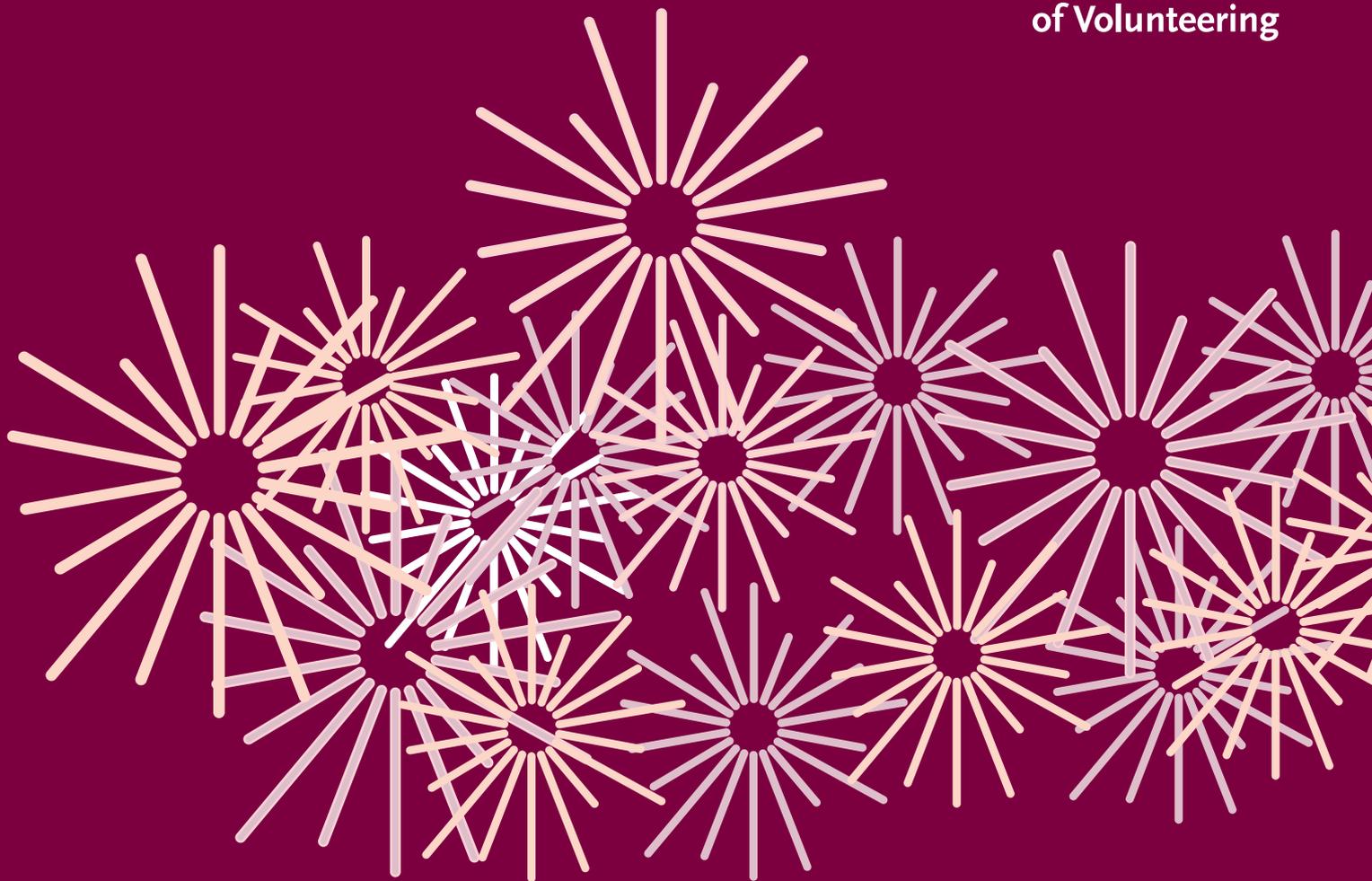




The Commission  
on the Future  
of Volunteering



The Institute for Volunteering Research and Volunteering England

# Volunteering works

**Volunteering and social policy**

September 2007

**Editor:**

Nick Ockenden

**Consultant editors:**

Angela Ellis Paine and Mike Locke

**Authors:**

Angela Ellis Paine, Steven Howlett, Joanna Machin, Cathy McBain, Nick Ockenden, Simon Teasdale, Meta Zimmeck

**Acknowledgements**

I would like to express my thanks to the people named above who were involved in the research, writing, and production of this publication. They offered thoughtful and valuable comments during its editing. I would also like to thank the organisations who have assisted us in the collation of the research.

Nick Ockenden

September 2007

Volunteering works: Volunteering and social policy

Institute for Volunteering Research and Volunteering England

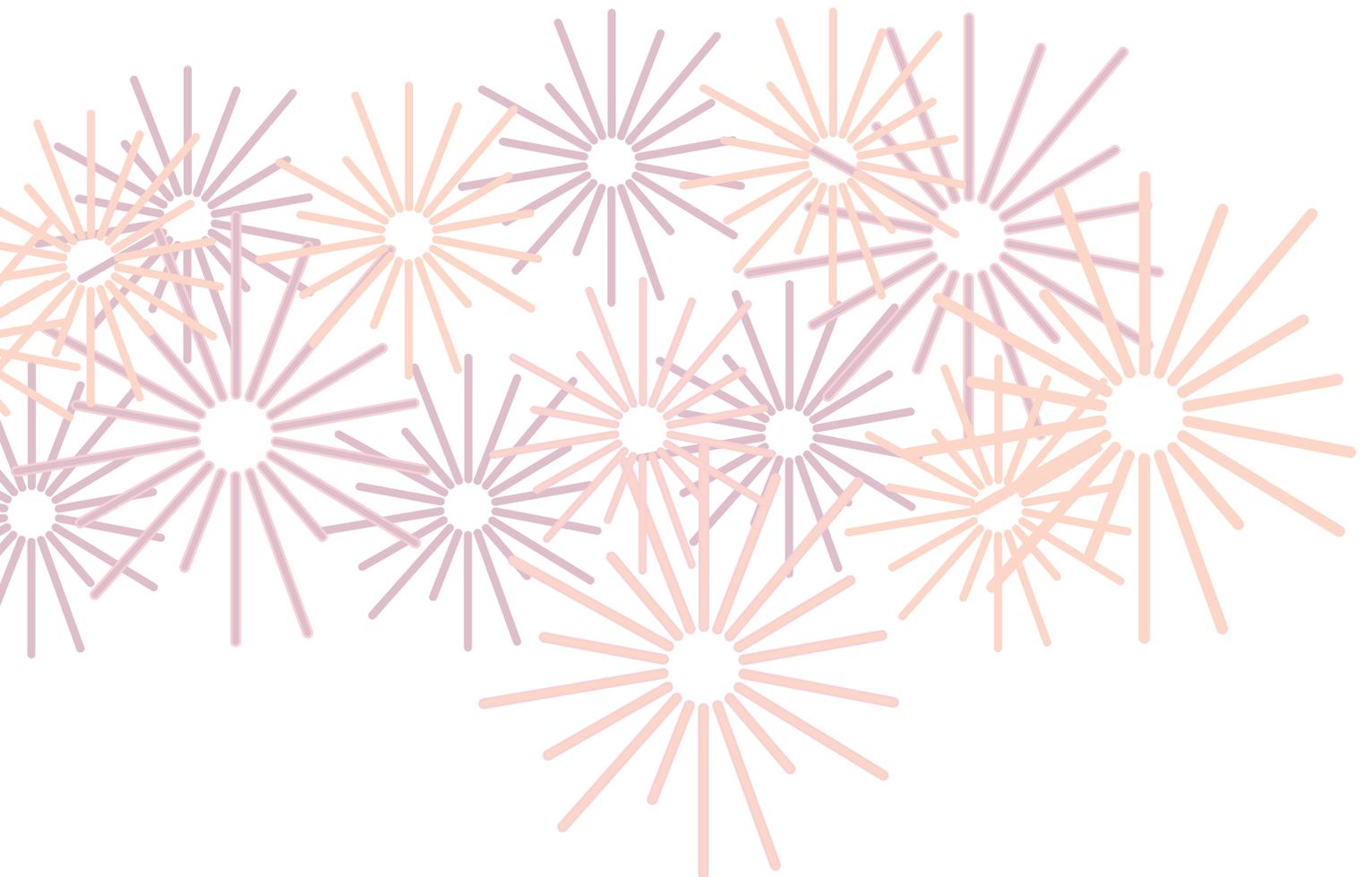
September 2007

ISBN 978-1-906111-01-4



# Contents

Foreword	3
Introduction	4
1 Development	6
Economic development	6
Sustainable development	8
2 Safer and stronger communities	13
Stronger communities	13
Safer communities	15
3 Social inclusion	19
Social and economic support	19
Empowerment and integration	20
4 Quality of life	24
Contentment and satisfaction	24
Physical and mental health	24
5 Lifelong learning	28
Skills development and accreditation	28
Achievements for education	30
Conclusions: How can government work for volunteering?	34
Key resources	36



# Foreword

The Commission on the Future of Volunteering is pleased to present this report, its second to date, on volunteering and public policy, written by the Institute for Volunteering Research and Volunteering England.

In the last twenty years government has recognised the critical contribution that volunteering makes to building a strong and cohesive society. It has promoted volunteering as 'the essential act of citizenship', a means for combating social exclusion, and an important contributor to the delivery of high quality public services. To this end it has developed numerous policy initiatives to involve, deploy and support individual volunteers, volunteer-involving organisations, and volunteering infrastructure bodies.

Government has, however, done so, not on the basis of overwhelming scientific evidence that volunteering does these things but, for the most part, on the fervent belief held by key politicians and policy-makers that it does. Government is not on the whole soft-hearted, but it has taken account of the mass of qualitative evidence produced by researchers and, in some cases, the evidence of ministers' and civil servants' own eyes, that something strange and wonderful is going on in the world of volunteering. It is this very elusiveness, the power of volunteering to act upon people in mysterious ways, that makes it so powerful an intervention - for those who volunteer,

those who are helped by volunteers and the community generally that benefits from the contribution of volunteers - and that makes it so frustrating for government.

Government policy, therefore, has been an odd mixture of enthusiasm for the perceived outputs of volunteering, made real by the testimonies of countless individuals and visits to volunteering projects, and distrust, because it does not work along lines that can be understood and controlled.

This report targets both that enthusiasm and that distrust. It marshals the best evidence available in five key policy areas – development, safer and stronger communities, social inclusion, quality of life and lifelong learning – in order to demonstrate the positive impact of volunteering.

The Commission's task is to examine volunteering as it is now and as it should be in ten years' time. One of its key interests is the relationship between volunteering and government, and we welcome this report as a very useful contribution to our work.



Derek Tamea ©

**Julia Neuberger**

# Introduction

There is widespread agreement that volunteering has rarely received as much support from a government as it has since Labour were elected in 1997<sup>1</sup>. Building on a long history of voluntary action within this country, many of the government's policies have influenced, encouraged and enabled volunteering. Volunteering has, in turn, had a positive impact on a wide range of government policies and agendas, and throughout the rest of society.

*Volunteering works* explores the impact of volunteering on government policies and agendas at the local, regional and national level throughout England. This report discusses the part volunteering can play in helping government work towards and achieve its priorities and objectives. It focuses on the current policy environment, but also draws on recent agendas from the past ten years as well as looking to future developments. This report presents existing evidence from research, reports and evaluations that demonstrates this positive impact and relevance. It is the first such assembly of this information in one place and provides a foundation for anyone wishing to establish the relevance of volunteering.

This report has not sought to analyse and critique the challenges facing volunteering in great detail, but it nonetheless identifies the areas that need to be addressed in the future. It should also be noted that the evidence presented in *Volunteering works* is not exhaustive. It is a presentation of what is available at a moment in time, and readers should maintain an awareness of new research that becomes available. It should also be borne in mind that the report builds up the evidence base from a range of studies, many of which are smaller and were not originally intended to address the policy agenda head on.

*[Volunteering is] 'an activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or individuals or groups other than (or in addition to) close relatives'.*

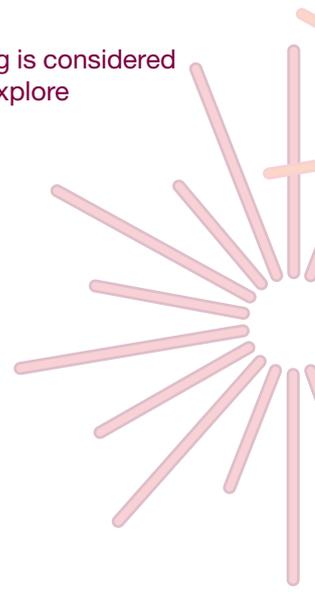
The Volunteering Compact Code of Good Practice (2005)<sup>2</sup>

*Volunteering works* considers volunteering to be any activity that meets the Compact's definition. This includes formal volunteering, defined as an activity that takes place through a group, club or organisation, as well as informal volunteering, including activities that take place independently of such structures, often as an individual<sup>3</sup>. Much volunteering is carried out within organisations with paid staff that involve volunteers. This takes place throughout the voluntary and community sector, the private sector and the public sector. *Volunteering works* refers to volunteering taking place in, and across, all three sectors. It also makes reference to the multitude of community-based organisations which may have few members of paid staff, and those groups that are led by volunteers.

Volunteers themselves undertake a huge range of activities, and this report can only attempt to explore a fraction of them. It helps to appreciate this diversity by using a four-fold typology of volunteering<sup>4</sup>:

- 1 Mutual aid or self help: people with shared problems, challenges or conditions working together to address them.
- 2 Philanthropy or service to others: most commonly volunteering through a voluntary or community organisation to provide some form of service to one or more third parties or beneficiaries.
- 3 Participation: the involvement of individuals in the political, governance or decision-making process at any level.
- 4 Advocacy and campaigning: collective action in formal or informal groups, or as individuals, to secure or prevent change.

While the full breadth of volunteering is considered throughout this report, it does not explore



volunteering specifically by activity. It discusses the impact of volunteering across five different and thematic government agendas, so as to reflect the cross-cutting nature of volunteering.

The report opens by examining the central role of volunteering in relation to economic and sustainable development. It then discusses the contribution of volunteering to the development of safer and stronger communities in chapter two, before exploring its role in helping to foster social inclusion in chapter three. Chapter four discusses the impact volunteering can have on the quality of life of the individuals that take part. The final chapter draws together evidence exploring volunteering in relation to lifelong learning and education. The report concludes by looking to the future, exploring some of the findings from the Commission on the Future of Volunteering and highlighting areas for government consideration.

#### Footnotes

- 1 Ellis Paine, A. and Malmersjo, G. (2006) *Short term volunteering: a blessing or a curse?* IVR: London
- 2 Home Office (2005) *The Volunteering Compact Code of Good Practice* Home Office: London
- 3 Kitchen, S., Michealson, J., Wood, N. and Peter, J. (2006) *2005 Citizenship Survey: active communities topic report* DCLG: London
- 4 Davis Smith, J. (2000) 'Volunteering and social development' in *Voluntary Action* 3(1): 9-23



# 1 Development

This chapter examines how volunteering contributes to the economic health and development of England. First it explores the practical impact of volunteering, describing how volunteers help organisations and companies to function. It then looks at the wider benefits of volunteering on sustainable forms of development.

## Economic development

Volunteering has a significant impact on the economy in England. In 2003 42 per cent of people in England and Wales volunteered through a group, club or organisation at least once, equivalent to approximately 17.9 million people. Each volunteer contributed an estimated 104 hours in the twelve months before the survey and the total contribution was 1.9 billion hours. This was equivalent of one million full-time workers. At the national average wage their contribution was worth around £22.5 billion<sup>1</sup>. This form of involvement takes place throughout the public, private and third sectors.

The voluntary and community sector, or the 'third sector', has always relied heavily on the contribution of volunteers. In 2007, for 65 per cent of volunteers, the main organisation they helped was within the voluntary and community sector<sup>2</sup>. This is a large sector: the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) states that there were over 169,000 'general charities' in 2004<sup>3</sup>. This figure does not include many of the smaller organisations. Community-based organisations, for example, make up the large majority of non-profit organisations in England<sup>4</sup>.

Many of these organisations could not exist, or at least could not provide their current level of service, without the help of volunteers. Volunteering has a significant positive resource impact on volunteer-involving organisations. The Volunteer Investment and Value Audit was developed to evaluate the cost effectiveness of investing in volunteers by comparing inputs needed to support volunteers with the outputs produced by volunteers. A recent study of eight volunteer-involving organisations across Europe, including three in the UK, demonstrated a high level of value: for every £1 organisations spent on supporting volunteers, they received an average

return worth between £3 and £8<sup>5</sup>. This also shows that for organisations to experience this benefit, sufficient investment and resources to support volunteers is crucial.

### Help the Hospices

A 2006 pilot survey of 59 hospices estimated that the financial value of volunteers to UK hospices was around £112 million. It found that if hospices had to pay for staff to do the work contributed by volunteers, their running costs would increase by nearly a quarter. The survey showed that for each £1 spent on supporting volunteers, hospices received a return of more than £11. In England, the economic value of volunteers to hospices was nearly equal to the contribution from the NHS<sup>6</sup>.

Volunteers are also widely involved throughout the private sector. For 11 per cent of volunteers in 2007, the main organisation they helped was within the private sector<sup>7</sup>. Increasing numbers of people are also being encouraged to volunteer by their employers, many of whom will be in the private sector. Employer-supported volunteering is a term used to describe those employers who have schemes to allow their employees time off to volunteer or those who directly support them to volunteer during work time. In 2005, 24 per cent of employees worked for an employer with a volunteering scheme, up from 18 per cent in 2003<sup>8</sup>.



Volunteering England Image Bank/Chaiky White ©

### Employer-supported volunteering

While this is still a relatively small area of volunteering, the direct financial impacts are notable. In 2003, 1.5 million people volunteered through an employer-supported scheme, contributing approximately 66 million hours. At the national average wage, this was worth £0.8 billion, equivalent to 36,000 full-time workers<sup>9</sup>. While the monetary value of their contribution is not insignificant, employers' facilitation of such schemes testifies to their recognition of the softer benefits of volunteering to their organisations. For example, Barclays Bank currently involves over 19,500 of its staff in volunteering programmes worldwide (up from

12,000 in 2003)<sup>10</sup>. In an evaluation of the volunteering scheme in England, managers within the bank described improvements such as enhanced job satisfaction amongst employers, pride in Barclays as an employer, improved team-working, and a raised profile for the bank in the community<sup>11</sup>.

*'[It is my vision]... for our country to pioneer and be the first to achieve the day when it becomes the norm for...every employer [to have] a volunteering scheme for their employees'.*

Gordon Brown (2006)<sup>12</sup>

One area of volunteer-involvement which bridges economic and social development is social enterprise. These organisations have been defined as 'a business with primarily social objectives whose surpluses are principally reinvested for that purpose'<sup>13</sup>. They have therefore been understood as having a double bottom line, as being concerned with both economic and social impacts<sup>14</sup>. Social enterprises come in many shapes and forms, and include co-operatives, development trusts, social firms, community businesses, credit unions, intermediate labour market companies, employee-owned business, charity trading arms and housing associations.

Adopting a business-focused definition, the Office of the Third Sector estimate that there are over 55,000 social enterprises in the UK, generating more than £27 billion in turnover and contributing over £8 billion to the country's GDP<sup>15</sup>. If smaller, more informal organisations are included within the definition of social enterprises, the figure is much higher<sup>16</sup>.

There are no accurate figures to show the number of volunteers involved in social enterprise, but in some cases it has been calculated that there are more volunteers than paid staff<sup>17</sup>. A study of social enterprises in the East of England in 2001, for example, estimated that the 1,103 social enterprises in the region had around 30,000 full-time staff, 13,500 part-time staff, 1,000 trainees, and over 26,000 volunteers<sup>18</sup>. A later study for Cambridgeshire estimated that the 200 social enterprises in the county had 527 full-time staff, 460 part-time staff,

and 1,127 volunteers<sup>19</sup>. Moreover, the majority of the more informal enterprises working throughout the voluntary and community sector are staffed entirely by unpaid community activists<sup>20</sup>.

### The Big Life Group

The Big Life Group was formed in 2002 following the merger of The Big Issue in the North with Diverse Resources. The Big Issue in the North was the regional producer of the Big Issue street newspaper sold by homeless people.

The organisation has a bank of volunteers who operate across the groups' various businesses and charities. Volunteers initially ran the editorial department and distribution section. Volunteers from Lifeshare (a voluntary organisation providing soup and accommodation to Manchester's homeless population) also helped out. As the venture developed, the directors were able to create paid jobs for many former volunteers, and over time the organisation reduced its reliance on volunteers.

The Big Life Group is now one of the largest social enterprises in the UK, with an expected annual turnover of £10 million for the year 2006-2007. While relatively few volunteers are now involved, it could not have continued to help thousands of homeless people earn their own income without the initial help of volunteers<sup>21</sup>.

A great many volunteers are also involved throughout the public sector. In 2007, for 23 per cent of volunteers the main organisation they helped was within the public sector<sup>22</sup>. Schools, the health service, policing and the criminal justice system all involve considerable numbers of volunteers and would not be able to function in the same way without their work. This frequently involves volunteers in the delivery of public services, namely those services that are wholly or partly funded by government. The range of services that volunteers engage in is extensive. Volunteering England, for example, has identified 99 different volunteer roles within health and social care provision alone<sup>23</sup>.

Sources have listed numerous advantages to involving volunteers in the delivery of public services. These include the needs of the service-users of public institutions being better understood,





### Volunteering in health care provision

greater accountability as a result of volunteers sitting on committees, and participants feeling more connected to society<sup>24</sup>. In 2003 Community Service Volunteers (CSV) launched its Open Doors campaign to encourage the development of volunteer involvement in public services. Behind this was an acknowledgement of the unique contribution that volunteers can make. The campaign aimed 'to tap into this huge reserve of energy and skills and to lengthen and strengthen services, to develop citizen engagement and to enrich communities'<sup>25</sup>. Such a trend has also been driven by increasing awareness of the weaknesses of universal state provision of public services. Authors have described the state's lack of flexibility, its remoteness from users<sup>36</sup>, and its failure to meet the needs of society<sup>27</sup>.

*'If we are to realise our goal of world class public services we must tap into the accumulated wisdom of the voluntary and community sector and unlock the potential of volunteers and communities across the land.'*

HM Treasury (2002)<sup>28</sup>

The delivery of services by volunteers increasingly involves voluntary and community organisations. For example, a study in Norfolk indicated that in 2006, two-fifths of voluntary and community organisations that delivered services under contract involved volunteers, and of these, around one-tenth were entirely volunteer run<sup>29</sup>. Community-based organisations in particular rely heavily on volunteers and a central part of their mission can be the provision of a wide range of services and activities to the local community<sup>30</sup>. This can include community and sports events, caring for the elderly or people suffering from mental disability, improving the environment or activities that deal with drug and alcohol dependencies<sup>31</sup>. This illustrates the cross-cutting nature of volunteer involvement throughout and between the different sectors.

### Challenges and potential

Highlighting only the financial impact of volunteering can inevitably risk missing many of the wider benefits. It may also contribute to volunteers being seen as cost-cutting mechanisms or substitutes for paid staff positions. Within some parts of the public sector, some are questioning what an appropriate role for a volunteer is and whether volunteers are being taken advantage of as free labour. There is a need for transparent debate about the different economic and social contributions of volunteers and paid staff. If the unique added value of involving volunteers is acknowledged and understood, it is likely that volunteers and staff will complement one another; the impact of these relationships should be evaluated.

### Sustainable development

In 1987 the Brundtland Commission coined the phrase 'sustainable development' to highlight that economic growth could not continue to take place at the expense of social and environmental factors<sup>32</sup>. Volunteers have played a leading role in the movement to help achieve this, from recycling to campaigning for animal welfare.

### Local solutions to global problems

Research shows that the collective impact of environmental and sustainability projects that involve volunteers can be enormous<sup>33</sup>. Innovative recycling initiatives, for example, rely on the contribution of volunteers. In 2002 there were approximately 350 community recycling initiatives linked to the Community Recycling Network, and around 300 furniture recycling projects throughout England and Wales<sup>34</sup>. Volunteers are also involved in carbon offsetting initiatives, including woodland planting and management, as well as peat conservation<sup>35</sup>.

Much of this work can contribute towards national, regional and local targets to reduce greenhouse gases, a key priority for government: the 2007 Stern Review stated that 'climate change is a serious threat, and it demands an urgent response'<sup>36</sup>. Government has also acknowledged that much of this solution needs to come at the individual and local level. For example, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) recently launched its 'Every Action Counts' programme<sup>37</sup> to help community groups across England take action on sustainable development and climate change.

*'Individuals, households and communities have a crucial role to play in tackling climate change.'*

DEFRA (2006) Climate Change, the UK Programme<sup>38</sup>

Volunteers play a part in the promotion and development of more sustainable communities. The 6,500 miles of the UK's National Cycle Network are maintained by over 1,300 volunteer rangers, providing a sustainable form of transport for many communities. Volunteering can also help on a more indirect level by helping to foster an environmental consciousness amongst individuals and contributing to the development of environmental citizenship<sup>39</sup>. Evaluation of one programme within the UK National Cycle Network found that the main motivation for volunteers was a commitment to the environment and a sustainable transport system<sup>40</sup>. At least at the local level, this can help to address some of the problems facing the current transport system, the scale of which can be considerable: the 2006 Eddington Review of transport, for example, estimated the economic consequences of unchecked road congestion to business and freight to be £10 billion a year<sup>41</sup>.

### Conserving and protecting nature

Enormous numbers of volunteers are involved in the direct management of nature through community-based conservation<sup>42</sup> and by giving their time to organisations working with the natural environment. BTCV, the UK's largest practical conservation charity, currently works with over 130,000 volunteers throughout the UK<sup>43</sup> who contribute over 330,000 work days each year<sup>44</sup>, while the 57 regional trusts of the Wildlife Trusts support over 32,000 volunteers in wildlife conservation work<sup>45</sup>. Volunteers also play a major part in the work of heritage conservation organisations. The National Trust has over 49,000 volunteers giving their time in England, Wales and Northern Ireland<sup>46</sup>, a figure that increased by 30 per cent between 1993 and 2003<sup>47</sup>. This is also evident at the local level. An Audit Commission Best Value inspection of the Norfolk Broads Authority found that the work carried out with volunteers and the New Deal scheme increased the amount of environmental work that was undertaken, allowing the authority to do 'more than could be done by employed staff alone'. It highlighted that these two groups gave over 11,000 additional days of work to the Authority in 2001<sup>48</sup>.

*'The spark for and sustainability of the UK's key environmental organisations has depended on the active support of volunteers.'*

The National Trust (2004)<sup>49</sup>

### West Berkshire Partnership

The West Berkshire Partnership's Local Area Agreement aims 'to protect and enhance biodiversity' by measuring 'the increase in the total number of volunteers working on countryside conservation projects'. They have put in place a target of increasing the number of able-bodied volunteers from 815 in 2003/04 to 1,075 in 2008/09. They have also included specific targets for those volunteers with disabilities and younger volunteers<sup>50</sup>.

An area that relies heavily on the involvement of volunteers is biological recording, in which individuals collect information about plant and animal species, including distributional and frequency data. Many have noted how major ecological surveys, such as the British Trust for Ornithology's (BTO) distributional breeding atlases of birds, the UK's annual garden bird watch survey<sup>51</sup>, and, in the US, the Environmental Protection Agency's water quality survey<sup>52</sup> could not exist without the involvement of volunteers. In 1994, the then director of the BTO publicly stated how volunteer involvement in surveys could 'provide a basis for sound conservation action'<sup>53</sup>. Volunteers have been found to be able to successfully make accurate and valuable contributions to the work of scientists in surveys<sup>54</sup>. Being able to gather significant amounts of data in a short time is also seen as a particular strength of the volunteers that take part<sup>55</sup>. These volunteers are also being actively encouraged by the scientific community and government to record the number and diversity of key indicator species as part of the development of Biodiversity Action Plans at the local level<sup>56</sup>.

*'Britain could have the best developed and most highly integrated volunteer-based schemes for ornithological monitoring.'*

Greenwood (1994), the then Director of the British Trust for Ornithology<sup>57</sup>

### Liveability and regeneration

Much of the contemporary understanding of the role of communities in helping to improve liveability emerged from the Local Agenda 21 (LA21) process of the 1990s. The LA21 initiative was about self-help, self-development and community involvement, with 77 per cent of all local authorities having some form of strategy in place by 2000<sup>58</sup>. Many of the original principles can be seen in contemporary volunteer programmes. There are currently nearly 1,000 community gardens throughout the UK maintained by an estimated 500,000 volunteers<sup>59</sup>, a movement that combines environmental protection



Volunteering with BTCV

with social inclusion and grassroots community development<sup>60</sup>. The improvement of liveability at the local level can depend on community action through volunteering, much of which can be volunteer-led. There are an estimated 4,000 independent volunteer groups working to improve and manage their local parks and green spaces throughout the UK, having as many as 500,000 members in total. A very small minority of these groups employ any paid staff<sup>61</sup>.

Volunteers also form a central part of many local regeneration initiatives. In 2005 Groundwork encouraged volunteers to give 444,000 days of their time to improve their neighbourhoods. They directly supported more than 6,000 projects, all of which have an emphasis on local quality of life<sup>62</sup>. An evaluation of their activities in Wales found that the key partners involved were positive about the contribution of local Groundwork Trusts to the regeneration agenda and valued their ability to deliver local community-based projects in hard-to-reach areas<sup>63</sup>.

The success of wider regeneration initiatives can rely on effective community participation. Alongside consultation, volunteering can form an important component. The final evaluation of the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) recorded the number of volunteers involved as one of a series of indicators of the scheme's success. The 20 case studies of SRB-funded projects that made up the evaluation involved over 13,500 individuals in voluntary work, a figure that was 219 per cent of its target level. Across the SRB areas, the evaluation observed a significant increase in the proportion of those people feeling closely connected to the community and an increase in social cohesion. The evaluation also found that satisfaction with the local area increased by 4.5 per cent more than the England average during the life of the projects<sup>64</sup>.



Volunteering England Image Bank/BTCV ©

## Challenges and potential

While large numbers of people volunteer with the environment, relatively few are involved by comparison with volunteering in other sectors. In 2007, 8 per cent of those who volunteered formally gave their time to an organisation whose main remit is conservation, the environment or heritage, which can be compared to 31 per cent who volunteer with education<sup>65</sup>. The contribution of many of these volunteers can also risk going largely unnoticed, as is the case with many volunteers involved in biological recording<sup>66</sup>. It can also be difficult to quantify the extent that volunteers have had a direct impact on sustainable development targets and agendas. Many of the impacts of volunteering with the environment may only be felt in the longer term, and it can often only be the cumulative impacts of many individual projects that are discernable. It can also be difficult to distinguish the direct impacts of volunteering from the effect of other factors. For example, volunteering was only one of many elements which contributed to the neighbourhood improvements and social developments observed within the case studies of the national SRB evaluation<sup>67</sup>. However, the impact of volunteering as a form of participation is nonetheless a vital part of the process.

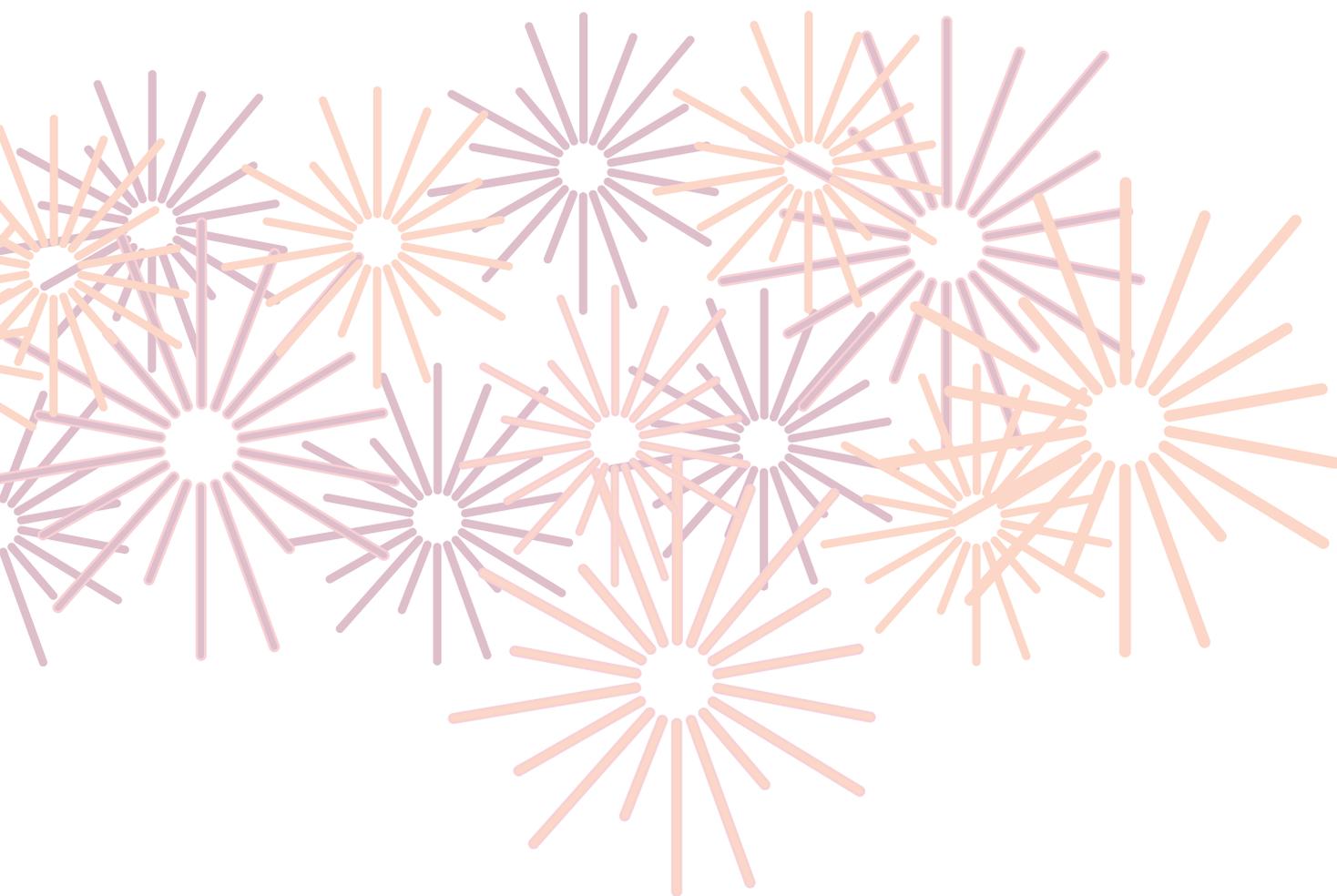
Research has also suggested that much volunteering within the environment may not yet be fully inclusive. Some project evaluations have pointed towards a lack of diversity of those volunteering, especially in terms of the ethnic background of those that take part<sup>68</sup>. Research has found that people from Black and minority ethnic groups, for example, can often experience exclusion from rural areas and the countryside<sup>69</sup>. If such barriers are adequately addressed, there appears to be potential for increasing the scale of volunteering on environmental and sustainable development objectives.

## Footnotes

- 1 HOCS (2004) *2003 Home Office Citizenship Survey: people, families and communities* Home Office Research: London
- 2 Low, N., Butt, S., Ellis Paine, A. and Davis Smith, J. (2007) *Helping out: a national survey of volunteering and charitable giving* Cabinet Office: London
- 3 Wildling, K., Clark, J., Griffith, M., Jochum, V. and Wainwright, S. (2006) *The UK Voluntary Sector Almanac 2007: the state of the sector* NCVO: London
- 4 DCLG (2006) *Community Assets - the benefits and costs of community management and ownership* DCLG: London
- 5 Gaskin, K. (2000) *Valuing volunteers in Europe: a comparative study of VIVA: Research Bulletin* IVR: London
- 6 Help the Hospices (2006) *Volunteer value: a pilot survey in UK hospices* Help the Hospices: London
- 7 Low, N. et al (2007) op. cit.
- 8 Kitchen, S., Michealson, J., Wood, N. and Peter, J. (2006) *2005 Citizenship Survey: active communities topic report* DCLG: London
- 9 HOCS (2004) op. cit.
- 10 Barclays Bank PLC (2007) *Barclays corporate social responsibility report* Barclays Bank PLC: London
- 11 IVR (2004) *Community Investment: the impacts of employee volunteering at Barclays Bank* IVR: London
- 12 Brown, G. (2006) *HMRC Corporate & Social Responsibility Conference* [http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/newsroom\\_and\\_speeches/press/2006/press\\_79\\_06.cfm](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/newsroom_and_speeches/press/2006/press_79_06.cfm) [accessed April 2007]
- 13 DTI (2002) *Speech by Douglas Alexander MP to the Social Enterprise London seminar 10/1/02* <http://www.dti.gov.uk/ministers/archived/alexander100102.html> [accessed April 2007]
- 14 DTI (2002) *Social enterprise: a strategy for success* DTI: London
- 15 Cabinet Office of the Third Sector (2006) *Social enterprise action plan: scaling new heights* Cabinet Office of the Third Sector: London
- 16 Macgillivray, A., Wadhams, C. and Conaty, P. (2001) *Low-flying heroes: micro-social enterprise below the radar screen* New Economics Foundation: London
- 17 Ecotec (2003) *Guidance on mapping social enterprise: final report to the DTI social enterprise unit* Ecotec: Birmingham
- 18 Stevenson, N. and Wakeman, T. (2001) *Making a living: mapping the social economy in the East of England* East of England Development Agency: Histon
- 19 Carson, M. (2006) *Social enterprise Cambridge: needs and priorities* Greater Cambridge Partnership and East of England Development Agency: Histon
- 20 Macgillivray, A., Wadhams, C. and Conaty, P. (2001) op. cit.
- 21 The Big Life Group (2006) *Annual report 2005/2006* The Big Life Group: Manchester
- 22 Low, N. et al (2007) op. cit.
- 23 [www.volunteering.org.uk/projects+and+initiatives/volunteersinhealth/socialcare](http://www.volunteering.org.uk/projects+and+initiatives/volunteersinhealth/socialcare) [accessed April 2007]
- 24 HM Treasury (2002) *Next Steps on Volunteering and Giving* HM Treasury: London
- 25 CSV (2004) *CSV annual review 2003/04: opening doors to active citizens* CSV: London
- 26 Hopkins, A. (2007) *Delivering public services: service users' experiences of the third sector by the National Consumer Council* National Consumer Council: London
- 27 Elstub, S. (2006) 'Towards an inclusive social policy for the UK: the need for democratic deliberation in voluntary and community associations' in *Voluntas* 17(1)
- 28 HM Treasury (2002) op. cit.
- 29 Stevenson, N. and McDaid, L. (2006) *The sector counts: researching the impact of Norfolk's voluntary and community sector for the Local Area Agreement* The Guild/Norwich and Norfolk Voluntary Services: Norwich
- 30 IVAR (2006) *Servants of the community or agents of government: The role of community-based organisations and their contribution to public services and civil renewal* IVAR: London; Community Alliance (no date given) *Transformation through community anchors* Community Alliance: London
- 31 DCLG (2006) op. cit.
- 32 Brundtland Commission (1987) cited in O'Riordan, T. (2000) 'The sustainability debate' in O'Riordan, T. (2000) (ed) *Environmental science for environmental management* Pearson Education Limited: Harlow
- 33 Church, C. and Elster, J. (2002) *Thinking locally, acting nationally: Lessons for national policy from work on local sustainability* Joseph Rowntree Foundation: York
- 34 Church, C. and Elster, J. (2002) *ibid.*
- 35 Dalgleish, J. (2006) *The opportunities for environmental volunteering to deliver Scottish Executive policies: a discussion paper* BTCV Scotland: Stirling
- 36 Stern, N. (2007) *Stern Review: the economics of climate change* HM Treasury: London
- 37 DEFRA (2006) *Every Action Counts* DEFRA: London
- 38 DEFRA (2006) *Climate change: the UK programme* DEFRA: London
- 39 Scottish Executive (2007) *Playing our part - the Scottish Executive's response to the Dalgleish report on environmental volunteering* Scottish Executive: Edinburgh
- 40 Ralston, R. and Rhoden, S. (2005) 'The motivations of volunteers on cycle trails: the case of the National Cycle Network, UK' in *Tourism and Hospitality Planning and Development* 2(2):101-114
- 41 Eddington, R. (2006) *The Eddington transport study, the case for action: Sir Rod Eddington's advice to government* HM Treasury and Department for Transport: London
- 42 Berkes, F. (2004) 'Rethinking community-based conservation' in *Conservation Biology* 18 (3)
- 43 BTCV (2005) *BTCV report and accounts for the year ended 31 March 2005* BTCV: Wallingford
- 44 Heritage Link (2004) *Volunteers and the historic environment* Heritage Link: London
- 45 IVR (2006) *Unlocking the potential? Reviewing the Wildlife Trusts' project to strengthen volunteering: Research Bulletin* IVR: London
- 46 National Trust (2007) *In-house data collection* National Trust: Swindon
- 47 Brewis, G. (2004) *National Trust Volunteer Survey 2004 Report* IVR: London
- 48 Audit Commission (2002) *Broads Authority: conservation of cultural heritage and volunteers and New Deal* Audit Commission: London
- 49 National Trust (2004) *Employee volunteering programme: An evaluation report 2001-2004* National Trust: Swindon
- 50 West Berkshire Partnership's Local Area Agreement [http://www.westberks.gov.uk/media/doc/h/i/LAA\\_6\\_Monthly\\_overview\\_text\\_report\\_-\\_December\\_06.doc](http://www.westberks.gov.uk/media/doc/h/i/LAA_6_Monthly_overview_text_report_-_December_06.doc) [accessed April 2007]
- 51 Greenwood, J. (1994) 'Trust the wildlife volunteers' in *Nature* 368 (6471): 490
- 52 Newman, C., Bueching, C. and Macdonald, D. (2003) 'Validating mammal monitoring methods and assessing the performance of volunteers in wildlife conservation' in *Biological Conservation* 113 (2): 189-197
- 53 Greenwood, J. (1994) op. cit.
- 54 Newman, C., Bueching, C. and Macdonald, D. (2003) op. cit.; Foster-Smith, J. and Evans, S. (2002) 'The value of marine biological recording data collected by volunteers' in *Biological Conservation* 113 (2): 490
- 55 Foster-Smith, J. and Evans, S. (2002) *ibid.*
- 56 Ellis, R. and Waterton, C. (2004) 'Environmental citizenship in the making' in *Science and Public Policy* 31 (2): 95-105
- 57 Greenwood, J. (1994) op. cit.
- 58 Holland, L. (2004) 'Diversity and connections in community gardens: a contribution to local sustainability' in *Local Environment* 9 (3): 285-305



- 59 [www.farmgarden.org.uk](http://www.farmgarden.org.uk) [accessed April 2007]
- 60 Holland, L. (2004) op. cit.
- 61 Ockenden, N. and Moore, S. (2003) *The community networking project final report* GreenSpace: Reading
- 62 Groundwork (2006) *For people, for places, for health: Groundwork's contribution to delivering public health targets* Groundwork: Birmingham
- 63 Baker Associates (2004) *The Groundwork movement in Wales: a review of its achievements* Baker Associates: Bristol
- 64 Rhodes, J., Tyler, P. and Brenna, A. (no date given) *The Single Regeneration Budget: final evaluation* Department of Land Economy, University of Cambridge: Cambridge
- 65 Low, N. et al (2007) op. cit.
- 66 Ellis, R. and Waterton, C. (2004) op. cit.
- 67 Rhodes, J., Tyler, P. and Brenna, A. (no date given) op. cit.
- 68 Black Environment Network (2002) *Environments for all: baseline review of BTCV's work with disadvantaged communities* BTCV: Wallingford; IVR (2006) op. cit.
- 69 Chakraborti, N. and Garland, J. (2004) 'England's green and pleasant land? Examining racist prejudice in a rural context' in *Patterns of prejudice* 38(4): 383-398



## 2 Safer and stronger communities

This chapter reports on the impact volunteering has on the development of both safer and stronger communities. It first examines the growing civil renewal agenda and the role of volunteering in helping to develop active citizenship and social cohesion. It then looks at the role of volunteering in relation to the development of safer communities through the involvement of volunteers throughout the criminal justice system and policing.

### Stronger communities

A key government policy area is the civil renewal agenda. This has been defined by government as ‘a way to empower people in their communities to provide the answers to our contemporary social problems’<sup>1</sup>. The government has described the three key ingredients of civil renewal as: active citizens; strengthened communities; and partnerships between local people and public sector bodies<sup>2</sup>. Within this, there has been an underlying emphasis on community involvement and the development of active citizenship, and there has been a specific focus on increasing levels of volunteering. In turn, volunteering contributes to the three key ingredients of the civil renewal agenda in a number of ways.

*‘The Government is committed to promoting active citizenship and civic engagement at all levels.’*

*Strong and Prosperous Communities (2006)*<sup>3</sup>

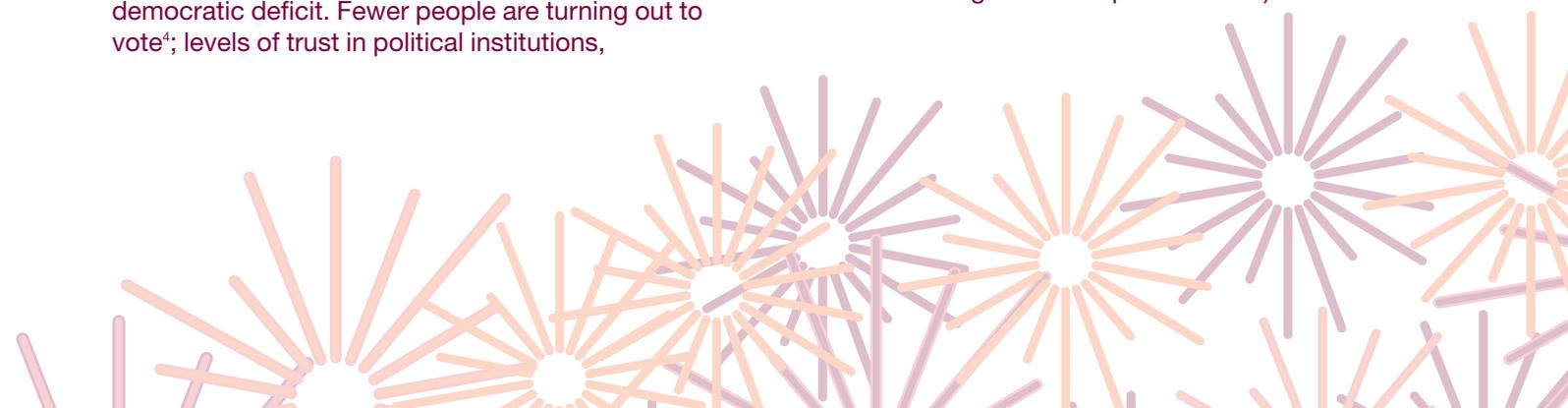
A key concern of government in the first few years of the 21st century has been to address the growing democratic deficit. Fewer people are turning out to vote<sup>4</sup>; levels of trust in political institutions,

politicians and each other are low<sup>5</sup>; there is a general sense of alienation from formal institutions; and fear of crime is rising<sup>6</sup>. These concerns were focused by Putnam’s work on the decline of social capital, in which he found that people were becoming less connected with each other and less trusting, and that this was resulting in a reduction in the ability of individuals, households and communities to help each other<sup>7</sup>.

Despite an apparent lack of interest in participating in formal political processes, there appears to be evidence to suggest that individuals still want to be involved as part of the solution. It seems that people are increasingly seeking to express their social cohesion and involvement in new ways<sup>8</sup>. For example, 37 per cent of the people that told the Power Enquiry they did not vote were members of, or active in, a charity, community group, public body or campaigning organisation<sup>9</sup>. While not all of these people are volunteers, many will be.

While volunteering and other forms of participation may provide alternative forms of engagement for some people, it has also been suggested that the act of volunteering itself can help to reduce the democratic deficit, and actually encourage engagement with the political process. The general idea is that through volunteering people learn to be better citizens (full of a sense of both their rights and responsibilities), but also that they will provide their own sustainable solutions to the problems they face with local services becoming more responsive. Subsequently, as people begin to see that they can make a difference through their volunteering they become more likely to vote, and the democratic deficit is reduced.

Volunteering also plays a central role in helping to develop more active citizens, a central component of civil renewal. A growing number of volunteers are getting involved in civic activism roles. This includes the involvement of individuals in decision-making processes, or participation in the provision of local services by taking on a role such as a local councillor, school governor or magistrate<sup>10</sup>. The services that volunteers can influence range from education through to health and local regeneration and housing initiatives, helping to deliver them in a way most suited to local needs. This concerns individuals developing new partnerships with public sector bodies, one of the three ingredients of the civil renewal agenda (see also chapter one for volunteering within the public sector).





Volunteers sitting on a board



Although most, but not all, of these individuals were volunteers, 9 per cent of the adult population in England had undertaken at least one civic activism role in 2005. Those that did were more likely than others to have a sense of being able to influence local decisions and of being actively involved in their communities<sup>11</sup>. The 2005 Citizenship Survey found that 57 per cent of people participating in civic activism roles felt they could influence local decisions, compared to 37 per cent who did not participate. By contrast, the North East has the lowest rates of volunteering, and people there are less likely to feel they could influence decisions affecting the local area<sup>12</sup>. Beyond their local areas, civic activists were also more likely to think that they could influence decisions affecting the whole country (29 per cent of those involved in civic activism, compared to 21 per cent of those not<sup>13</sup>). The positive link between volunteering and feelings of being able to influence decisions among individuals is central to government agendas such as Local Strategic Partnerships, Youth Referral Panels and tenant participation, which they interpret as ‘nurseries for democratic participation’<sup>14</sup>.

The development of active citizenship appears to be self-promoting: volunteering encourages further volunteering and can be part of a virtuous circle. In a survey of town and community councillors, for example, each councillor was active in two or three other organisations prior to joining the council, but they became active in one to six *more* after joining the council<sup>15</sup>.

There is a growing body of research to suggest that volunteering also leads to stronger communities and helps to build social capital. Volunteers develop wider networks with people in their communities, and become more trusting of each other. In an

evaluation of TimeBanks<sup>16</sup>, volunteers felt that through their involvement they were building friendships and trust, as well as improving their neighbourhoods<sup>17</sup>. This has also been reflected in the findings of the government’s 2005 Citizenship Survey<sup>18</sup>. Regular participation in voluntary activities was found to be connected to positive views of the neighbourhood: 91 per cent of those involved in formal volunteering agreed that people in their neighbourhood were willing to help each other, compared to 87 per cent who didn’t volunteer. Volunteers were also more likely to enjoy living in the neighbourhood, and to feel that others in the neighbourhood shared similar values to them. The Citizenship Survey also found that volunteering was associated with higher levels of trust of other people in the neighbourhood: 54 per cent of people who volunteered felt that many people in the neighbourhood could be trusted, compared to 45 per cent among those who didn’t volunteer. In such a context, the success of government policies to strengthen communities can depend on the involvement of volunteers. This appears to have been recognised: one of the five core indicators within the government’s Safer Stronger Communities Fund is the presence of volunteering in local areas<sup>19</sup>.

*‘...voluntary activity in the community is associated with better health, lower crime, improved educational performance and greater life satisfaction.’*

Whitely (2004)<sup>20</sup>



### The Bradford Community Strategy 20/20

In an attempt to understand what factors hold the community together, Bradford council conducted extensive consultation with the public around what constituted and affected community cohesion. The four key priorities identified were community safety, equality, community relations and active citizenship. The resultant Community Strategy 20/20 states that while difference is celebrated, connections between communities are clear. This focus on diversity and unity involves building solidarity, getting to know neighbours, and engendering a sense of place within communities.

Twelve cohesion targets were identified in the Community Plan, six of which are included within the Local Public Service Agreement (PSA). Bradford's Round One Local PSA target was a mixed target with four elements. This included 'participation', through involvement in Neighbourhood Forums as well as election turnout, and 'representation' of individuals in a variety of groups such as school governors. It also included 'repeat victimisation', interpreting a reduction in crime as having a positive impact on community cohesion. The fourth was a 'perception' target, which was considered to be the least effective measure due to the impact of factors outside the influence of the council, such as political or social issues in other countries<sup>21</sup>.

### Challenges and potential

While community involvement in volunteering appears to have a positive impact, several reports have pointed to its limitations, particularly with regards to equality of access. People do not participate equally, and as such they have different levels of access to the benefits of participation. Questions have also been raised as to how real any shifts in power actually are, in terms of whether local people are given more of a say in how things work, or whether they are simply being given more responsibility without the necessary power. For example, in a study of participation within tenant and resident associations (TARA) in the north of England, the uneven balance of power between the TARAs and the local authority was found to lead to a process of 'disempowering participation' which limited their organisational autonomy and their ability

to campaign<sup>22</sup>. Opportunities for participation need to be equitable, and attention should be paid to how volunteers are involved in such processes.

### Safer communities

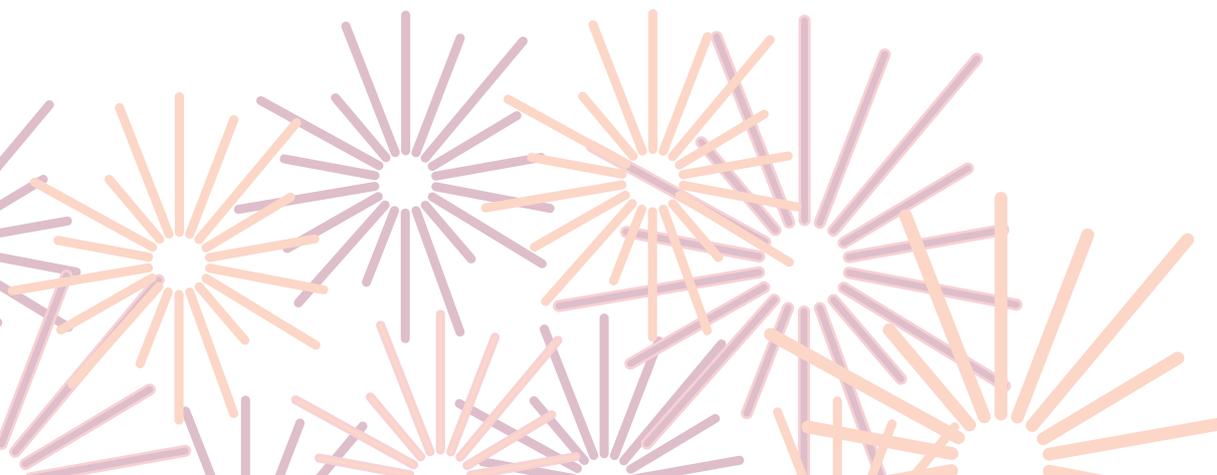
Volunteering helps to build safer communities<sup>23</sup>. Neighbourhood Watch is the largest voluntary movement in the UK, with over 165,000 schemes covering six million households and involving 10 million individual members. It relies on volunteers and the impacts can be notable. In one village in Yorkshire, for example, the establishment of a Neighbourhood Watch scheme led to a reduction in car crime by 44 per cent and burglaries by 24 per cent. It also recreated a community spirit and trust between residents and local agencies<sup>24</sup>.

*'Neighbourhood Watch volunteers around the country make an invaluable contribution to local crime reduction and community safety, improving the quality of life for individuals and neighbourhoods and making homes, streets and public spaces safer and better places to live and work.'*

ODPM (2005)<sup>25</sup>

Volunteers are directly involved in supporting the work of the criminal justice system and policing. This is an area which faces significant challenges. High rates of re-offending (in 2006, 60 per cent of adult offenders re-offended within two years<sup>26</sup>) and increasing prison numbers (over 80,000 in December 2006<sup>27</sup>) are just two dominating issues. The criminal justice sector is currently experiencing rapid and significant changes with the set up of the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) in 2004<sup>28</sup>, changes in the delivery of prison and probation services<sup>29</sup> and police restructuring.

A key objective of government is to 'reduce crime and anti-social behaviour and make people feel safer'<sup>30</sup>. Alongside the need to punish offenders, the importance of giving them the opportunity to reform has been recognised. The part played by volunteering and community engagement itself in



reducing crime and rates of re-offending has been highlighted in a number of government publications, strategies and programmes. Volunteers are, for example, central to the Neighbourhood Policing Programme<sup>31</sup> and the government's partnership alliances to reducing re-offending<sup>32</sup>.

## fact

The Home Office Public Service Agreement (PSA) sets the priorities for the Home Office over the spending review period 2005/06 to 2007/08. The PSA targets include:

- PSA 1: Reduce crime by 15 per cent, and further in high crime areas, by 2007/08.
- PSA 2: Reassure the public, reducing the fear of crime and antisocial behaviour, and building confidence in the criminal justice system without compromising fairness.

Home Office SR 2004 PSA targets, technical notes (2005)<sup>33</sup>

The involvement of volunteers across policing, prisons, probation, victim support, the courts and youth justice is broad and varied. Volunteer roles include special constables (currently numbering over 11,000<sup>34</sup>), prison visitors, mentors for offenders leaving prison, victim support volunteers, magistrates or Youth Offender Panel members<sup>35</sup>. While exact figures of the number of active volunteers are not available, their contribution is extensive. In England and Wales, an estimated 6,000 volunteers were involved in prisons through faith-based organisations in 2003<sup>36</sup>, while around 1,800 volunteers participated as members of Independent Monitoring Boards<sup>37</sup>. Offenders themselves can also be involved as volunteers. In many prisons offenders participate in listening schemes, mentoring, peer support or in community-based volunteering. An estimated 7 per cent of prisoners volunteer to help other prisoners<sup>38</sup>.

In NOMS, volunteering can play a vital role within the seven pathways for reducing re-offending<sup>39</sup>, helping offenders to develop the skills and confidence necessary to reintegrate into society. For example, volunteers can help the government meet its targets to transform the skills and employment prospects of offenders<sup>40</sup> by acting as mentors to help with literacy, numeracy and vocational skills. By providing advice and peer support on accommodation issues, volunteers can also contribute to meeting the government's target of 70,000 prisoners having found accommodation to go to after release<sup>41</sup>.

*[Volunteers provide] '...a valuable extra resource to the work of Prison and Probation Service staff as well as providing a fresh perspective.'*

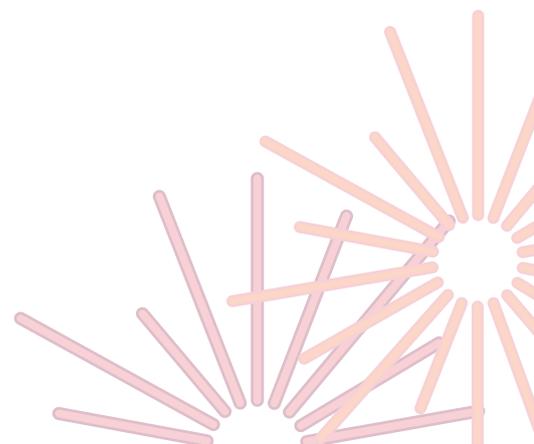
Baroness Scotland<sup>42</sup>



Volunteering on an information desk in a prison

Some studies suggest that volunteering can have an impact on the lives of offenders. An evaluation of CSV's Bedfordshire Mentors and Peers project found that 'the scheme has had a positive impact on the prevention of offending within the target group': 77 per cent of young offenders did not re-offend after being supported by a volunteer mentor<sup>43</sup>. The Sycamore Tree Programme, a victim awareness initiative which involved a number of volunteers, was found to be successful in changing the attitudes towards offending amongst offenders<sup>44</sup>. The national evaluation of the Youth Justice Board's 80 community mentoring projects found increases in the literacy and numeracy of the young people who were mentored by volunteers, and improvements in their attendance and behaviour at school. Fifty per cent of mentees from a Black and minority ethnic background also said that their involvement in community activities such as sports clubs and social clubs had increased as a result of their mentoring<sup>45</sup>.

Volunteers also have an impact in other areas of the criminal justice system. The organisation Victim Support currently involves 9,500 volunteers in helping to support victims and witnesses of crime, their friends and families. Through the provision of practical and emotional support, the involvement of volunteers contributes towards the government's aim to better meet the needs of victims of crime<sup>46</sup> and to increase contact with victims<sup>47</sup>. The government has also identified the part played by special constables and police support volunteers, pledging to increase the number and effectiveness of these volunteers as part of the development of a better police service<sup>48</sup>.



## Connect and Connect 2

Connect 2 is a European Social Fund project which aims to enhance the employability of prisoners from the West Midlands who are serving short sentences. Four probation boards and the prison service form the partnership for the initiative which currently involves 200 mentors through voluntary sector organisations with whom Connect has contracts. Twenty-seven per cent of Connect's budget is spent in the voluntary sector. Project workers engage short-sentence prisoners on a voluntary basis to motivate them to work on an action plan during sentence. The focus of the mentors' role is on supporting offenders as soon as they are released in order to help them achieve the action plan objectives. The mentor is also central to achieving re-integration into their home area for some of the most socially disadvantaged people in the criminal justice system. Volunteers from the offender's home community are able to signpost offenders to existing resources and support them during the crucial first weeks after release.

This project is the successor to the original Connect which was run between April 2003 and March 2005 and is producing impressive results. All targets for numbers into employment and for positive 'social' outcomes are being met and a national team, Re-Connect, has been set up with a view to making Connect-like provision for short sentence prisoners available across England and Wales<sup>49</sup>.



Connect / West Mercia Probation ©

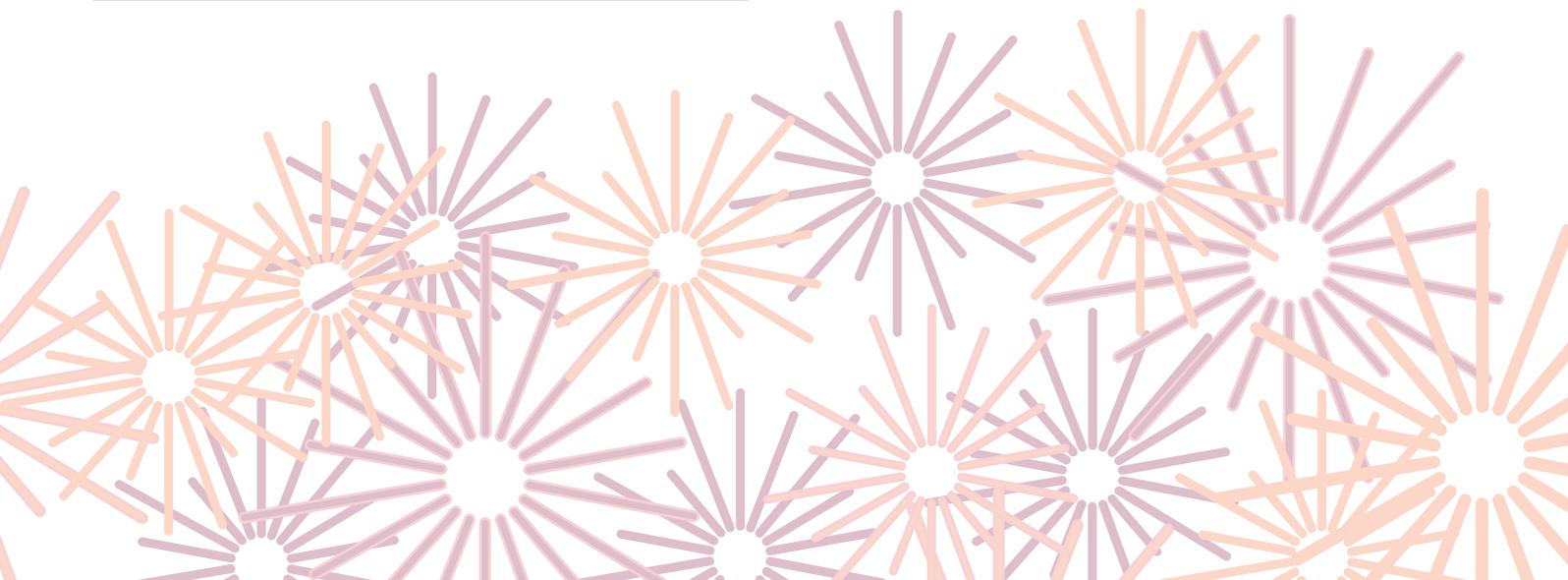
Volunteering with the Connect Project

## Challenges and potential

Many of the positive impacts of volunteering throughout the criminal justice system and policing can be subjective and hard to quantify, with robust data on its contribution to reducing rates of re-offending often lacking. In some cases, the positive impact of volunteers can be unclear. While the aforementioned evaluation of the Youth Justice Board's community mentoring projects identified numerous beneficial impacts, the evaluation found that many young people referred to the projects declined to participate or failed to engage with the mentors. Its smaller scale Depth Study, which involved formal assessments of the mentored young people, failed to find evidence of the reported gains in mentee behaviour, literacy and numeracy. The evaluation also stated that it could not provide convincing evidence to show that mentor programmes produce a reduction in offending within their first year<sup>50</sup>.

The existing evidence, which is often anecdotal in nature, does, however, often suggest that a large number of volunteers have a broad and far-reaching impact. In 2007 NOMS put its draft volunteering strategy out for consultation, a document that highlighted the current impact of volunteers on government targets and agendas<sup>51</sup>. This document recognised that the potential contribution of volunteers in helping to improve the lives of offenders, victims and the general public is greater than at present. It proposed the need to support and manage volunteers better as well as increasing the number and diversity of people volunteering.

The development of volunteering in this area needs to proceed with care. In a sector where issues of risk are particularly pertinent and where those supported by the work of volunteers, and those volunteering themselves, can be vulnerable, comprehensive and quality support for all those taking part is crucial.



## Footnotes

- 1 Home Office (2003) *Building civil renewal – a review of government support for community capacity building and proposals for change* Home Office: London p.1
- 2 Blunkett, D. (2003) *Active citizens, strong communities - progressing civil renewal: Scarman Trust Forum Lecture 2003* Scarman Trust: London
- 3 DCLG (2006) *Strong and prosperous communities: The local government white paper* DCLG: London
- 4 Power Enquiry (2006) *Power to the people: the report of an independent enquiry into Britain's democracy* York Publishing Services: York
- 5 Curry, N. (2000) 'Community participation in outdoor recreation and the development of Millennium Greens in England' in *Leisure studies* 19(1): 17-35; Goodwin, P. (1998) "Hired hands' or 'local voice'? Understandings and experience of local participation in conservation' in *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 23 (4): 481-499
- 6 NCVO (2005) Jochum, V., Pratten, B. and Wilding, K. (2005) *Civil renewal and active citizenship: a guide to the debate* NCVO: London
- 7 Putnam, R. (2000) *Bowling alone: the collapse and revival of American community* Simon and Schuster: New York
- 8 Curry, N. (2000) op. cit.; Goodwin, P. (1998) op. cit.
- 9 Power Enquiry (2006) op. cit.
- 10 Kitchen, S., Michealson, J., Wood, N. and Peter, J. (2006) 2005 *Citizenship Survey: active communities topic report* DCLG: London
- 11 Kitchen et al (2006) *ibid.*
- 12 Kitchen et al (2006) *ibid.*
- 13 Kitchen et al (2006) *ibid.*
- 14 ODPM (2005) *Citizen engagement and public services: why neighbourhoods matter* ODPM: London
- 15 Edwards, W. and Woods, M. (2006) 'Voluntarism and new forms of governance in rural communities' in Milligan, C. and Conradson, D. (eds) *Landscapes of voluntarism: new spaces of health, welfare and governance* in Policy Press: Bristol: 53-71
- 16 TimeBanks function by participants 'depositing' their time in a time 'bank' by giving practical help and support to others and being able to 'withdraw' their time when they need something done themselves. The use of the community currency based on time is measured in 'time credits'. For further information see [www.timebanks.co.uk](http://www.timebanks.co.uk).
- 17 Seyfang, G., 2002, *The time of our lives: using time banking for neighbourhood renewal* New Economics Foundation: London
- 18 Kitchen, S. et al (2006) op. cit.
- 19 Safer Stronger Communities Fund <http://www.neighbourhood.gov.uk/page.asp?id=1304> [accessed April 2007]
- 20 Whitely, P. (2004) *The art of happiness...is volunteering the blueprint for bliss?* ESRC: London
- 21 Local Government Association (2004) *Network meeting of local PSA.net community cohesion outcome paper* Local Government Association: London
- 22 Dalziel, R. (2006) *Partnership structures and governance at the local level: the case of tenant and residents associations (TARAs) and the council: Paper presented at the 10th international research symposium on public management* Glasgow Caledonian University: Glasgow
- 23 Whitely, P. (2004) op. cit.
- 24 ODPM (2005) op. cit. p.38
- 25 ODPM (2005) *ibid.* p.16
- 26 House of Commons (2006) *Research Paper 06/62: The Offender Management Bill* [[http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/pabills/200607/offender\\_management.htm](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/pabills/200607/offender_management.htm)]
- 27 NOMS (2006) *Prison population and accommodation briefing for 1st December 2006* Home Office: London
- 28 NOMS brings together the prison and probation services and other partners.
- 29 NOMS (2006) op. cit.
- 30 National Criminal Justice Board (2004) *Cutting crime, delivering justice: a strategic plan for criminal justice 2004-08* Home Office: London p.6
- 31 [www.neighbourhoodpolicing.co.uk/the\\_programme](http://www.neighbourhoodpolicing.co.uk/the_programme) [accessed April 2007]
- 32 <http://noms.homeoffice.gov.uk/about-us/working-with-partners/alliances/?version=3> [accessed April 2007]
- 33 Home Office (2005) *SR 2004 PSA targets, technical notes* Home Office: London
- 34 [http://police.homeoffice.gov.uk/news-and-publications/publication/national-policing-plan/wp04\\_complete.pdf?view=Binary](http://police.homeoffice.gov.uk/news-and-publications/publication/national-policing-plan/wp04_complete.pdf?view=Binary) [accessed April 2007]
- 35 For more information on the different volunteer roles in the criminal justice system visit [www.whatcanido.org.uk](http://www.whatcanido.org.uk)
- 36 Grimshaw, R. and Sanchez, L. (2003) *Mapping voluntary faith-based activity and organisations in prisons: a survey of Chaplains* The Centre for Crime and Justice Studies, School of Law, Kings College London: London
- 37 NOMS (2005) *Volunteering: a guide to good practice for prisons* Home Office: London
- 38 Prison Reform Trust (2002) *Barred citizens: volunteering and active citizenship by prisoners* Prison Reform Trust: London
- 39 The seven pathways are identified in the National and Regional Action Plans as accommodation; education, training and employment; mental and physical health; drugs and alcohol; finance, benefit and debt; children and families; and offenders' attitudes.
- 40 Newman, R. (2006) *Response to the green paper: Reducing re-offending through skills and employment* Youth Justice Board: London; The national resettlement outcome for the NOMS Business Plan 2006-7 is for 39,370 prisoners to have employment, training or education on release and 15,000 (in the community) to be placed into employment.
- 41 NOMS (2006) *National Offender Management Service business plan 2006-7* Home Office: London
- 42 <http://press.homeoffice.gov.uk/press-releases/baroness-scotland-launcheasternew> [accessed April 2007]
- 43 St James-Roberts, I., Greenlaw, G., Simon, A. and Hurry, J. (2005) *National evaluation of Youth Justice Board mentoring schemes 2001 to 2004* Youth Justice Board for England and Wales: London
- 44 [http://www.restorativejustice.org.uk/?RJ\\_in\\_Prison:Prison\\_Research](http://www.restorativejustice.org.uk/?RJ_in_Prison:Prison_Research) [accessed April 2007]
- 45 St James-Roberts, et al. (2005) op. cit.
- 46 Home Office (2005) *Rebuilding lives: supporting victims of crime* Home Office: London
- 47 NOMS (2006) *National Offender Management Service business plan 2006-7* Home Office: London
- 48 [http://police.homeoffice.gov.uk/news-and-publications/publication/national-policing-plan/wp04\\_complete.pdf?view=Binary](http://police.homeoffice.gov.uk/news-and-publications/publication/national-policing-plan/wp04_complete.pdf?view=Binary) [accessed April 2007]
- 49 West Mercia Probation (2007) *Email communication with Sue Chantler, ACO/Regional Project Manager* West Mercia Probation: Kidderminster
- 50 St James-Roberts, I. et al (2005) op. cit.
- 51 National Offender Management Service (2007) *Volunteers can: Towards a volunteering strategy to reduce re-offending: Consultation document* Home Office: London



# 3 Social inclusion

This chapter examines the role of volunteering in fostering social inclusion amongst individuals and communities. Its part in combating feelings of personal isolation, empowering individuals, enhancing people's sense of worth, helping individuals gain a range of skills, or providing a route to employment is explored<sup>1</sup>. Firstly, it examines the impact of volunteering on the development of social inclusion throughout communities, exploring the development of wider support systems and how it can encourage new ways of thinking. It then looks at how volunteering can empower and help integrate the individuals themselves.

## fact

The Cabinet Office's Public Service Agreement 4 target (element 1) is to 'increase voluntary and community sector engagement, especially amongst those at risk of social exclusion'. This consists of people from Black and minority ethnic groups, people with limiting long-term illnesses or disabilities, and people with no formal qualifications.

Cabinet Office (2006)<sup>2</sup>

## Social and economic support

Volunteering can help address the decline of civil, political and social rights of citizenship that is symptomatic of much social exclusion<sup>3</sup>. In particular, it connects people and helps to address feelings of personal isolation. The 2007 National Survey of Volunteering and Charitable Giving found that 86 per cent of volunteers said that they saw meeting people and making friends to be an important personal benefit of their volunteering. Similarly, 30 per cent of current volunteers got involved to meet people or make new friends<sup>4</sup>. This can be particularly important amongst older people. Here volunteering can lessen the isolation felt by those cut off from social networks in the workplace or their families<sup>5</sup>. It seems that this group of people is increasingly keen to experience this benefit: in 2007, 53 per cent of people aged 65 years and over had volunteered formally<sup>6</sup>. Due to different age categories, it is not

possible to make a direct comparison with previous surveys. However, the evidence suggests that more people of this age are getting involved. In 1997, 45 per cent of people aged between 65 and 74 years of age had volunteered compared to 34 per cent in 1991<sup>7</sup>.

*'Volunteering is an effective way for many people to alleviate the symptoms of social exclusion, and can help to address some of the causes.'*

Institute for Volunteering Research (2004)<sup>8</sup>

Mutual aid or self-help volunteering involves people with shared problems, challenges or conditions working together to address them, and can be particularly relevant to health and social welfare<sup>9</sup>. Through the development of friendships and the improvement of their neighbourhoods, this has been a particularly successful way to involve those socially excluded groups who may not want to take part in more formal, organised volunteering<sup>10</sup>. A major reason why community gardens developed throughout the UK was as a direct response to social exclusion, poverty and lack of resources<sup>11</sup>. There are now nearly 1,000 gardens throughout the UK growing food and providing a wide variety of services to their local communities<sup>12</sup>.

People from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds are considered to be a group at risk of social exclusion. Research has shown that there is often a close link between ethnicity and faith, with people from Black and ethnic minority backgrounds tending to feel that their religious beliefs are more fundamental to their sense of self-identity than white people<sup>13</sup>. This can in turn have an effect on volunteering within these communities. In 2007, 38 per cent of volunteers from an Asian background and 34 per cent from a Black background described a motivation to volunteer as being 'part of my religious belief'; this was the case for 15 per cent of white volunteers<sup>14</sup>.



Volunteering England Image Bank / Anne Misselwitz ©

Volunteering within a faith community

As with other forms of mutual aid, a great deal of faith-based volunteering can be informal and evolve spontaneously out of congregations or local groups<sup>15</sup>. In a study of faith-based voluntary action, all the faiths expected their members to give money and time<sup>16</sup>. This contribution is often significant, and individuals taking part in voluntary action within religious organisations can demonstrate greater commitment to organisational values than may be seen in other forms of volunteering<sup>17</sup>.

*[Institutions in faith communities] ‘...depend almost entirely on voluntary action for their survival: a large proportion of members volunteer regularly and an even larger number occasionally.’*

Lukka and Locke (2002)<sup>18</sup>

By bringing people from different backgrounds together, volunteering can also play a considerable part in addressing some of the causes of social exclusion<sup>19</sup>. It can help to challenge some of the stereotypes and misunderstandings that contribute to individuals and communities experiencing exclusion. For example, there is a tendency for people with disabilities to be perceived as the cared-for rather than the carers themselves<sup>20</sup>. Similarly, people with disabilities are frequently seen in terms of their disability and rarely as a resource themselves<sup>21</sup>. By taking part in volunteering, individuals have found that they have successfully challenged the stereotype of disabled people as the perennial recipients of charity<sup>22</sup>.

*‘Disabled people tend to be seen as passive recipients of volunteering. But disabled people, like non disabled people, can make valuable contributions to society by volunteering. Volunteering is key to social exclusion for disabled people.’*

Skill (1998)<sup>23</sup>

### Challenges and potential

Many cultures, especially in Asia, do not have a word to describe the act of volunteering, with understandings of ‘helping-out’ being far more prevalent<sup>24</sup>. The 2007 National Survey of Volunteering and Charitable Giving found that Asian

volunteers were the ethnic group least likely to report satisfaction as an important benefit of their volunteering<sup>25</sup>. For many communities from a Black and minority ethnic background, the bureaucracy and formality of many Western forms of volunteering can be off-putting<sup>26</sup>. Indeed, evidence suggests that voluntary activity through community-based organisations can be more inclusive than many forms of volunteering taking place through larger, sometimes more formalised, groups. People in semi-skilled manual jobs and those dependent on benefits are more likely as a percentage to volunteer through these more informal community roles<sup>27</sup>. It is therefore important to recognise the diversity of types of volunteering that contribute to social inclusion, especially the more informal, community-based varieties. Failing to recognise this can mean that a considerable amount of volunteering by groups at risk of social exclusion can go unnoticed and may remain undervalued<sup>28</sup>.

## Empowerment and integration

In a society in which people can feel increasingly excluded from mainstream political processes<sup>29</sup>, individuals and communities may look for, and have found, new forms of social and political expression, social cohesion and social involvement<sup>30</sup>. In this context, volunteering through campaigning and advocacy can form an important means of fostering social inclusion. This involves collective action in formal or informal groups, or as individuals, to secure or prevent change, and commonly involves activism or raising public awareness<sup>31</sup>. Increasingly, the internet and other forms of technology provide inclusive opportunities for people to participate, allowing excluded populations to create new ways of taking part and establishing and spreading ideas<sup>32</sup>. It has also been argued that involvement of volunteers in campaigning has played an important part in transforming politics, helping to make it more inclusive by challenging existing power structures, enriching democracy and creating ‘new decision-making arenas’<sup>33</sup>.

*‘Socially excluded and minority groups have created cybercommunities to find strength in online unity and fight silence on abuses of their rights.’*

United Nations Development Programme (1999)<sup>34</sup>



Volunteering can also give the individual volunteer the confidence and skills necessary to change their environment and themselves. By getting involved and making a contribution to society, people's sense of self-worth can be enhanced<sup>35</sup>. Research by the National Centre for Volunteering found a range of benefits, including empowerment, the development of community spirit, and the retention of identity<sup>36</sup>. Volunteering can also increase the independence of those that may lack self-confidence or self-esteem. People with disabilities can often find that volunteering can help to introduce control over their choices and decisions, as well as allowing them to develop new and existing skills<sup>37</sup>.

## fact

People giving their background as Black demonstrated the highest levels of formal volunteering for any ethnic group, 42 per cent having volunteered at least once in the previous year compared to 39 per cent of white people.

Home Office Citizenship Survey (2001)<sup>38</sup>

Volunteering can provide socially excluded individuals with a range of hard (vocational) skills and soft (interpersonal) skills<sup>39</sup>. Volunteering can demonstrate an individual's ability to work, and can act as a precursor to paid employment<sup>40</sup>. It provides an opportunity for those who may be excluded from the job market to become integrated. Volunteering by people with disabilities can be a valuable way for them to gain access to employment through informal and continuous learning opportunities<sup>41</sup>. This is of note given that unemployment amongst people with disabilities is approximately two and a half times the national average<sup>42</sup>. In the context of recent understandings of social exclusion being focused on the exclusion of individuals from paid work<sup>43</sup>, volunteering has a clear role to play.

This can be particularly relevant to refugees and asylum seekers, a group that often experience social exclusion when they enter the UK. While those

seeking asylum or appealing against a decision to refuse asylum have not been able to take paid work since a Home Office decision in 2002, they are able to volunteer<sup>44</sup>. Research by the Department of Work and Pensions found that 29 per cent of refugees had undertaken voluntary work<sup>45</sup>, while a study of 57 refugees in Wales found that 22 per cent had volunteered since arriving in the UK<sup>46</sup>. In one study, this figure was as high as 36.5 per cent of refugees<sup>47</sup>. The most common type of work was welfare and giving advice to new arrivals, although administration for the group and interpretation and translation services were also frequently seen.

The impact of volunteering for refugees and asylum seekers can be considerable. It plays an important part in helping people to settle in and obtain work, as well as allowing individuals to take control of their lives at a difficult time, providing them with choices about their activities<sup>48</sup>. In a study of volunteer refugee and asylum seekers in Wales, 100 per cent of respondents felt that it helped towards their integration and 85 per cent felt that it helped them to build self-esteem. A crucial impact of this form of volunteering is the link it has to obtaining work. This can be indirectly through improved confidence, language skills, understanding of work cultures and processes, and developing relationships with British people<sup>49</sup>. However, it can also have a much more direct link, often being seen by refugees and asylum seekers as essential for gaining references and work experience<sup>50</sup> (for further information on the impact of volunteering on the development of skills and the link to gaining employment, see chapter five).

*'Volunteering...plays a key role in enabling individuals, communities and organisations to integrate.'*

INVOLVE (2006)<sup>51</sup>



Volunteering England Image Bank/Chalky Whyte ©

Welcoming visitors at a community event



Volunteering England Image Bank /Anne Misselwitz

A volunteer mentor session

While volunteering can provide a valuable means of breaking the cycle of social exclusion associated with a lack of paid employment, there are some long-excluded groups who may never be able to return to the labour market<sup>52</sup>. In these cases, volunteering can help support them to participate in other ways. It also provides a valuable alternative to work for those that do not wish to or are unable to engage in paid employment<sup>53</sup>.

## Challenges and potential

The 2007 National Survey of Volunteering and Charitable Giving found lower levels of formal volunteering among groups at risk of social exclusion, in particular those with a limiting long-term illness or disability<sup>54</sup>. Similarly, the majority of organisations in the study *Volunteering for All?* said that individuals from Black and minority and ethnic backgrounds, people with disabilities, and ex-offenders were underrepresented among their volunteers. It subsequently stated that volunteering is not yet inclusive<sup>55</sup>. As has already been seen, this appears to be the case with certain forms of volunteering, such as with the environment, which can demonstrate lower levels of engagement by Black and minority ethnic groups (see chapter one).

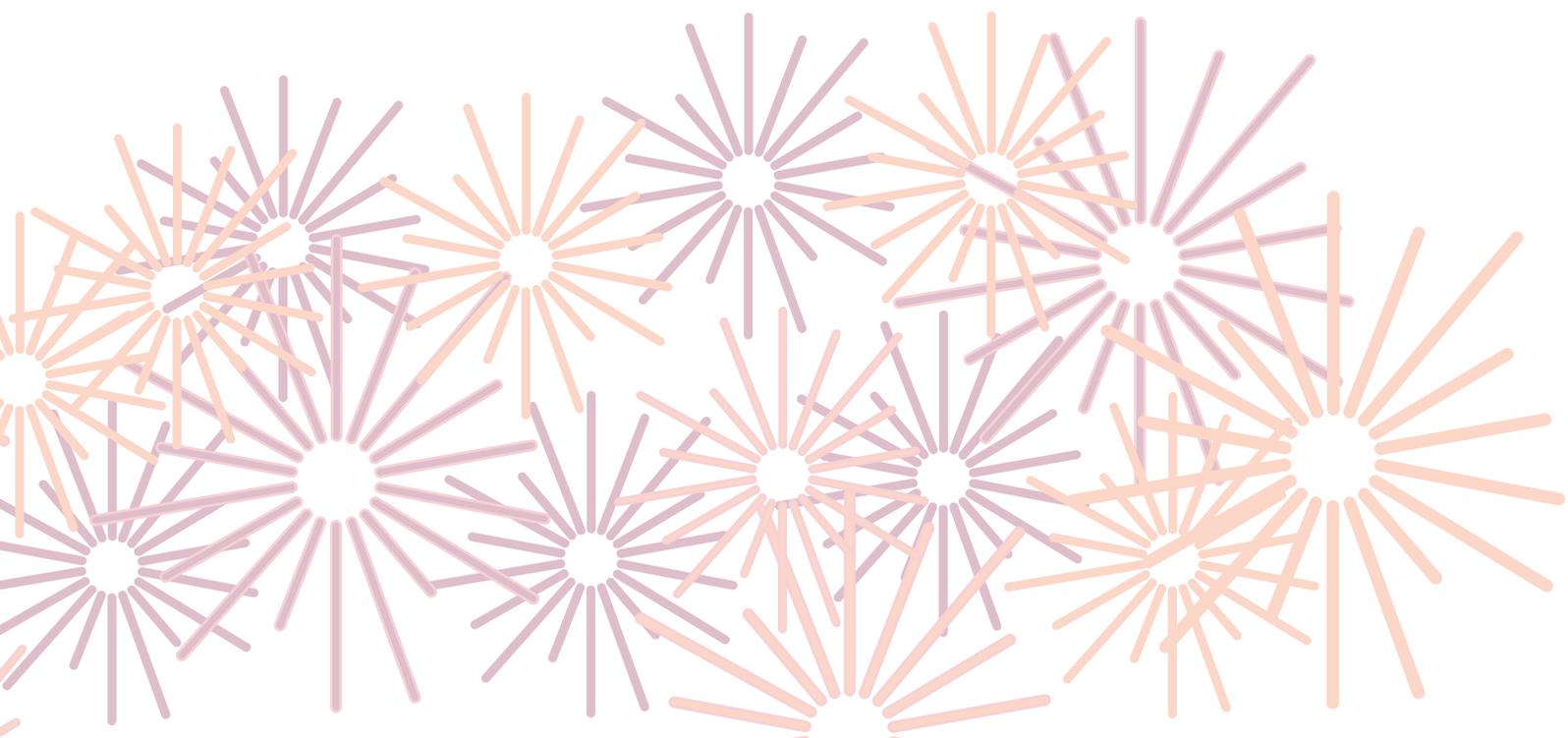
It is possible that people at risk from social exclusion can experience a number of barriers to taking part in volunteering. These can include the pressures of low paid work and a lack of English language skills for refugees and asylum seekers<sup>56</sup>, or upper age limits for some volunteering opportunities for older volunteers<sup>57</sup>. The study *Volunteering for All?* found that a fear of losing welfare benefits could put some individuals off volunteering. While the regulations state that most benefits claimants can volunteer for an unlimited amount of hours, the research found that the message did not always get through, with some potential volunteers remaining too fearful to give their time<sup>58</sup>. It is important that the factors which can prevent people from volunteering are fully understood and mitigated wherever possible.

## Footnotes

- 1 These some of the negative characteristics of social exclusion, as described in IVR (2004) *Volunteering for all? Exploring the link between volunteering and social exclusion* IVR: London
- 2 Cabinet Office (2006) *Autumn performance report 2006* Cabinet Office: London
- 3 Walker, A. and Walker, C. (1997) (eds) *Britain divided: the growth of social exclusion in the 1980s and 1990s* Child Poverty Action Group: London
- 4 Low, N., Butt, S., Ellis Paine, A. and Davis Smith, J. (2007) *Helping out: a national survey of volunteering and charitable giving* Cabinet Office: London
- 5 IVR (2001) *Age discrimination and volunteering* IVR: London
- 6 Low, N. et al (2007) op. cit.
- 7 Davis Smith, J. (1998) *The 1997 national survey of volunteering* The National Centre for Volunteering: London; Lynne, N. and Davis Smith, J. (1991) *The 1991 national survey of voluntary activity in the UK* The Volunteer Centre UK: Berkhamstead
- 8 IVR (2004) op. cit.
- 9 Davis Smith, J. (2000) 'Volunteering and social development' in *Voluntary Action* 3(1): 9-23
- 10 Seyfang, G., 2002, *The time of our lives: Using time banking for neighbourhood renewal* New Economics Foundation: London
- 11 Holland, L. (2004) 'Diversity and connections in community gardens: a contribution to local sustainability' in *Local Environment* 9 (3): 285-305
- 12 www.farmgarden.org.uk [accessed April 2007]
- 13 Atwood, C., Singh, G., Prime, D., Creasey, R. and others (2003) *2001 Home Office Citizenship Survey: people, families and communities* Home Office Research: London
- 14 Low, N. et al (2007) op. cit.
- 15 Lukka, P. and Locke, M. with A. Soteri-Procter (2003) *Faith and voluntary action: communities, values and resources* Volunteering England: London
- 16 Lukka, P. and Locke, M. with A. Soteri-Procter (2003) *ibid.*
- 17 Cameron, H., Richter, P., Davies, D. and Ward, F. (2005) *Studying local churches: a handbook* SCM Press: London
- 18 Lukka, P. and Locke, M. with A. Soteri-Procter (2003) op. cit.
- 19 IVR (2004) op. cit.
- 20 Niyazi, F. (1996) *Volunteering by Black people: a route to opportunity* NCV: London
- 21 Retired and Senior Volunteer Programme (2000) *Disability need be no handicap: creating opportunities in volunteering* RSVP: London
- 22 Skill (1998) *Volunteering key to social inclusion for disabled people* www.skill.org.uk/PRvolunteeringinclusion.htm [accessed January 2000]
- 23 Skill (1998) *ibid.*
- 24 Bhasin, S. (1997) *My time, my community, myself: experiences of volunteering within the Black community* The National Centre for Volunteering: London; Leigh, R. (2000) *Black elders project report* Leicester Volunteer Centre: Leicester
- 25 Low, N. et al (2007) op. cit.
- 26 Niyazi, F. (1996) op. cit.; Leigh (2000) op. cit.
- 27 nfpsynergy (2005) *Charity awareness monitor: Executive overview* nfpsynergy: London
- 28 Kinds, H., Munz, A. and Horn, L. (2000) *Volunteering into participation: a strategy for social inclusion, 2000* Community Partnerships Consultants
- 29 Curry, N. (2000) 'Community participation in outdoor recreation and the development of Millennium Greens in England' in *Leisure studies* 19(1): 17-35



- 30 Warburton, D. (1997) *Participatory action in the countryside, a literature review* Countryside Commission: Cheltenham; Giddens (1998) cited in Goodwin, P. (1998) 'Hired hands' or 'local voice'? Understandings and experience of local participation in conservation' in *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 23 (4): 481-499
- 31 Davis Smith, J. (2000) 'Volunteering and social development' in *Voluntary Action* 3(1): 9-23
- 32 Davis Smith, J. (2000) *ibid.*
- 33 Della Porta, D. and Diani, M. (1999) *Social movements: an introduction* Blackwell: Oxford, p.254
- 34 UNDP (1999) cited in Davis Smith, J. (2000) 'Volunteering and social development' in *Voluntary Action* 3(1): 9-23
- 35 IVR (2004) *op. cit.*
- 36 Bhasin, S. (1997) *op. cit.*
- 37 Niyazi, F. (1996) *op. cit.*
- 38 Attwood, C. et al (2003) *op. cit.*
- 39 IVR (2004) *op. cit.*
- 40 Kinds, H., Munz, A. and Horn, L. (2000) *op. cit.*
- 41 Goss, N. (2000) *Mind the gap: disability, opportunity and employment* Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation: London
- 42 Skill (1998) *op. cit.*
- 43 Morris, J. (2001) 'Social exclusion and young disabled people with high levels of support needs' in *Critical Social Policy* 21(2)
- 44 Wilson, R. (2003) *The a-z of volunteering and asylum: a handbook for managers* National Centre for Volunteering: London
- 45 Department for Work and Pensions (2005) *Working to rebuild lives* DWP: London
- 46 Dooner, P. (2005) *Valuing volunteers: The value of volunteering for refugees and asylum seekers: Executive summary* Wales Council for Voluntary Action: Cardiff
- 47 Gillet, L. and Gregg, A. (1999) *Volunteering as a route to employment for refugees: Paper presented at the Volunteurop conference in Madrid, October 14-18 1999* Volunteurop: Madrid
- 48 INVOLVE (2006) *Involvement of third country nationals in volunteering as a means of better integration: Final project report* European Volunteer Centre: Brussels
- 49 Wilson, R. and Lewis, H. (2006) *A part of society: Refugees and asylum seekers volunteering in the UK* Tandem: Leeds; Stopforth, S. (2001) 'The effects of volunteering on refugees' prospects of getting paid work' in *Voluntary Action* 4(1):11-27
- 50 Stopforth, S. (2001) *ibid.*; Gillet, L. and Gregg, A. (1999) *op. cit.*
- 51 INVOLVE (2006) *op. cit.*
- 52 Kinds, H., Munz, A. and Horn, L. (2000) *op. cit.*
- 53 IVR (2004) *op. cit.*
- 54 Low, N. et al (2007) *op. cit.*
- 55 IVR (2004) *op. cit.*
- 56 INVOLVE (2006) *op. cit.*
- 57 IVR (2001) *op. cit.*
- 58 IVR (2004) *op. cit.*



# 4 Quality of life

This chapter explores the impact volunteering can have on the quality of life of the volunteers themselves. Firstly, it discusses the part volunteering plays in contributing to the contentment and satisfaction of the individual volunteer. It then explores some of the impacts of volunteering on the physical and mental health of individual volunteers.

## Contentment and satisfaction

One of the most basic outcomes of volunteering is that it can give those that take part pleasure. Satisfaction and enjoyment have been identified as the top two benefits of volunteering<sup>1</sup>, with volunteering as a pastime ranked highly as a source of 'joy' in one study<sup>2</sup>. Further research explores the idea that volunteering gives people feelings of enhanced well-being. Over 85 per cent of three thousand surveyed volunteers in one study reported enhanced well-being after volunteering, which was identified by the researcher as a 'helper's high'<sup>3</sup>. Relationships between volunteering and well-being, happiness, self-esteem and self-reported physical health have been identified, with the suggestion that people feel better in themselves as a result of being involved<sup>4</sup>.

**fact** 96 per cent of volunteers identified 'I really enjoy it' as a very important or important personal benefit to them of their volunteering.

Helping Out: a National Survey of Volunteering and Charitable Giving (2007)<sup>5</sup>

These feelings of well-being help to explain why research often identifies that volunteers can enjoy a higher quality of life than non-volunteers<sup>6</sup>. A study of a small number of individuals with a disability suggested that participating in volunteer activities is an essential component of their life satisfaction, and that being a volunteer is a valued role for people with disabilities<sup>7</sup>. Higher life satisfaction through volunteering has also been reported within other groups of volunteers<sup>8</sup>.

These findings can be understood in the context of the positive link between social integration (how much a person is connected to others) and

subjective evaluations of well-being. Research has found that people feel happier when they are engaged in activities where they can meet and mix with others, and volunteering provides an opportunity for this<sup>9</sup>. This can be described as social capital, often interpreted as the glue that binds communities together. Volunteering can have a role to play in helping people to work together in communities (see chapter two for further information). One outcome is a more healthy community in terms of participation and trust, while another is that by associating as volunteers, people become healthier themselves<sup>10</sup>. Within the UK, people who live in areas with higher levels of informal voluntary activity report better overall life satisfaction and happiness, and they often identify themselves as very satisfied with their lives. This is irrespective of the social class of the area: it is possible for a relatively poor community with lots of voluntary activity to do better in relation to health than a more affluent one where voluntary activity is missing<sup>11</sup>.

## Challenges and potential

The impact of volunteering on the contentment and satisfaction of those that take part can often be subjective. Factors such as happiness or enjoyment cannot be assessed objectively and will be personal to the individual involved. It can also be difficult to determine the extent to which volunteering contributes to the development of social capital within communities in comparison to other forms of participation and interaction. These benefits should nonetheless be considered in any holistic appreciation of the place and value of volunteering.

## Physical and mental health

The health benefits of volunteering are demonstrated by studies showing that volunteers report feeling better and have higher contentment with life after they volunteer; but there are also studies that use more objective measures to report similar health gains. Encompassing some of the broader impacts, the term 'philanthropy' was coined to convey the idea that volunteers receive considerable therapeutic benefit through their altruistic behaviour<sup>12</sup>. This includes a range of different impacts, including a faster recovery from health problems, reduced stress, a boosted immune and nervous system and reduced heart rate and blood pressure<sup>13</sup>. Some of the effects on physical health can be most noticeable in older volunteers, where the benefits of keeping active can be most pronounced. This can include a reduced risk of disability and mortality<sup>14</sup>, and longer life expectancy compared to non-volunteers<sup>15</sup>.

Volunteers often experience an improvement in their physical health as a result of involvement in practical

and active tasks. One example is work in the environment. Groundwork is focused on improving local environmental conditions, but research has demonstrated that participation also improves the health of the volunteers taking part<sup>16</sup>. Other schemes connected to the environment have a more direct focus on health. Over 1,300 people volunteered in Green Gyms in 2004<sup>17</sup>, undertaking environmental conservation work as an alternative to traditional gyms. Green Gyms can take referrals from GP surgeries, promoting volunteering as an enjoyable way to get fit. It has been noted that the mix of referred participants with ordinary volunteers has a beneficial effect: people who join to achieve better health sometimes stay on because they become as motivated about environmental improvement as they do about health improvement<sup>18</sup>. The benefits of involvement include raised awareness of the importance of physical activity on their health, with over 80 per cent of respondents in one evaluation reporting increased energy levels<sup>19</sup>. Participation in some Green Gym activities has also been shown to use more calories per minute than aerobics<sup>20</sup>. Other benefits have included feeling fitter and more flexible, having more stamina<sup>21</sup>, and experiencing reduced stress levels<sup>22</sup>. In the context of the direct cost of obesity to the UK amounting to £0.5 billion, and the indirect annual cost to the economy being as high as £2 billion<sup>23</sup>, the benefits to the personal health of those that take part in volunteering are significant.

Many studies identify lower levels of depression for self-reported health volunteers, especially for those who are older<sup>24</sup>. Mental health benefits have in some instances been identified for older volunteers, but not for middle-aged people in the same study. Research suggests that this can be related to the part played by volunteering in providing opportunities for individuals to contribute meaningfully through a variety of roles<sup>25</sup>. Volunteering, through the act of participation, can also help to address the negative psychological impacts that can be associated with the loss of social roles for some individuals. Volunteering is also highly beneficial to other age groups, and can have a positive impact on younger groups of volunteers if it is sustained<sup>26</sup>. The benefits for volunteers with mental health problems include increased confidence and self-esteem<sup>27</sup>, having fun, enjoying themselves, gaining skills and meeting new people<sup>28</sup>. It has been estimated that Britain loses £12 billion of economic output each year to chronic depression and anxiety<sup>29</sup>, a figure that could potentially be ameliorated through the positive benefits of volunteering.

### The Green Key Project

The Gwent Wildlife Trust's Green Key Project works with volunteers to help manage the Magor Marsh reserve. The project involves people recovering from mental health problems, having developed as a result of a partnership between the community occupational therapists of Newport Community Mental Health Team and the Gwent Wildlife Trust. It is designed to give people the chance to volunteer with wildlife who might not otherwise get involved, and gives people the opportunity to undertake physical conservation tasks and activities in an outdoor, natural environment.

A grant from the Wildlife Trust's Lottery-supported 'Unlocking the Potential' programme funded the initial development of the programme, whilst further financial support came from the Welsh Assembly via the Welsh Council for Voluntary Action. The project is now funded by the Big Lottery Fund, the Pilgrim Trust and Corus Strip Products UK. Volunteers reported increased personal development and confidence, enhanced social contacts, a sense of inclusion, stability and routine, improved mental well-being and the development of new skills as a direct result. One of the volunteers was a runner up in the Wales Volunteer of the Year in 2005, having gone on to secure employment as a warden at the reserve as a direct result of their experience.<sup>30</sup>



© 2006 Gwent Wildlife Trust

Volunteers with the Green Key Project

## Challenges and potential

The evidence suggests that volunteering has a positive effect on the mental and physical health of the individuals involved. A considerable amount of the research, however, relies on the self-reported health gains of the volunteers that take part, saying themselves whether they think they feel better as a result of volunteering. In some cases volunteering may have a limited effect on the health of individuals unless sustained. For example, participation once a week in Green Gyms was shown to be too infrequent to show sufficient health benefits<sup>31</sup>. It can also be difficult to say whether it is the volunteering itself that makes people feel better, or whether people who are by and large happy and healthy tend to volunteer more. Similarly, it can be difficult to be clear what impact volunteering has as a form of participation over and above other ways of being involved, such as attending activities at a day centre, for example. The evidence suggests that it is nonetheless worth encouraging volunteering as part of an holistic approach towards becoming a healthier and happier society.

## Footnotes

- 1 Low, N. Butt, S., Ellis Paine, A. and Davis Smith, J. (2007) *Helping out: a national survey of volunteering and charitable giving* Cabinet Office: London
- 2 Argyle, M (1996) *The social psychology of leisure* Penguin: London
- 3 Luks, A., with Payne, P. (1991) *The healing power of doing good: the health and spiritual benefits of helping others* Fawcett Columbine: New York
- 4 Wilson, J. and Musick, M. (1999) 'The effects of volunteering on the volunteer' in *Law and contemporary problems* 62(4):141-168; Wilson, J. and Musick, M. (2000) 'Who Cares? Toward an integrated theory of volunteer work' in *American Sociological Review* 62: 694-713; Musick, M. and Wilson, J. (2003) 'Volunteering and depression: the role of psychological and social resources in different age groups' in *Social Science and Medicine* 56(2):259-69; Thoits, P. and Hewitt, L. (2001) 'Volunteer work and social well-being' in *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 48:175-187; Van Willigen, M. (2000) 'Differential benefits of volunteering across the Life Course' in *Journal of Gerontology: Social sciences* 55B: 308-318; Wheeler, J., Gorey, K. and Greenblatt, B. (1998) 'The beneficial effects of volunteering for older adults and the people they serve: a meta-analysis' in *International Journal of Ageing and Human Development* 47: 69-80
- 5 Low, N. et al (2007) op. cit.
- 6 Wheeler, J., Gorey, K. and Greenblatt, B. (1998) op. cit.
- 7 Caldwell, K. and Wiegand, M. (2001) *Volunteer participation and life satisfaction among people with disabilities: a pilot study* School of Health and Graduate Program in Occupational Therapy: Philadelphia
- 8 Morrow-Howell, N., Kinnevy, S. and Mann, M. (1999) 'The perceived benefits of participation in volunteer and educational activities' in *Journal of Gerontological Social Work* 32: 65-80; Pancer, M. and Pratt, M. (1999) 'Social and family determinants of community service involvement in Canadian Youth' in Yates, M, and Youniss, J. (eds) *Community service and activism in youth* University of Chicago Press: Chicago
- 9 Wilson, J. and Musick, M. (2000) op. cit.
- 10 Putnam, R. (2000) *Bowling alone: the collapse and revival of American community* Simon and Schuster: New York
- 11 Pattie, C., Seyd, P. and Whiteley, P. (2004) *Citizenship in Britain: values, participation and democracy* Cambridge University Press: Cambridge
- 12 Konwerski, P., and Nashman, H. (2007) 'Philanthropy: a paradigm of social exchange with dual benefits' in *Voluntary Action* 8 [www.ivr.org.uk/voluntaryaction](http://www.ivr.org.uk/voluntaryaction)
- 13 Konwerski, P. and Nashman, H. (2007) *ibid.*
- 14 Glass, T., Seeman, T., Herzog, A., Khan, R. and Berkman, L. (1995) 'Change in productive activity in late adulthood: MacArthur studies of successful aging' in *Journals of Gerontology, Series B: Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences* 50 (2): S65-S76
- 15 Luoh, M. and Herzog, A. (2002) 'Individual consequences of volunteer and paid work in old age: health and mortality' in *Journal of Health and Social Behaviour* 49:490-509; Musick, M., Herzog, A. and House, J. (1999) 'Volunteering and mortality among older adults: findings from a national sample' in *Journals of Gerontology, Series B: Psychological Sciences and Social Science* 54B (3):S173-S180; Oman, D., Thoresen, C. and McMahon, K. (1999) 'Volunteerism and mortality among the community-dwelling elderly' in *Journal of Health Psychology* 4(3): 301-16
- 16 Groundwork (undated) *For people, for places, for health: Groundwork's contribution to delivering health targets* Groundwork UK: London
- 17 BTCV (2005) *BTCV report and accounts for the year ended 31 March 2005* BTCV: Wallingford
- 18 Conservation Volunteers Northern Ireland (undated) *Green Gym evaluation* [http://www.cvni.org/greengym/evaluation/evaluation\\_2002\\_2003.html](http://www.cvni.org/greengym/evaluation/evaluation_2002_2003.html) [accessed April 2007]; Reynolds, V. (2000) 'The Green Gym' *Voluntary Action* 2(2):15-26; Monaghan, L. (2002) *An evaluation of the Green Health Partnership: mental health benefits and satisfaction with the service* Amber Valley Community Mental Health Team: Belper
- 19 Humphreys, I. (2003) *Green Gym: promoting health, fitness and the environment: Paper presented to the International Healthy Cities Conference, Belfast, 19-22 October 2003*
- 20 Reynolds, V. (2000) op. cit.
- 21 Reynolds, V. (2000) *ibid.*
- 22 Birch, M. (2005) 'Cultivating wildness: three conservation volunteers' experience of participation in the green gym scheme' in *The British Journal of Occupational Therapy* 68 (6)
- 23 National Audit Office (2001) *Tackling obesity in England* NAO: London
- 24 Lum, T. and Lightfoot, E. (2005) 'The effects of volunteering on the physical and mental health of older people' in *Research On Aging* 27: 31-48
- 25 Lum, T. and Lightfoot, E. (2005) *ibid.*; Musick, M. and Wilson, J (2003) 'Volunteering and depression: the role of psychological and social resources in different age groups' in *Social Science and Medicine* 56(2):259-69

- 26 Thoits, P. and Hewitt, L. (2001) 'Volunteer work and social well-being' in *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 48:175-187; Musick, M. and Wilson, J. (2003) 'Volunteering and depression: the role of psychological and social resources in different age groups' in *Social Science and Medicine* 56: 259-69; Morrow-Howlee, N., Hinterlong, J., Rozario, P. and Tang, F. (2003) 'Effects of volunteering on the well-being of older adults' in *Journal of Gerontological Social Work* 32(2):65-80
- 27 Lewis, T. (2005) *Valuing volunteers: The scope of volunteering for people with mental health problems* Wales Council for Voluntary Action: Rhyl
- 28 Murray, J., Bellringer, S. and Easter, A. (2006) *Evaluation of capital volunteering interim report on the first 60 participants* Institute of Psychiatry at the Maudsley King's College, University of London: London
- 29 Centre for Economic Performance (2006) *The depression report: a new deal for depression and anxiety disorders* Centre for Economic Performance's Mental Health Policy Group, LSE: London
- 30 <http://www.wildlifetrust.org.uk/gwent/greenkeyproject.htm> [accessed April 2007]
- 31 Humphreys, I. (2003) op. cit.



# 5 Lifelong learning

This chapter explores how volunteering contributes to the agenda for lifelong learning in its broadest sense, a concept which has become something of a buzz word in the education and skills sector as well as a central focus of government policy. Firstly, it looks at the key issue of how volunteering contributes to skills development and opens up opportunities for employment and accreditation for volunteers. It then turns to the role of volunteering within education settings themselves, one of the most popular areas for volunteer involvement.

## Skills development and accreditation

Volunteering has a significant impact on the development of skills amongst those that take part and makes an important contribution to improving their employability in many cases.

### Skills development through volunteering

The opportunity to develop new skills can be an important motivation to volunteer for some volunteers. The 2007 National Survey of Volunteering and Charitable Giving found that 19 per cent of people started volunteering to learn new skills<sup>1</sup>. It has also been suggested that if more people were aware of these potential benefits they too would get involved in volunteering. The 2005 Citizenship Survey reported that 20 per cent of people who did not participate in formal voluntary activities or who volunteered informally said they would be more likely to get involved if they knew it would help them improve their skills or gain qualifications<sup>2</sup>.

Research suggests that the prospect of developing new skills as a result of volunteering can be an important motivator for young people in particular<sup>3</sup>. The 2007 National Survey of Volunteering and Charitable Giving found that 46 per cent of volunteers aged 16-24 years of age volunteered to learn new skills, compared to 19 per cent for all age groups<sup>4</sup>. Younger volunteers are also more likely to

say that their experience of volunteering leads to them gaining new skills, with 80 per cent of 25 to 34 year olds agreeing that it did so in 2007<sup>5</sup>. These skills can be wide ranging, from harder vocational skills such as IT through to softer skills such as team work<sup>6</sup>. A study by the National Youth Agency found that the increased levels of self-confidence and self-esteem in young people were cited as the most common benefits by the volunteers themselves, alongside improved communication skills<sup>7</sup>. The study also found that volunteering amongst young people could in some instances act as a catalyst for them to re-engage with learning and formal education, contributing to them gaining additional qualifications<sup>8</sup>.

*‘Social action impacts on young people’s sense of who they are, their skills and abilities, and their plan for the future.’*

Roker and Eden (2002)<sup>9</sup>

Volunteers of any age can develop new skills as a result of taking part. Sport England describes how volunteer involvement in the decision-making and management of local sports activities, events, teams and facilities can contribute towards the development of greater self esteem and transferable skills amongst individuals and communities<sup>10</sup>.

Volunteering can therefore be seen to make a significant contribution to key government agendas. The acquisition of skills has been described as the key driver to achieving economic success and social justice in the UK. Leitch’s review of skills<sup>11</sup> places the need to increase adult skills across all levels in the UK as the central concern if the UK is to achieve ‘world class prosperity and fairness’<sup>12</sup>. Up-skilling the adult workforce remains (as it has for some time) a key priority for government and is reflected in its numerous strategies and reforms for education, colleges and training providers<sup>13</sup>.

### Millennium Volunteers Programme

The Millennium Volunteers Programme was launched in 1999 to promote sustained volunteering among young people aged between 16 and 24 years of age. Between its inception and 2002, over 50,000 young people participated in the programme in a variety of projects and activities. A UK-wide evaluation of the initiative found that involvement in volunteering activities brought a number of personal development benefits. For example, 84 per cent of volunteers thought that as a result of being a Millennium Volunteer (MV) their confidence increased, 78 per cent saying that they were happier meeting and mixing with other people as a result. In terms of skills development, the evaluation found that ‘MVs gained an array of skills’ which ‘ranged from hard-edged, vocational skills, such as computing or environmental conservation, to the softer more generic skills, such as public speaking and team work’<sup>14</sup>.

## Volunteering and employability

Volunteering can act as a route to employment for many people. In 2007 just under a quarter of volunteers reported an important personal benefit of their volunteering to be that it gave them a chance to improve their employment prospects<sup>15</sup>. A study of young people's motivations to volunteer found that most could identify how their volunteering helped them to prepare for employment. Benefits listed included providing an opportunity to test out different careers and gaining practical experience and acquiring skills related to specific types of employment<sup>16</sup>. A key element for many student volunteers is the opportunity for participants to learn key and transferable skills to prepare them for employment. More than 42,000 students are involved in volunteering activities throughout England<sup>17</sup>. Studies of student volunteering programmes indicate that participation not only enables students to gain extra skills but can have positive impacts on career options. A study of volunteering within Student Community Action groups in universities in the UK found that the experience affected the future career path of the majority of respondents, and led to 40 per cent following a direction that was completely unrelated to their choice of academic study<sup>18</sup>.

Volunteering can also benefit other sections of the population who may be seeking employment. In a study of registered job seekers in Camden and Bedford, 81 per cent of respondents said that volunteering gave them a chance to learn new skills and 49 per cent said it might give them the opportunity to gain a recognised qualification<sup>19</sup>. Volunteering projects can increase the confidence of individuals and improve their self-esteem<sup>20</sup>. It is often possible for individuals to feel better prepared when seeking paid employment as a direct result. Of those individuals looking for work, 88 per cent of respondents to one survey said that they believed that their volunteering would help them get a job, while 41 per cent of those in employment said that their volunteering had helped them get their current job<sup>21</sup>. The development of confidence, work experience and the gaining of skills were identified as specific benefits.

fact

A survey of over 200 leading UK companies found that 94 per cent of respondents thought that volunteering added to the skills of their workforce.

Timebank<sup>22</sup>

Within the workplace, employees are increasingly getting involved as volunteers in the community through employer-supported volunteering schemes (see also chapter one). The benefits of involvement for the individual volunteer are increasingly being recognised by those taking part themselves, the companies involved, the wider community and

government. Research based on interviews with US executives in 1998 found that a wide range of specific skills can be gained through employee volunteering. These included communication skills, organisational and time management skills, people skills (such as caring, negotiating and listening), accountability and assessment reporting, planning skills, budgeting skills and survival skills (such as stress management and prioritisation)<sup>23</sup>. Research and evaluations of such schemes within organisations also reveal the benefits to the volunteers themselves. An evaluation of Barclays Bank's volunteering scheme found that 61 per cent of managers thought that staff communication skills had improved as a direct result of their volunteering<sup>24</sup>.

## Accredited learning

Over the past 20 years, workplace learning, training and accreditation have been championed as a way to improve skills, increase the involvement of employers in education and extend participation in education and training in the UK. This recognises the value of vocational training and qualifications, and the skills and competences that can be gained outside traditional compulsory education. Defined as 'the formal recognition of the achievements of an individual, linked up to some internal or external standard'<sup>25</sup>, accreditation can range from internal certificates developed in-house to nationally recognised awards or qualifications from awarding bodies (such as NVQs or National Open College Network Awards). Accreditation for employee volunteers, for example, has been available since 2005 through Business in the Community's *Volunteering Plus* award which is accredited through City and Guilds<sup>26</sup>. Wider accreditation and certification for volunteering is still developing, although increasing numbers of organisations are now offering it for their volunteers, allowing them to record their skills and experiences<sup>27</sup>.

*'If credit is made more widely available and assessed against national standards, training providers can demonstrate to the volunteer and to the wider community the value of voluntary experience.'*

The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (1990)<sup>28</sup>

The prospect of having volunteer experiences accredited can act as a significant motivator for many volunteers. One study found that 37 per cent of volunteers surveyed wanted skills-based recognition for their volunteering<sup>29</sup>. An evaluation of the Project 2001 initiative<sup>30</sup> found that volunteers emphasised improvements in their performance and



### Volunteering within education

made links with their ambitions for paid employment when asked why they were interested in training and accreditation. Such activities can lead to a wide variety of benefits for the volunteer. It can provide the volunteer with recognition for their skills and learning, can help to motivate them in their volunteering and training, provide them with opportunities to learn, progress and grow personally and can give them 'currency' in the world of work<sup>31</sup>.

### Challenges and potential

There is a lack of evidence linking volunteering directly to employability. This is also the case with accreditation, with little research that explores the demand for accreditation and its impact on volunteers and on their opportunities for employment. Research does suggest, however, that some volunteers face barriers to seeking accreditation. This includes volunteers being unwilling to take on the additional workload of evidencing their skills, as well as interpreting the outputs of their voluntary activities as being more valuable than the learning and skills they could gain<sup>32</sup>. In some cases, it appears that volunteers do not always want to receive accreditation<sup>33</sup>. In light of this, research has reiterated the need to treat volunteers, and their motivations to volunteer, as unique, with accreditation being attractive to some and inappropriate for others<sup>34</sup>. A study of young volunteers by the National Youth Agency stressed, for example, the need to recognise the different starting points and motives among young volunteers, many of which can change as they become increasingly involved<sup>35</sup>.

### Achievements for education

Volunteering has a considerable impact on the education system itself. Schools and other educational institutions are one of the most popular areas to volunteer within<sup>36</sup> and volunteers perform a number of vital functions within the education system, contributing to a range of outcomes. Education has been one of the prime focuses for government policy<sup>37</sup>, much of which could not be delivered in the same way without the involvement of volunteers. A number of these policy initiatives have recognised the importance of increasing parental and



Volunteering England Image Bank / Santiago Arribas Pena ©

community involvement in education, coinciding with volunteering policies that have sought to increase levels of participation in public service delivery.

**In 2007 the most common field of interest for volunteers was education - 18 per cent of the adult population and 31 per cent of current volunteers volunteered within schools, colleges and universities.**

fact

Helping Out: a National Survey of Volunteering and Charitable Giving (2007)<sup>38</sup>

### Leadership and accountability

School governors are the largest single group of volunteers in the UK<sup>39</sup>. There are 350,000 volunteer governor places in England in nursery, primary and secondary schools<sup>40</sup>, plus 8,000 in Further Education colleges in England and Wales<sup>41</sup>. In the last 20 years, school and college governors have gained increasing power and responsibility. Governors now have responsibility for staffing and financial management of the school, accountability to parents and other stakeholders, and they have their performance inspected<sup>42</sup>. In Further Education colleges, governors are responsible for multi-million pound budgets. They are vital to the strategic leadership and accountability of these institutions.

There has been little research into the impact of school governors on the effectiveness of their schools<sup>43</sup>. OFSTED, however, has identified three main roles they play in raising standards and improving schools: providing a strategic role; acting as a critical friend; and ensuring accountability<sup>44</sup>. Governors play a fundamental part in raising standards and research has found that good governance is associated with high performing schools<sup>45</sup>.

*'Governor recruitment is not just about statistics and filling vacancies but, more importantly, it is about developing and sustaining community involvement.'*

Bird (2002)<sup>46</sup>

## The delivery of education

Volunteers also contribute to the delivery and enhancement of education. They undertake a wide range of roles, from learning support (particularly in areas such as reading, maths and citizenship) through to fundraising for the school within Parent Teachers Associations. The learning support programmes can have a significant impact on student learning<sup>47</sup> and on student attendance<sup>48</sup>. An evaluation of one volunteer reading project found that it helped to raise academic performance among approximately 60 per cent of the participating 10 to 11 year olds<sup>49</sup>.

Recognition of the importance of involving the community in schools is now being matched by recognition of the importance of involving the school in the community. An evaluation of the Full Service Extended Schools pilot has shown that this approach can have a significant impact on children, adults, families, and for schools in terms of improved performance measures such as student attainment, exclusion rates and increased student intake numbers<sup>50</sup>.

## Volunteers within the education system

Many students and staff within educational institutions are also active volunteers themselves. In England, student volunteers gave nearly 3.5 million hours to their communities in 2004 and contributed £42 million to the economy<sup>51</sup>. Engaging students in volunteering can lead to a number of positive impacts, both for the students and the schools, and indeed for the wider communities. Reflecting this, pupils in schools are encouraged to engage in a wide range of volunteering activities. This has been further developed as a result of the citizenship curriculum and the implicit shift in emphasis within 'Every Child Matters' away from 'attainment' towards 'enjoying and achieving'<sup>52</sup>.

School councils can make a significant contribution to school life. They provide young people with an experience of democratic processes and practices, help to meet the schools' requirement for provision of social and citizenship education<sup>53</sup> and help to develop responsible citizens<sup>54</sup>. They also help to improve behaviour<sup>55</sup>, reduce 'vulnerability and stress' and 'build the school community'<sup>56</sup>.

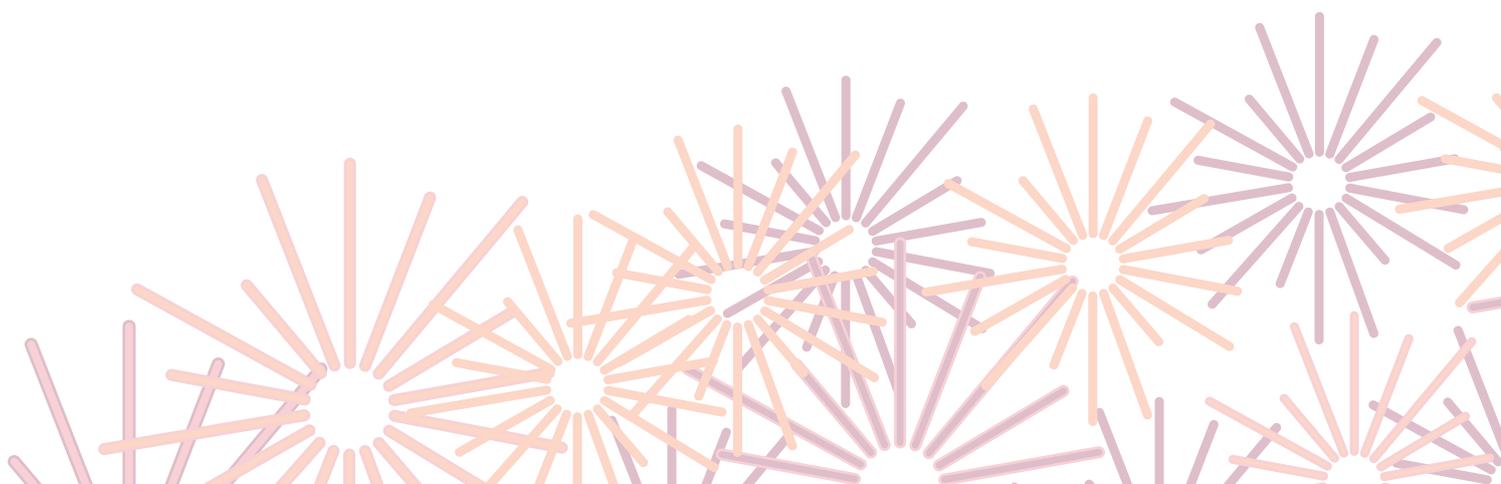
## Active Citizens in Schools pilot

The Active Citizens in Schools (ACiS) pilot ran from 2001 to 2004 in 28 secondary schools across England. The initiative aimed to increase volunteering amongst 11 to 16 year olds. An evaluation of the programme demonstrated a range of positive impacts on all stakeholders. By 2004, 5,400 young people had taken part and 2,900 25-hour certificates and 1,100 50-hour Awards had been achieved. The ACiS volunteers gained a wide range of benefits themselves, but also assets that would benefit their schools and communities, such as 84 per cent being more aware of the needs of others. The programme also directly affected the participating schools: physical improvements to the school environment; enhanced behaviour; engaging disaffected young people; enhanced relationships between staff and pupils; increased profile and reputation for the school; and, in some cases, a change in the ethos of the school<sup>57</sup>.

*'It should be commonplace for young people to volunteer whilst they are at school, college or higher education. All education institutions should have a volunteering ethos.'*

Russell Commission Recommendation Four (2005)<sup>58</sup>

In universities in England in 2000 there were over 180 local Student Community Action groups, representing approximately 25,000 student volunteers, who together supported over 90,000 people<sup>59</sup>. This reflects the link made between volunteering and widening participation within universities and the desire to increase work-based learning<sup>60</sup>. The benefits of university-based volunteering can be divided into three categories: firstly, it enables students to apply their learning, and transfer and develop skills<sup>61</sup>; secondly, it develops stronger links between universities and the public, reducing barriers between 'town and gown'<sup>62</sup> and helping to break down stereotypes of, and by, the community<sup>63</sup>; and thirdly, it increases levels of engagement between students and their community, improving students' knowledge and awareness of civic and social issues, which in turn lead them to become better and more active citizens<sup>64</sup>.



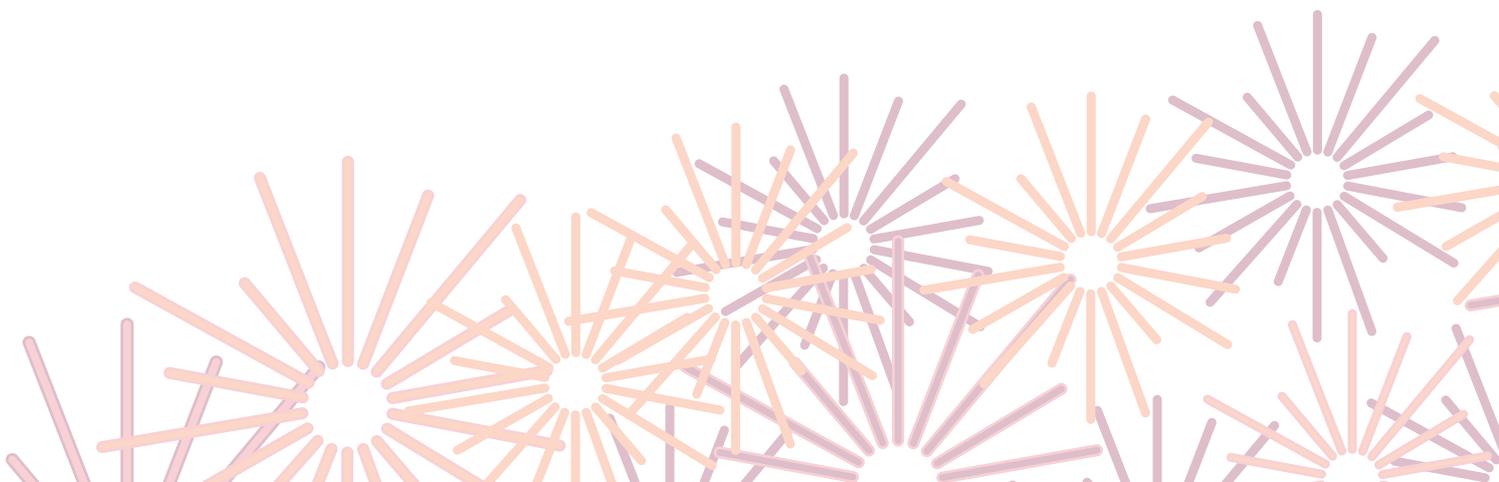
## Challenges and potential

Not all studies suggest that the impacts have been positive, however. In some cases, research has failed to show a positive correlation between volunteer interventions and student learning<sup>65</sup>. A major potential limitation and challenge is also seen in the evidence that educational volunteers, governors in particular, are often not representative of the communities within which the schools or colleges are based<sup>66</sup>, especially in terms of women and people from Black and minority ethnic groups. Unrepresentative governing bodies may adversely affect schools, acting as a force against change<sup>67</sup> or failing to recognise and meet the needs of all pupils and stakeholders. The greatest impacts of volunteering would most likely be seen when volunteers reflect the diversity of the communities they work in and of the people they are supporting and helping.

## Footnotes

- 1 Low, N., Butt, S., Ellis Paine, A. and Davis Smith, J. (2007) *Helping out: a national survey of volunteering and charitable giving* Cabinet Office: London
- 2 Kitchen, S., Michealson, J., Wood, N. and Peter, J. (2006) *2005 Citizenship Survey: active communities topic report* DCLG: London
- 3 Low, N. et al (2007) op. cit.; Gaskin, K. (1998) *What young people want from volunteering* IVR: London; Ellis, A. (2004) *Generation V: young people speak out* IVR: London
- 4 Low, N. et al (2007) op. cit.
- 5 Low, N. et al (2007) op. cit.
- 6 Brunwin, C. (2002) *A mapping survey of youth volunteering (14-25 year olds) in the city of Manchester* The Manchester Youth Volunteering Project: Manchester
- 7 National Youth Agency (2007) *Young people's volunteering and skills development: Research Report RW103* DFES: London
- 8 National Youth Agency (2007) *ibid.*
- 9 Roker, D. and Eden, K. (2002) *A longitudinal study of young people's involvement in social action* Trust for the Study of Adolescence: Brighton; 'Social action' is defined as 'groups of young people who meet on a regular basis, with the aim of bringing about change in policies and/or practices, or raising awareness, at a local, national or international level'.
- 10 Sport England (undated) *Sport playing its part: The contribution of sport to building safe, strong and sustainable communities* Sport England: London
- 11 Leitch (2006) *Prosperity for all in the global economy: Final report* HMSO: London
- 12 Leitch (2006) *ibid.* p.9
- 13 DfES (2006) *Further Education: raising skills, improving life chances* DfES: London; *DfES department plan, 21st century skills: realising our potential: individuals, employers and nation* DfES: London
- 14 IVR (2002) *UK-wide evaluation of the Millennium Volunteers programme* IVR: London
- 15 Low, N. et al (2007) op. cit.
- 16 National Youth Agency (2007) op. cit.
- 17 Student Volunteering England (2006) *No substitute for experience: PDP and volunteering toolkit* SVE: London
- 18 Drake, K. and Evans, P. (1998) *Putting the life into lifelong learning* DfEE: London
- 19 Gay, P. (1998) *Getting into work: the role of volunteering in improving employability* IVR: London
- 20 Corden, A. and Sainsbury, R. (2004) *Volunteering for employment skills: A qualitative research study* Social Policy Research Unit: London
- 21 Hirst, A. (2000) *Links between volunteering and employability: Research report RR309* DfES: London
- 22 [www.timebank.org.uk](http://www.timebank.org.uk) [accessed May 2007]
- 23 Tuffrey, M. (1998) *Valuing employee community involvement: practical guidance on measuring the business benefits from employee involvement in community activity* The Corporate Citizenship Company: London
- 24 IVR (2004) *Community Investment: the impacts of employee volunteering at Barclays Bank* IVR: London
- 25 [www.volunteeringengland.org](http://www.volunteeringengland.org) [accessed April 2007]
- 26 [http://www.bitc.org.uk/what\\_we\\_do/cares/volunteering\\_plus.html](http://www.bitc.org.uk/what_we_do/cares/volunteering_plus.html) [accessed April 2007]
- 27 Brewis, G. and Ponikiewski, N. (2004) *Assessing voluntary experience: Final report* IVR: London
- 28 NIACE (1990) *Valuing volunteers: the accreditation of voluntary and training experience* NIACE: Leicester
- 29 Spinks, T. (1997) *Credit where credit's due: a route to recognition and accreditation of volunteers*, Wales Council for Voluntary Action
- 30 Project 2001 was a three-year initiative funded by DfEE and NLCB set up to 'enable voluntary sector organisations to operate more effectively through training, accreditation and development'.
- 31 NIACE (1990) *Valuing volunteers: the accreditation of voluntary training and experience* NIACE: Leicester; Voluntary Sector National Training Organisation (2000) *Credit for learning: a report on the use of S/NVQs in the voluntary sector* VSNT0: London; RSA (2001) *Making it work: learning and accreditation in the voluntary sector* RSA: London
- 32 RSA (2001) *ibid.*
- 33 Cox, E. (2002) Rewarding volunteers: a study of participant responses to the assessment and accreditation of volunteer learning in *Studies in the Education of Adults* 34 (2): 156-170
- 34 Brewis, G. and Ponikiewski, N. (2004) op. cit.
- 35 National Youth Agency (2007) op. cit.
- 36 Low, N. et al (2007) op. cit.

- 37 Bird, S. (2002) *Governance matters* The Education Network: London
- 38 Low, N. et al (2007) op. cit.
- 39 DfES (2002) *Help schools help children: school governor recruitment toolkit* DfES: Nottingham
- 40 <http://www.sgoss.org.uk/home/> [accessed April 2007]
- 41 Ellis, A. (2003) *Barriers to participation for under-represented groups in school governance: Research report no.500* DfES: Nottingham
- 42 Ellis, A. (2003) *ibid.*
- 43 Creese, M. (1999) 'Ofsted on governance: A view from the bridge?' *School Leadership and Management*, 19(2): 241-252
- 44 DFE/BIS/OFSTED (1995) quoted in Creese (1999) *ibid.*
- 45 Ranson, S., Farrell, C., Piem, N. and Smith, P. (2005) 'Does governance matter for school improvement?' *School effectiveness and school improvement* 16(3): 305-325
- 46 Bird, S. (2002) op. cit.
- 47 NFER by Brookes et al (1996) cited in Elliot, J., Arthurs, J. and Williams, R. (2000) 'Volunteer support in the primary classroom: the long-term impact of one initiative upon children's reading performance' *British Educational Research Journal* 26(2): 227-244
- 48 Volkman, B. and Bye, L. (2006) 'Improved school attendance through adult partners' in *Children and Schools*, 28 (3): 145-152
- 49 NFER by Brookes et al (1996) op. cit.
- 50 Cummings, C., Dyson, A., Papps, I., Pearson, D., Raffo, C., Tiplady, L. and Todd, L. (2006) *Evaluation of the full service extended schools initiative, second year: thematic papers. Research Brief No. RB795* DfES: Nottingham
- 51 Student Volunteering England (2004) *Student volunteering: the national survey 2004* SVE: London
- 52 Fletcher, quoted in Hayes, P. (2006) *New perspectives on volunteering in schools* CSV: London
- 53 Taylor, M. with Johnson, R. (2002) *School councils: their role in citizenship and personal and social education* NFER: Slough
- 54 Crick, quoted in Bird, S. (2002) op. cit.
- 55 Ofsted (2006) <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/2377> [accessed April 2007]
- 56 [www.schoolcouncils.org](http://www.schoolcouncils.org) [accessed April 2007]
- 57 Ellis, A. (2005) *Active citizens in schools: evaluation of the DfES pilot programme* DfES: London
- 58 Russell, I. (2005) *Russell Commission. A national framework for youth action and engagement* Home Office: London
- 59 Student Volunteering UK (2000) *Act on it!* Student Volunteering UK: London
- 60 Dearing Report National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education (1997) *Higher Education in the Learning Society* HMSO: London; see also Buckingham-Hatfield, S. (2000) (ed) *Student Community Partnerships in Higher Education: Promoting skills for life and work* CSV: London
- 61 Mohan, J. (1995) 'Thinking local: service-learning, education for citizenship and geography' in *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 19: 129-142; Buckingham-Hatfield, S. (2000) op. cit.
- 62 Buckingham-Hatfield, S. (2000) op. cit.; see also CoBaLT (1999) *Report of survey of practice in community based learning* University of Liverpool, Department of Social Policy and Social Work Studies: Liverpool
- 63 Student Volunteering England (2006) *SVE response to Universities UK 'Studentification: a guide to opportunities, challenges and practices'* SVE: London
- 64 Mohan, J. (1995) op. cit.; Indiana University Centre for Post-secondary Research and Planning (2002) *National survey of student engagement: 2002 overview: The College Student Report* National Survey of Student Engagement: Bloomington
- 65 Elliot, J., Arthurs, J. and Williams, R. (2000) op. cit.; Torgerson, C., King, S. and Sowden, A. (2002) 'Do volunteers in schools help children learn to read? A systematic review of randomised controlled trials' in *Educational Studies* 28(4): 433-444
- 66 Ellis, A. (2003) op. cit.; Ellis, A. and Brewis, G. (2005) *Issues of diversity and recruitment among Further Education college governors* IVR: London; Bird, S. (2002) op. cit.; Bird, S. (2003) *Do the right thing: how governors can contribute to community cohesion and school accountability* The Education Network: London; Sharpe, E. and Attan, J. (2000) *School governor recruitment: publicity development qualitative research report (RS 4550)* for the Department for Education and Employment: London
- 67 Deem, R. (1996) 'The school, the parent, the banker and the local politician: what can we learn from the English experience of involving lay people in the site-based management of schools?' in Pole, C. and Chawlw-Duggan, R. (eds) *Reshaping education in the 1990s: perspectives in secondary schooling* Falmer Press: London, pp55-70



# Conclusions: How can government work for volunteering?

**By Meta Zimmeck, Head of Secretariat,  
Commission on the Future of Volunteering**

This report sets out in a simple and accessible way evidence about how volunteering contributes to positive outcomes in five key social policy areas – development, safer and stronger communities, social inclusion, quality of life and lifelong learning. It shows how these positive outcomes are experienced by all concerned - volunteers, those helped by volunteers, organisations that involve volunteers, communities, society generally and, in particular, government.

This report indicates clearly what volunteering has done for the government policy agenda, but it does not indicate what government has done – or can do – for volunteering.

The Commission on the Future of Volunteering is an independent body established by the England Volunteering Development Council to investigate the state of volunteering now and to develop a long-term vision for volunteering in England. Between January and August 2007, in a series of regionally-based and topic-based consultation events and a web-based call for evidence, it gathered evidence from nearly a thousand respondents, those reporting as individuals and/or on behalf of organisations in all three sectors and in all walks of life. It specifically investigated the relationship between volunteering and government, and the evidence it gathered is challenging and thought-provoking.

For the Commission's respondents, who approached the subject from very different perspectives and on the basis of very different experiences, government's interest in and 'promotion' of volunteering is a mixed blessing, regarded with weariness, wariness and unquenchable hope.

Respondents are weary of chopping and changing in government's policies and programmes for volunteering. They know that the needs they are attempting to meet are constant, and they want government to help them to meet those needs and not to waylay them with a series of enormous changes at the last minute. Respondents are weary of always running on empty. They want to do more and better, but most are constrained by lack of resources. Respondents are weary of being excluded from the magic circle of those particular groups of volunteers, geographical areas and types of volunteering favoured by government's increasingly tighter targets. They feel that this exclusion is disrespectful, inequitable and ultimately counter-productive. Respondents are weary of not being trusted to do what they do best. They feel that government pays insufficient attention to their knowledge and experience, does not treat them as equal partners and burdens them with unnecessary red tape.

Respondents are wary of being pushed off course by the pursuit of funding. They do not want to abandon their involvement of volunteers or to cut or downsize services to their core clients purely in order to chase the next new thing. Respondents are wary of being dragged into doing things that they think are inappropriate. They do not want volunteers to do the work of employees, people to be compelled to 'volunteer' or people to be inveigled into 'volunteering' via various wheezes for payment. Respondents are wary of government's authority to pronounce on volunteering in the light of its inability first to put its own house in order. They cite the failures of its ill-thought-out 'vanity' programmes, its inability via the Compact mechanism to secure full cost recovery in contractual relationships, its inconsistent approach to job-seekers and asylum seekers who wish to volunteer, and its lack of sensible and comparable measures of volunteering (from the national benchmark of the Citizenship Surveys to the free-for-all of Local Area Agreements).

However, despite all this, respondents are unquenchably hopeful about what they are doing now and what they hope to do in the future. They believe in volunteering. They want more opportunities for volunteering for more, and more diverse people. They know that volunteering has produced and will continue to produce the positive outcomes in the social policy areas covered by this

report and in the many other areas not covered by this report.

What, then, can government do for volunteering? The Commission's detailed recommendations will be set out in its October 2007 Manifesto. At the time of writing, it is not possible to do more than raise a series of issues for government to consider:

- how to take a more considered and less immediately instrumental view of volunteering;
- how to view volunteering not as a thing of the moment but as a long-term part of the social fabric, which binds people together, bridges the gaps between different groups and communities and links people to democratic institutions;
- how to adopt the broadest possible remit, covering all volunteering and volunteers rather than the narrow targets and 'sexy' headlines;
- how to focus on the quality rather than the quantity of volunteering;
- how to empower rather than command.

If government gives sufficient consideration to these issues, it will be able further to release the power of volunteering and to apply a multiplier effect to the good that it does.



# Key resources

- Attwood, C., Singh, G., Prime, D., Creasey, R. and others (2003) *2001 Home Office Citizenship Survey: people, families and communities* Home Office Research: London
- Davis Smith, J. (1998) *1997 National Survey of Volunteering* IVR: London
- Davis Smith, J. (2000) 'Volunteering and social development' *Voluntary Action* 3(1): 9-23
- Ellis, A. (2005) *Generation V: young people speak out on volunteering: Research Bulletin* IVR: London
- Evans, E. and Saxton, J. (2005) *The twenty-first century volunteer* nfpsnergy: London
- Gaskin, K. (2003) *The economics of hospice volunteering* Help the Hospices: London
- HOCS (2004) *2003 Home Office Citizenship Survey: people, families and communities* Home Office Research: London
- Home Office (2005) *The Volunteering Compact Code of Good Practice* Home Office: London
- IVR (2004) *Community investment: the impacts of employee volunteering at Barclays Bank* Research Bulletin IVR: London
- IVR (2004) *Volunteering for all? Exploring the link between volunteering and social exclusion* IVR: London
- Kitchen, S., Michealson, J., Wood, N. and Peter, J. (2006) *2005 Citizenship Survey: active communities topic report* DCLG: London
- Low, N. Butt, S., Ellis Paine, A. and Davis Smith, J. (2007) *Helping out: a national survey of volunteering and charitable giving* Cabinet Office: London
- McBain, C. and Jones, A. (2005) *Employer-supported volunteering – the guide* Volunteering England: London
- Rochester, C. (2006) *Making sense of volunteering, a literature review* Volunteering England: London
- Rochester, C. and Thomas, B. (2006) *The indispensable backbone of voluntary action: measuring and valuing the contribution of older volunteers. Report of a survey carried out by VITA and Volunteering England* WRVS: Abingdon
- Volunteering England Good Practice Bank  
<http://www.volunteering.org.uk/managingvolunteers/goodpracticebank/>

## **The Commission on the Future of Volunteering**

The Commission on the Future of Volunteering is an independent body established by the England Volunteering Development Council to develop a long-term vision for volunteering in England as a legacy of the Year of the Volunteer 2005.

[www.volcomm.org.uk](http://www.volcomm.org.uk)

## **The Institute for Volunteering Research**

The Institute for Volunteering Research (IVR) is a specialist research and consultancy agency focusing on volunteering. IVR is an initiative of Volunteering England and the University of East London. It was set up in 1997 in response to the increased demand for research on volunteering. Over the past ten years IVR has carried out a wide variety of research, consultancy and evaluation projects on many different aspects of volunteering. It has completed four national surveys of volunteering.

[www.ivr.org.uk](http://www.ivr.org.uk).

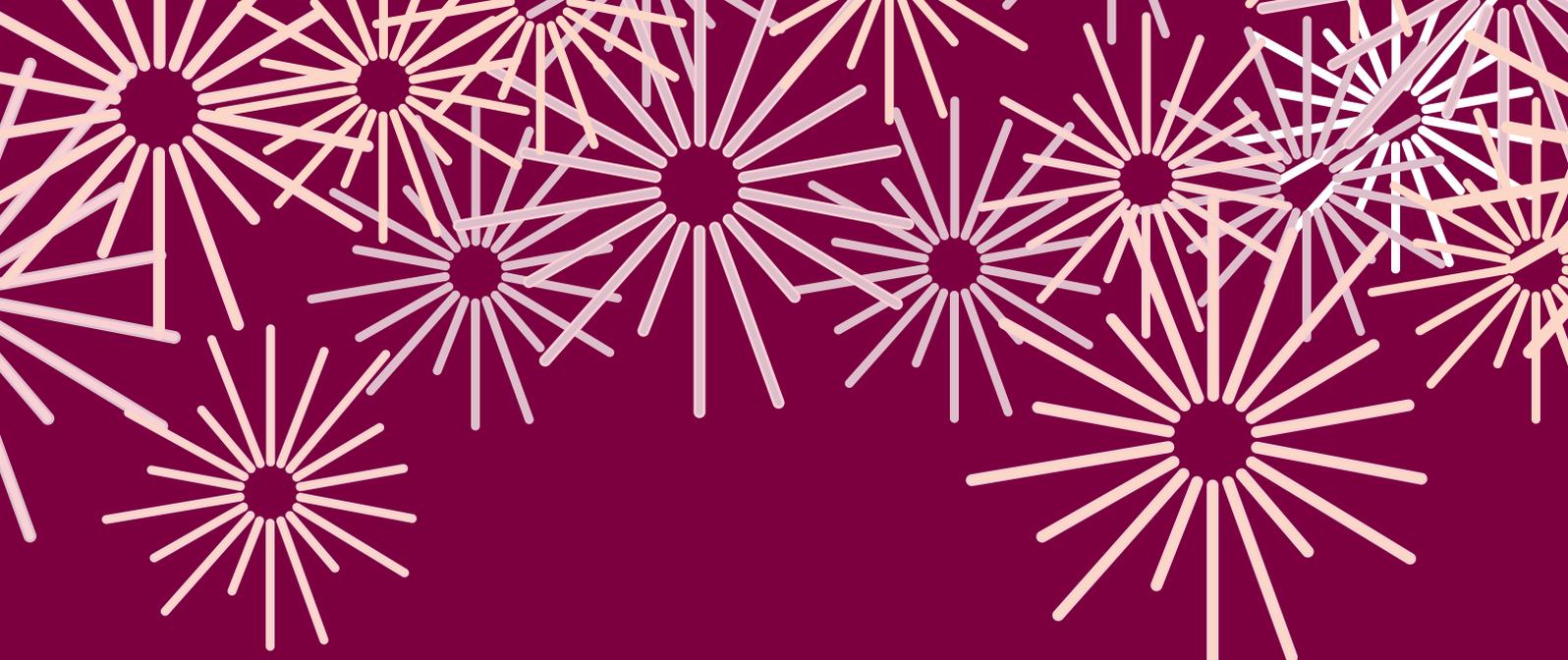
## **Volunteering England**

Volunteering England supports volunteering and everyone who works with volunteers by:

- providing information and advice on volunteering through its information team, its website and its publications;
- giving local support to volunteers and volunteer organisations through its network of Volunteer Centres;
- developing and supporting a strong and effective nationwide volunteering infrastructure;
- working at local, regional and national levels;
- making sure that everyone knows how valuable volunteering is to society by its powerful lobbying and campaigning;
- ensuring that volunteering is understood at the heart of government, and in the public, private and third sectors.

[www.volunteering.org.uk](http://www.volunteering.org.uk)





The Commission  
on the Future  
of Volunteering



Published by the Institute for Volunteering Research and Volunteering England on behalf of the Commission on the Future of Volunteering.

Volunteering England is a Registered Charity No. 1102770.

A company limited by guarantee Registered in England and Wales No. 4934814



Printed on Revive matt paper  
made from 50 per cent de-inked post consumer waste  
25 per cent pre-consumer waste  
and 25 per cent FSC virgin pulp