund a success. A big change in emphasis will be making Futurebuilders a very outward-facing organisation. We want to try to meet people in the market (sic) and work out what they want from the fund."

That's just spiffing isn't it; no doubt Stephen will be choosing the wine.....

Trainers to be clip-boarded

In an extraordinary outburst of bureaucratic madness, plans are now circulating that would require anybody doing training for adults with public money to be registered with the Institute of Learning and hold 'appropriate' qualifications. What started as a proposal affecting those working in Further Education, has quickly been extended by the heads-in-buckets brigade to all publicly-funded training. As our correspondent says:

"This is just yet another example of what your Coalition is all about - the control of the voluntary sector (in this case indirectly) by non-stop rules & regulation."

Sublime or ridiculous?

Here's another cheering tale of this new world of social enterprise - the Director of the Royal Opera House has said a decision to subsidise ordinary seats by raising prices for the best seats is "a perfect example" of how a fee-charging charity can meet new public benefit requirements.

Ruth Jarratt, director of policy development at the Royal Opera House, said the move was one of several ways in which a charity could charge high fees but not be exclusive. "Our key issue for years has been getting the arts to ordinary people," she said. So they are going to charge up to £210 for some seats in order to provide others for as little as £30! Only £30 eh - what a bargain! Opera lovers on the minimum wage will be delighted.

Some funders bring us good news

'Funders' Footprints' report from South West Foundation shows the way forward

A mass of useful information is to be found in a recently published research report from the S.W. Foundation. The report - 'Funders' Footprints' - is based on interviews with 350 VCS groups in the South West, and looks at the 'footprint' that funders leave on the sector as a consequence of their involvement. The report "is intended to make funders look back at their footprints and see what can be done to reduce the damage that those footprints make".

The report examines 11 aspects of funding relationships that create difficulties for VCS agencies and then goes on to look at 7 "positive footprints"- ways in which funders can truly support the development of the sector.

The report can be got from South West Foundation, Westway Farm, Bishop Sutton, Somerset BS39 5XP Tel: 01275 333666.

New UK Womens' Fund launched

A new fund for UK women's groups will launch in June in response to what has been described as a national crisis of funding for the sector. Established by Maggie Baxter, formerly director of Womankind Worldwide, the fund aims to attract income from major philanthropic donors - particularly wealthy women - among other sources. A director will be appointed once the fund is up and running, and Baxter will move onto the board as a trustee.

"Funding for women's groups is chronically low," said Baxter. "The women's sector fills a need, and charities fighting violence against women in particular need to build strength." A 2006 survey by the charity Women's Resource Centre found that 18,000 women's groups were on course to close before 2009 because of a lack of funds. The number of Rape Crisis centres has halved over the past two decades.

"Women in the UK are the cement of communities and pick up the pieces when things go wrong," said Baxter. "That's why funding for these groups is important."

The fund will finance projects working for women's safety, economic justice, health and wellbeing, and equal representation, and will allocate grants in the first year to proposals for new projects. It is hoped that the website will be up and running for the launch - www.rosaUK.org

Baring Foundation to put more money into sector independence

The second phase of Baring's Strengthening the Voluntary Sector (STVS) Programme has been announced. This year the STVS programme has a tight focus with a geographical criteria and a focused theme within the issue of independence from Government. The programme will focus on strengthening the independence of advice and advocacy organisations in the cities of Bristol, Coventry, Manchester or Sheffield or in the counties of Kent or Lincolnshire. The deadline for submitting applications is 30 June 2008 and new grants will be announced in December 2008.

You can get the guidance and application forms at:
<http://www.baringfoundation.org.uk/STVSguide2008.pdf>

Profit, the Private Sector and the Government

A number of depressing pieces this month of Government Ministers thoughts on markets and money-making, and the ways this Government ideology is impacting on local services and voluntary action. Making money out of people's social problems now seems to be quite OK. And there is certainly money to be made.....

Who wants to be a millionaire?

Phil Hope, Minister for the Third Sector, gave a speech on the 26th March to the Skoll World Forum on Social Entrepreneurship. According to Phil social enterprise has the potential to make a huge contribution to defeating the 'five giants' threatening our society today (Inequality; pollution and climate change; ignorance of other communities; social epidemics like obesity, diabetes and HIV/Aids; untapped energy for social action).

"One of the biggest tricks to solving the Giant Evils in our world is to harness the power of the market" and "We need to be more grown up about what we really mean by 'profit'." He set out ways in which the Government's "key role" will be played out in "signalling big shifts in behaviour that will create an environment in which social enterprise can flourish". This will be based on our recognition "as a global society" that "maximising financial return is not the only, and indeed often not the best, way of doing business."

In the face of the reality of global capitalism, this seems a tad naïve Meanwhile John Hutton, Secretary of State for Business and Enterprise has been banging the same drum:

"... rather than questioning whether high salaries are morally justified, we should celebrate the fact that people can be enormously successful in this country. Rather than placing a cap on that success, we should be questioning why it is not available to more people. It would be a good thing for our country if there were more millionaires in Britain not fewer. Our overarching goal that no-one should get left behind must not become translated into a stultifying sense that no-one should be allowed to get too far ahead."

Well that's pretty clear then.

A4E pops up all over

So how are those apparently not that interested in 'maximising financial return' getting on? Last month we described how Action 4 Employment (A4E) had taken over important legal advice services in Leicester (not forgetting that A4E CEO Emma Harrison features as the Secret Millionaire in the C4 TV programme.) This month it is Hull CAB that is feeling the pinch. The Council and the Legal Services Commission has commissioned A4E to take over the job of providing Hull's residents with impartial, confidential and independent advice. The CAB has been lobbying to get the decision reversed but, if confirmed, CAB staff will transfer to the new employer under TUPE rules. This means effectively that A4E will have taken over the CAB. Some 40 jobs are involved. One of the new jobs for the Centre Manager will be to report weekly to his or her bosses how much profit (sometimes called 'maximising financial return') it has been possible to take out of the contract (according to our mole in another A4E project).

Meanwhile, a consortium of black advice agencies in London (Black Advice Network) has got steamed up about another aspect of A4E's entryism into the advice world. A4E, and other potential bidders for the lucrative Home Office contract to provide employment support to refugees, have been wooing local advice agencies to accept referrals from them and provide an advice service to the clients - without payment of course.

Apparently the full story here is that the Home Office asked the tendering partners to submit low bids in London due to 'limited budgets' (interesting approach to 'driving down costs'). The HO wanted bidders to show that they had access to an extended referral network for advice services, who would provide advice to clients for a 6 months period only. Once this period expires the idea is that the refugees' outstanding advice needs will be continue to be dealt with by the existing providers, with no further funding for the work. That seems OK with A4E.

After action taken by BAN agencies A4E is now reported to have said that it didn't mean it and it's very happy to pay a fair price for their services. BAN has complained to the Immigration Minister about these practices saying "it is no wonder that there is scepticism about the extent to which the competitive tendering process is more about driving down costs than ensuring that these vital services are delivered with the needs and interests of the refugees themselves uppermost." BAN representatives have also met with a couple of MPs and the administrator of the Home Affairs Committee to spell out concerns and objections and they will be submitting written evidence to the committee in an attempt to get a one day session on funding for refugee community organisations.

The cash cow of 'worklessness'

With the 'worklessness' agenda, A4E and their private sector pals again find themselves standing in the right place at the right time. Speaking to the business fraternity at a recent CBI conference, Gordon Brown told his audience that it was time to make training mandatory for all benefit claimants. And "There are too many people on benefit," says Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (DWP), Peter Hain.

Getting people into work is now big business. With A4E in the 'bid club' is Working Links. Established in 2000, Working Links was set up to work in the government's new 'Employment Zones'. Now established on a much broader (including international) platform, the firm is expanding fast. Working Links is part owned by the DWP, together with three private sector 'partners', one of whom is Mployment, a subsidiary of Mission Australia, an evangelical Christian outfit.

Working Links made £4m profit in 2006, though profits were down to less than a million quid in 2007, mainly because of the recruitment of a new 'sales team'. Turnover is up 15% and the business won 43 new contracts generating another £6m during the year. The government says that it is determined to 'grow the value of the business as measured by sustainable economic profit', and in this spirit shareholders received a dividend payment of £300,000. Proving that you can make money by pushing people off benefits and into work (regardless of the nature of that work). Working Links can make nearly £3,000 for every Incapacity Benefit claimant it gets into a job for at least 13 weeks. Nice little earner!

The Government is promising more and more schemes of these schemes. Next year Incapacity Benefit will be replaced by the Employment and Support Allowance. 'Customers' who don't agree to take part in work-focused interviews or take up training 'opportunities' will lose £11 a week for the first refusal, a penalty that doubles if they refuse to toe the line a second time.

Voluntary groups gather information about private sector inroads

The impact of all these private sector firms is becoming noticed in the VCS. The Local Grants Forum, which campaigns for the retention of grants programmes, has been collecting information about private sector companies taking money away from local VCOs, where funders choose to switch their money.

Although the date has passed for people to send in material, if you've got some tales to tell, why not do it anyway? Contact Tania Pouwhare at the Women's Resource Centre tania@wrc.org.uk Tel: 020 7324 3035. We don't know what they intend to do with the results of the exercise. Oh, and you can send the info to us as well - indyaction@yahoo.co.uk - 'cause we're mad as hell about this.

Why (and What Is) this Newsletter?

This newsletter is the voice of the planning group of NCIA. We aim to issue newsletters regularly to keep you informed of what we and others are doing or saying. We will also issue Action Alerts as pressing news and

opportunities for action arise. We will err on the side of inclusiveness, adding people willy-nilly to our mailing list — and of course giving every opportunity to unsubscribe.

How Can You Participate?

Tell us your news, write articles, sound off with your opinions and feedback but - most important - find ways of taking your own practical action to defend and protect the independence of your work and aspirations.

Talk to us and others via the Coalition google group <http://groups.google.co.uk/group/ncia-discussions> or the Coalition email address - indyaction@yahoo.co.uk .

We are all volunteers here and we welcome more offers of help. If you'd like to help make this initiative prosper then please get in touch with us.

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