

## ➤ **Introducing the Volunteering Hub**

Volunteering England was created in April 2004 as a result of the successful merger of the Consortium on Opportunities for Volunteering, the National Centre for Volunteering and Volunteer Development England. This brought together support for Volunteer Managers, research, promotions, good practice dissemination, grant making and the umbrella body for volunteer development agencies into one strategic body, and in so doing created a strong national volunteer development agency for England.

The process of creating Volunteering England began six months before the publication of the Treasury's *Cross cutting review on the role of the voluntary and community sector in public service delivery*. The rationale behind the creation of Volunteering England was to offer a better service to the volunteering sector, and was accompanied by work to look at how all volunteering infrastructure in England was configured for effective delivery to front-line organisations, volunteers and potential volunteers (which has become known as the 'modernisation process').

In parallel with the consultation processes that led to the creation of both Volunteering England and the ChangeUp strategy, a process to specifically identify the development needs of volunteering infrastructure was undertaken. Throughout this period there was very close working between staff in the Active Communities Directorate and Volunteering England to ensure that there was read-across between the evolving strategies. In June 2004, Volunteering England published *Building on success: strategy for volunteering infrastructure in England 2004-2014* as a sector led detailed strategy companion-piece to the volunteering element of ChangeUp. The ChangeUp programme identified Volunteering England as the Volunteering Hub.

The work to develop the Volunteering Hub Business Plan was informed by both strategies, and through a series of nine regional meetings during the autumn of 2004. At the same time Volunteering England secured the approval of the England Volunteering Development Council to take ownership of the *Building on success* strategy, and to act as the Volunteering Hub Advisory Group.

The England Volunteering Development Council took an active role in scrutinising the business plan. The Council has published a report on the first year's activity against the *Building on success* targets and is currently preparing the second annual report.

The Volunteering Hub Scrutiny Committee is a governance level sub-committee of the volunteering England Board. It is chaired by the Chair of the England Volunteering Development Council, and its members are also members of the Council. The Committee has full delegated responsibility for the strategic development and management of the Volunteering Hub including budget, resource allocation, monitoring, evaluation and future planning.

## ➤ **Volunteering Hub objectives**

The Volunteering Hub has adopted as its objective, the ChangeUp objective for volunteering 'that by 2014 there is a leaner, effectively marketed and high quality volunteering infrastructure reaching, recruiting and placing a greater number and diversity of individuals coupled with improved volunteer management'.

## ➤ **Volunteering Hub themes**

The Volunteering Hub is working toward this objective through four interlinked work themes:

Modernising volunteering infrastructure to achieve effective, efficient and sustainable England-wide coverage

This theme supports ChangeUp objectives by working to ensure that the volunteering infrastructure is 'fit for purpose' and is able to more effectively support front-line organisations

in their involvement of volunteers and through this to achieve their objectives. The activity delivered in this area will:

- Address issues of performance improvement in the delivery of the six core functions of volunteering infrastructure locally, regionally and nationally as defined in the *Compact Volunteering Code of Good Practice*
- Examine, through action research and good practice development, how the delivery of the core functions can be improved through reconfiguration of delivery
- Develop a sustainable funding model for Volunteer Centres and build buy-in to this from statutory funding sources locally and nationally
- Support the completion of the rollout of the Volunteer Centre brand and provide Volunteer Centres with additional resources to promote volunteering as part of the activity toward achieving government's PSA6 target

### Information dissemination, good practice and management development

This theme supports ChangeUp objectives through the development and delivery of a range of activities, products and support for Volunteer Managers in all sectors in order that they are more able to deliver higher quality volunteering opportunities and engagement and through this to enable their organisations to achieve their objectives. The activity delivered in this area will:

- Build on existing, nationally available, free support to Volunteer Managers and develop new charged-for services
- Co-ordinate dissemination of existing good practice in volunteer management and develop resources where gaps are identified
- Develop toolkits and training resources linked to the National Occupational Standards for Volunteer Managers and Investing in Volunteers
- Develop training resources for Volunteer Centre Managers linked to the six core functions of volunteering infrastructure as defined in the Compact and Volunteer Centre Quality Accreditation, including training on the delivery of all new products and resources developed by the Volunteering Hub
- Provide support for the development of a greater number of employer supported volunteering schemes

### Volunteering and risk management

This theme has been developed as an additional piece of Volunteering Hub activity at the request of the Home Office Volunteering and Charitable Giving Unit. It addresses issues raised in Julian Brazier's Private Member's 'Promotion of Volunteering Bill' which were deemed to need a policy rather than a legislative approach. Specifically this activity supports ChangeUp objectives through ensuring that frontline organisations are informed about issues of risk management in volunteering, and have the tools to ensure that they address these. The activity delivered in this area will:

- Research the current position from the perspective of volunteers, volunteer involving organisations and insurers
- Work with the Home Office to ensure that insurers act appropriately
- Work with the Department of Constitutional Affairs to shape the 'Compensation Bill' currently being drafted and ensure that it is volunteer-proofed

### Strategy and management

This theme supports ChangeUp objectives through ensuring that frontline organisations, infrastructure organisations, funders, government, opinion formers and policy makers are all

able to be involved in the process of creating a strategic approach to the development of volunteering. The activity delivered in this area will:

- Support the work of the England Volunteering Development Council
- Sponsor a *Commission on the future of volunteering*
- Ensure appropriate, accountable and transparent management and development of the Volunteering Hub

### ➔ **Key activities undertaken**

Since agreeing its grant in June 2005 the Volunteering Hub has undertaken the following activity within each of the key work themes:

#### Modernising volunteering infrastructure to achieve effective, efficient and sustainable England-wide coverage

- Worked with [www.do-it.org.uk](http://www.do-it.org.uk) to improve the on-line information and support available to potential volunteers, including themed volunteering strands, volunteer blogs (available at [www.do-it.org.uk/magazine/blogs](http://www.do-it.org.uk/magazine/blogs)) and closer linkages to [www.volunteering.org.uk](http://www.volunteering.org.uk)
- Paid the costs of rebranding 98 Volunteer Centres and ensured additional promotional materials are available on demand to all 298 branded Volunteer Centres
- Made grants to 37 Volunteer Centres to replace existing signage with the new brand
- Hosted a conference on the role of regional volunteering infrastructure in order to support the development of networks of providers
- Researched the current modernisation activity being undertaken by Volunteer Centres and commenced the production of a report detailing this
- Commenced the mapping of current models of funding of the six core functions of volunteering infrastructure at a local level
- Commenced work with the Local Government Association on the role of volunteering within public sector delivery and in the achievement of their PSA targets, and the need for an appropriate sustainable infrastructure to support this.

#### Information dissemination, good practice and management development

- Doubled the staff capacity of the Volunteering England Information Team, and in so doing:
  - Doubled the hours of access to the freephone information line
  - Developed a good practice bank and published this on the website
  - Reviewed all the contents of the Volunteering England resource library (available for free use to anyone requesting it)
- Implemented a new content management system for [volunteering.org.uk](http://volunteering.org.uk) in order that it can take the increased activity of the Volunteering Hub
- Part funded a major project exploring the role of volunteering in the integration of migrant and refugee communities in Europe, specifically to learn from local activity in England
- Instigated a training/learning set for managers of large national volunteer involving organisations involved in Investing in Volunteers
- Made 75 grants to local volunteer involving organisations to enable them to undertake Investing in Volunteers - of the awards 13 went to BME led or BME focussed organisations; 9 went to rural organisations or services; 14 went to faith based organisations or those with a majority of faith based volunteers; 11 went to organisations

with a mix of these criteria; 12 went to organisations of or for other minority communities; 56 awards were made to frontline organisations and 19 to infrastructure organisations

- Published mapping of the Investing in Volunteers accreditation indicators to other quality standards and frameworks
- Hosted a successful conference on 'Volunteering: Lessons in leadership – the inspirations and challenges' at which the Governance and Workforce Development Hubs ran workshops and Simon Hebditch was the closing plenary speaker
- Developed a web based facility to advertise opportunities for employment in the volunteering sector [www.volunteeringengland.info/jobs](http://www.volunteeringengland.info/jobs)

### Volunteering and risk management

- Research on the current position from the perspective of volunteers, volunteer involving organisations and insurers undertaken and published
- Commenced the development of a good practice guide on volunteering and risk management
- Established a Volunteering and Risk Management Forum and a wider reference group
- Working with VitA (the Volunteering in the Third Age programme) to ensure joined up messages
- Sitting on two Department for Constitutional Affairs advisory/working groups and spoken on this issue at a ministerial conference

### Strategy and management

- Support towards the meeting and activity costs of the national body of the England Volunteering Development Council, including the publication costs of the first annual report on *Building on success*
- Support towards the establishment and meeting costs of the regional bodies of the England Volunteering Development Council
- Sponsor of the Commission on the Future of Volunteering and its activity
- Costs of the Volunteering Hub Implementation Team and Volunteering Hub Scrutiny Committee
- Published two issues of *Hubbub* (the Volunteering Hub newsletter).

## ➔ **Key activities in progress**

The Volunteering Hub is currently undertaking the following activity within each of the key work themes:

### Modernising volunteering infrastructure to achieve effective, efficient and sustainable England-wide coverage

- Preparing a marketing campaign to encourage more people to volunteer and the role of Volunteer Centres
- Commissioning the development of a sustainable funding framework model for Volunteer Centres
- Mapping volunteering elements of all ChangeUp plans against the six core functions of volunteering infrastructure as defined in Compact and the Volunteering Hub Business Plan
- Developing brand use guidelines and resources for a range of sub-brands linked to the Volunteer Centre brand

Information dissemination, good practice and management development

- Ongoing collection of generic good practice materials from volunteer involving organisations to add to the good practice bank
- Collating and developing specialist good practice materials for publication in the good practice bank
- Integration of the resources and content of [www.employeevolunteering.org.uk](http://www.employeevolunteering.org.uk) into [www.volunteering.org.uk](http://www.volunteering.org.uk)
- Continuing to work with YouthNet UK to build specific additionality for volunteers and potential volunteers into [www.do-it.org.uk](http://www.do-it.org.uk)
- Strengthening relationships with a range of national volunteer involving organisations and umbrella groups representing marginalised groups, ensuring that these inform the development and communication of good practice resources
- Developing Investing in Volunteers Employ, a quality framework for employer support volunteering programmes
- Undertaking a national Volunteer Managers' training needs analysis; the creation of a training strategy to meet this linked to national occupational standards; the development of materials and training to support this; and training local agencies to deliver within a national framework (working with the Workforce Development Hub)
- Developing a sustainable and self-financing consultancy service to support volunteering to be delivered by Volunteering England, Volunteer Centres and others working in partnership
- Arranging training and induction for volunteer advisors for Learning Loops for Volunteer Managers and Volunteer Centre Managers prior to launch
- Developing a training programme for Volunteer Centre Managers linked to the delivery of the six core functions of volunteering infrastructure, and the mechanisms to deliver this
- Developing on-line learning facilities and resources to underpin the delivery of these activities

Volunteering and risk management

- Commencing development of good practice materials relating to volunteering and risk management
- Commencing development of training and support package on volunteering and risk management

Strategy and management

- Support towards the recruitment of independent Chairs for the regional bodies of the England Volunteering Development Council
- Support for consultation on the *Building on success* year 3 – 5 detailed targets and revised themes
- Publication of third issue of *Hubbub*
- Support for the first consultation being undertaken by the Commission on the Future of Volunteering (closes on 20<sup>th</sup> June) [www.volcomm.org.uk/getinvolved/index.htm](http://www.volcomm.org.uk/getinvolved/index.htm)
- A major literature review of themes and thinking on the future of volunteering, to be published in June/July

## → **Key activities planned**

The Volunteering Hub is planning the following activity within each of the key work themes:

### Modernising volunteering infrastructure to achieve effective, efficient and sustainable England-wide coverage

- Delivery of the marketing campaign to encourage more people to volunteer and the role of Volunteer Centres
- Publication of the outcomes of the conference on regional volunteering infrastructure
- Publication of the results of the action learning on modernisation
- Identification and publication of good practice case studies on modernisation
- Development of a sustainable funding framework model for Volunteer Centres, including consultation
- Development of a campaign for funding of Volunteer Centres by statutory funders
- Develop an impact assessment toolkit for the six core functions of volunteering infrastructure (whether delivered locally, sub-regionally, regionally or nationally)
- Development and provision of training and support for volunteering infrastructure providers in the use of the impact assessment toolkit
- Development of a revised Volunteer Centre Quality Accreditation process based on the impact assessment toolkit

### Information dissemination, good practice and management development

- Launch and roll out Investing in Volunteers Employ including training assessors and partners
- Develop a toolkit for good practice development in volunteer involving organisations linked to the Investing in Volunteers indicators
- Develop resources and support on good practice for use by Volunteer Centres in their work to support local volunteer involving organisations, ensuring that this provides continually updated information and consistent activity across England
- Develop a training programme for corporate social responsibility managers on employer supported volunteering linked to the Investing in Volunteers Employ framework

### Volunteering and risk management

- Involvement in a joint conference with VitA and Help the Aged on volunteering, risk management and insurance

### Strategy and management

- Sponsor the publication of the *Building on success* year 3 – 5 detailed targets and second annual report
- Publication of future issues of *Hubbub*
- Sponsor the activities of the Commission on the Future of Volunteering including hearings, events and consultation
- Evaluation of the work of the Volunteering Hub.

## → **Addressing diversity**

The volunteering sector has a strong commitment to making volunteering accessible for all, and this is made explicit within the overarching principles of the Volunteering Hub Business Plan.

In making volunteering accessible for all, the Volunteering Hub will not only seek to address the needs of black and minority ethnic, faith and rural communities and groups, it will also work to reach and meet the needs of other groups including: mental health and physical disability organisations; young people; older people; lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered communities; asylum seekers, refugees and migrants groups; and all other communities.

Reaching the needs of groups and trustees from diverse backgrounds takes time and cannot be achieved quickly or easily. It will also take efforts targeted at specific groups within limited resources.

The Hub's strategy to reach groups and trustees from diverse backgrounds therefore includes both the way the Hub itself works (its management arrangements and its strategy for communications) and the specific projects the Hub will deliver. The strategy covers:

- Developing the management arrangements
- Commissioning work
- The delivery of the Hub's activity

The Volunteering Hub will seek opportunities to co-ordinate work with other Hubs, with regional ChangeUp activities and with other agencies to ensure that work to improve inclusion has the widest impact.

## ➔ **Reflection on broader volunteering infrastructure issues**

Over the last five years significant steps have been taken to reduce overlaps in provision of volunteering infrastructure support in all sectors. There is a considerable amount of work being undertaken to bring sectors together and share learning and reduce duplication (for example Volunteering England, Sport England and the Central Council of Physical Recreation are working together to ensure that we do not reinvent the wheel, that we learn from each other, and we encourage communication and joint working between our separate sectors and memberships).

Volunteering infrastructure providers are used to working together to provide effective services, with a good example of this being the wide range of partnerships that have been developed by YouthNet UK to develop and deliver the national volunteering database, the software to back it, and its web portal ([www.do-it.org.uk](http://www.do-it.org.uk)).

Although this work is well underway, the more that is done, and the more contacts that are made, the more areas are identified for joined up thinking. Volunteering England is working with a range of sector specific infrastructure organisations to explore what can be done to streamline provision through joint working in their sectors.

At a local level, many Volunteer Centres are actively seeking to ensure that their services are best configured for effective, efficient, co-ordinated, and sustainable support for volunteering and are building networks of local/sub-regional specialist volunteering infrastructure providers as part of this process. Support from ChangeUp is assisting this process in most sub-regions and regions. However, the short-term nature of ChangeUp funding timescales to date has made it difficult for a number of Volunteer Centres to access and use this support in a strategic manner.

The big issue in volunteering infrastructure is local capacity due to substantial underinvestment. This has a knock on effect on the ability of Volunteer Centres to deliver the level of service which is demanded by local residents, volunteer involving organisations and the public sector. Volunteer Centres find it difficult also to engage in regional and sub-regional development, although they do so as they see its importance. Both Volunteering England and the Volunteering Hub are seeking to address this at a policy level, until appropriate levels of funding are forthcoming this major issue will continue to dominate

discussions. Additionally, until the funding of local volunteering infrastructure is put onto a realistic and sustainable basis there will continue to be gaps and areas of under provision.

There is substantial potential for local, sub-regional and regional support for volunteer involving organisations to work together on a range of activities that will enable them all to deliver more effectively. A range of tools to enable this are being developed by the Volunteering Hub, but without capacity to support this at a local level this potential could well not be realised.

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