
Submission to the Capacitybuilders' review of the national hubs

The Volunteering Hub is supportive of the overarching aims of the ChangeUp programme. We strongly endorse the need for sector led solutions to capacity building and an appropriate window within which that can happen.

The Volunteering Hub believes that the themes identified within ChangeUp are necessary to meet the current needs of the voluntary and community sector.

The Volunteering Hub is concerned that the delivery of the ten year strategy to date has been undertaken in a very short-term and unstrategic manner. Within this context we welcome the review of the national hubs currently being undertaken by Capacitybuilders. We consider that the review is timely and appropriate. We welcome the opportunity to engage in the review process.

The Volunteering Hub is disturbed that there has been little apparent strategic co-ordination of the delivery of the ChangeUp agenda. It would appear to us that there is a need to actively encourage read-across and consistency between local, sub-regional regional plans and the national themes. It would appear that this has been seen to be a responsibility of the hubs, yet funding for the hubs against approved workplans was agreed a year in advance of the required submission of the local sub regional and regional plans which has not allowed this to happen in any meaningful way. We trust that the review will assist Capacitybuilders in giving this strategic co-ordination. We hope that this will enable delivery to become focussed on a drive for long term modernisation and more effective delivery of capacity building and infrastructure rather than on short term projects.

The Volunteering Hub acknowledges that it is a part of the national ChangeUp delivery programme, and that this programme sits within a wider field of infrastructure support. We would encourage Capacitybuilders to seek to build close partnerships with existing national capacity building and infrastructure support agencies in order that it can understand the issues they are addressing, gain detailed knowledge of existing work programmes, and see where it is appropriate and possible for intervention to add value and make a difference.

The Volunteering Hub endorses the joint submission to the review made by Ben Kernigan on behalf of all six hubs.

Chris Penberthy
Director of Strategy and Planning
Volunteering England
&
Head of Volunteering Hub

On behalf of Volunteering England, the Volunteering Hub Scrutiny Committee and the Volunteering Hub Implementation Team.

28th July 2006

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INTRODUCING THE VOLUNTEERING HUB

Volunteering Hub - principles

The Volunteering Hub developed its thinking, activities and delivery programmes based on key principles

National thinking local delivery

The Volunteering Hub has developed with local delivery and support at its heart.

- Volunteering is predominantly a local activity, undertaken by people responding to local need and calls for action. The Home Office Citizenship Survey reveals that the number of people engaging in volunteering (both formal and informal) is increasing. These increases are in both people volunteering at least once a year and those volunteering at least once a month.
- Volunteering is an inclusive activity, and should be available to all. This value is strongly endorsed by volunteer involving organisations, volunteering infrastructure providers and policy makers. Consequently, diversity (in its widest sense) is a vital component in the development of any initiative about or support for volunteering, including the work of the Volunteering Hub.
- National support for volunteering should, wherever possible, be delivered locally, sub-regionally or regionally as appropriate. At a national level work should be done to provide leadership, consistency, and undertake developmental and purchasing activity where there are economies of scale or a need to achieve critical mass – all of this should be done based on local knowledge, expertise and input.

Partnership

The Volunteering Hub has adopted a model of partnership development and delivery of all areas of its work.

- Volunteering England, the Hub's accountable body, was created as a result of close partnership working between three national charities (The Consortium on Opportunities for Volunteering, The National Centre for Volunteering and Volunteer Development England). Each of these charities brought a history of working in partnership to the establishment of Volunteering England.
- The England Volunteering Development Council¹, which acts as the Volunteering Hub Advisory Group, arose out of the creation of Volunteering England and the range of partnerships this involved.
- ChangeUp has been instrumental in encouraging greater partnership working at a national level to ensure that capacity building and infrastructure support is more effectively delivered.

Volunteering infrastructure

The Volunteering Hub recognises the value that volunteering infrastructure brings, especially at a local level and a volunteering infrastructure modernisation programme is central to its thinking.

¹ The England Volunteering Development Council was established in 2004 as a high-level representative mechanism for volunteering. The Council engages both with government and opposition parties in order to capture the collective intelligence of volunteer-involving organisations, volunteering infrastructure providers and of volunteers to provide a powerful, coordinated lobby to steer government policy and community action. This year the Council established regional bodies to enhance its ability to deliver its objectives. Currently the Council has 250 members drawn from the voluntary, community, public and private sectors, bringing perspectives from the breadth of volunteering at a professional and personal level including volunteer managers, volunteering infrastructure providers, funders, and policy makers.

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- Volunteering infrastructure is integral to the successful achievement of the ChangeUp high level objective for volunteering. Volunteering infrastructure exists to encourage people to volunteer, to make the process of engaging in voluntarism as easy as possible and to ensure that the volunteering experience is as good as it can be.
- Volunteering deserves a dynamic, strategic, co-ordinated and sustainable infrastructure for volunteering at local, sub-regional, regional and national level. Volunteering infrastructure providers acknowledge that this means that they need to be accountable and have to change if they are to deliver on their potential.
- Volunteering does not only happen within the voluntary sector. Whilst the infrastructure to support volunteering is part of the voluntary and community sector, it serves the needs of volunteering within the public sector and supports the development of employer supported volunteering within all sectors. Volunteering infrastructure has to approach all sectors and the general public with appropriately targeted messages and support. It is probably unique in voluntary and community sector infrastructure support in not only engaging with all sectors but also providing support, good practice and standard setting for all sectors.

Build on what is already there

The Volunteering Hub has developed with a clear intention to build the capacity of existing organisations and activities wherever possible in order to ensure sustainability. Robin Simpson (Chief Executive, Voluntary Arts Network), a member of the Volunteering Hub Scrutiny Committee, has compared this to the need to maintain A-roads and B-roads as well as adding extra lanes to motorways.

- The ChangeUp strategy does not start from a blank piece of paper. Before the hubs were created there was already a range of organisations delivering support to the voluntary and community sector. At the same time thinking had been developed within the volunteering sector about a variety of pieces of national strategic activity that could benefit volunteering locally.
- During the creation of Volunteering England a parallel and related process was undertaken alongside the one that developed ChangeUp. The result of this was *Building on success: strategy for volunteering infrastructure in England 2004-2014*. This identified a clear agenda for change, and the work to develop it ensured a wide consensus for its findings and recommendations. This has enabled a common direction for volunteering across all parts of the ChangeUp programme.
- The Volunteering Hub is supporting the development of a range of products and services. We know that there is a need to be able to deliver many of these beyond the end of the current Hub funding. Careful thought has been given to balancing free and paid-for services within the Hub's portfolio. Wherever possible, services that are to be paid-for will be delivered locally, sub-regionally or regionally as appropriate and by an existing organisation or partnership. In developing a sustainable programme of activity, the Volunteering Hub is ensuring that this is delivered in a manner consistent with its principles².

² It is worth noting that volunteering infrastructure agencies have historically provided almost all of their services free of charge or on a heavily subsidised basis. The Volunteering Hub is therefore also working to bring an appropriate commercial culture to volunteering infrastructure. Such activity takes time, and itself requires support and investment. Within this context the Volunteering Hub is having to balance accountability for public funds and the risk involved in developing new products and services in a changing culture at the same time as meeting the strict delivery timescales required by the ChangeUp funding regime.

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Volunteering Hub - distinctives

Following the publication of the ChangeUp strategy, Volunteering England was identified as the Volunteering Hub. Volunteering England had recently been created through partnership work leading to merger and became the de facto accountable body and major delivery agency for the Volunteering Hub. In conversations with the Active Community Unit and the Volunteering and Charitable Giving Unit consideration was given to a number of issues relating to the inter-relationship between Volunteering England and the Volunteering Hub, and what the distinctives of this would be.

The relationship between Volunteering England's strategic funding and the funding available to the Volunteering Hub

There was agreement that these two funding streams were separate but complementary.

It was agreed that the two units would consider how best to approach this, and would then ask Volunteering England to make an appropriate submission for funding. In late January 2005, Volunteering England was asked to submit a full Volunteering Hub Business Plan. A first draft was provided in March, with in principle agreement being given in April. Final amendments, following external scrutiny and comments from officials, were submitted in June, with funding being released later that month.

There is an inter-relationship between the work of the Volunteering Hub and that of Volunteering England as the national volunteer development agency strategically funded by government. Volunteering England is committed to ensuring that volunteering is supported, and as such frequently works to facilitate, endorse and support initiatives. As a result of this commitment Volunteering England have made a substantial in-kind contribution to the work of the Volunteering Hub through the release of staff time and resources to support all activities within the Hub's Business Plan whether they have been delivered by Volunteering England or by a commissioned agency.

A pre-existing strategy, ongoing consultations and advisory mechanisms

The Volunteering Hub was able to base its development on a substantial body of work that had already been undertaken.

- The development of *Building on success* and the synergies between this and ChangeUp provided in depth evidence for key areas of activity.
- The England Volunteering Development Council existed before the creation of the national hubs, and had already taken ownership of the strategy for the development of volunteering infrastructure in England described in *Building on success* and on this basis agreed to become the Volunteering Hub Advisory Group in March 2005. This ensures accountability to the wider volunteering sector, grounding development in grassroots experience and enabling a breadth of thinking to inform activity.
- There is a discrete infrastructure for volunteering at local, sub-regional, regional and national levels, and within this there were already strong partnerships. The creation of Volunteering England strengthened this position, bringing the umbrella function for local volunteering infrastructure to the heart of national thinking on volunteering.
- Volunteering England and its partner organisations have a range of networks and consultative mechanisms that have been made available to the Volunteering Hub. In advance of the development of the Volunteering Hub Business Plan these enabled consultation meetings to happen in each region of England. The Regional Volunteering Development Team at Volunteering England has also been proactive in gathering local, sub regional and regional perspectives and feedback to inform the development of the Volunteering Hub whilst at the same time ensuring that national thinking has been able to inform consortia thinking and activity.

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Interdependence of governance

The Volunteering Hub Scrutiny Committee has been established to ensure good governance of the work of the Hub. As the accountable body for the Volunteering Hub, the Volunteering England Board of Trustees has delegated responsibility for the governance and activity of the Volunteering Hub to the Scrutiny Committee.

- The Scrutiny Committee is a recognised part of Volunteering England's governance.
 - The Volunteering England Board of Trustees has appointed an independent Scrutiny Committee Chair.
 - The Scrutiny Committee Chair is also Chair of the national body of the England Volunteering Development Council.
 - The majority of membership of the Committee is independent of Volunteering England. The Volunteering England Board of Trustees has two seats out of a total nine (including the Chair).
- As part of the Volunteering England governance structure the Volunteering Hub Scrutiny Committee is able to inform and influence the activity of Volunteering England. This supports joined up thinking.
- All members of the Scrutiny Committee are drawn from the England Volunteering Development Council, ensuring a close and accountable link between the Volunteering Hub's governance and advisory functions.
- The Volunteering Hub has been active in seeking to minimise conflicts of interest.
 - To date only two organisations (including Volunteering England) that have staff, trustees or volunteers sitting on the Volunteering Hub Scrutiny Committee have been awarded work by the Volunteering Hub. One of these (Fiona Dawe from YouthNet UK) has since resigned due to pressure of work.
 - A new member of the Scrutiny Committee (Mark Reedman from the Consortium of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered Voluntary and Community Organisations) had, prior to appointment, received a small grant from the Volunteering Hub to enable participation in Investing in Volunteers.
 - The Volunteering Hub Business Plan identified that Volunteering England would receive 40% of the budget to deliver activity and manage the work of the Hub. This would equate to £1,044,033 over the two year funded programme. The Volunteering Hub's commitment to commissioning has meant that this proportion has been smaller.
 - The actual proportion of the budget allocated to Volunteering England during the first year of activity is currently being calculated as part of the report to be made to the England Volunteering Development Council in September 2006. We expect this to be less than the £588,222 budgeted.
 - The budgeted proportion of the budget allocated to Volunteering England for the second year of activity is 30%. This equates to £431,578, of which £96,000 is dependent on income generation.
- The Volunteering Hub Scrutiny Committee makes a quarterly formal report to both the Volunteering England Board of Trustees and the England Volunteering Development Council. These reports are published on both the Scrutiny Committee and England Volunteering Development Council webpages.

In reflecting on these arrangements during the preparation of this submission, members of the Volunteering Hub Scrutiny Committee felt that on balance this arrangement makes the Volunteering Hub:

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- Accountable to both its accountable body whilst giving it freedom to work in different ways
- Accountable to the wider sector enabling it to be easily informed and influenced by it;
- Ensures the Volunteering Hub works to a sector developed and owned strategy
- Ensures joined up thinking between the Volunteering Hub and the national volunteer development agency working as a strategic partner of government;
- Brings the benefits of partnership without the need for financing of individual partners being an issue in meeting the identified need.

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ANSWERS TO REVIEW QUESTIONS

What do local, sub-regional and regional voluntary and community organisations need from a national set of services?

Different organisations, different types of organisations, and different staff/volunteer specialisms within organisations will want and need different things from a national set of services.

From our experience, organisations do not mind whether the support comes from a hub, an existing infrastructure provider, a sub-sector³ specialist, peer support groups, or any other source as long as it is available and easy to access. The majority of frontline organisations want this support from appropriate local and sub-regional sources and their sector specific national bodies. Local and sub-regional infrastructure and sector specific national bodies look for this support from national infrastructure providers.

Given the range of different requirements it can be difficult to give one answer. However, there are a number of areas of commonality, and some specifics from different types of organisation or staff/volunteer specialism.

Areas of commonality

- Strong two-way relationships, with clear and consistent communication.
- The ability to influence the planning of national services.
- Opportunities to learn from and contribute to good practice development.
- High quality training and specialist advice to supplement internal/local provision.
- The ability to adapt nationally produced materials for local and/or specific situations.
- Opportunities to showcase innovative ideas and approaches to service delivery, partnership development and capacity building.
- Opportunities to network with others in the same and other fields.

Specific issues for volunteer involving organisations

Organisations that involve volunteers in all sectors can often under resource volunteer programmes and the management of these. Meeting the costs of appropriately supporting volunteering is often treated as a low priority in applications for project funds and rarely within full cost recovery. Both volunteers and those who manage them have identified the need to raise the status of volunteer management and resourcing within organisations. It is clear that there is an expectation that this culture change should be led at a national level.'

Specific issues of volunteering infrastructure providers

The majority of volunteering infrastructure organisations at a local, sub-regional and national level are substantially under funded. In addition to this, much of the funding that they have is in the form of short term contracts and project funding; almost none of their funding is long term and strategic. This makes planning difficult and means that hard decisions have to be made about which external initiatives to engage with. Most of these organisations have chosen to actively engage in ChangeUp consortia, often at their own cost. The requirements of the national hubs for consultation and dissemination at local, sub-regional and regional levels have added to the pressure on overstretched and valuable organisations.

³ Such as arts, sports, heritage, environment, youth, older people, etc.

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We believe that one of the key areas of national support that is needed by local, sub-regional and regional providers of volunteering infrastructure is the development and securing of a strategic funding framework, especially at the local level.

We hope that Capacitybuilders will work with the Volunteering Hub, Volunteering England, the England Volunteering Development Council and the Commission on the Future of Volunteering to ensure the provision of this resource.

What is the best way of delivering such services?

The Volunteering Hub believes that the best way to deliver support is by building on what is already there and not re-inventing the wheel.

- Where there is existing capacity it should be clearly signposted. If there is a need to build capacity this should be done, and when achieved, signposted.
- Where there are gaps in provision these should be identified and methods of filling these developed, implemented and then signposted. Where this is necessary we believe that this should, wherever possible, be done by working through existing structures rather than creating more.

The Volunteering Hub suggests that frontline organisations would appreciate a rationalisation of current national support in order to reduce confusion and perceived duplication.

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EVIDENCE FOR REVIEW CRITERIA

Evidence of the range of added value that the national hubs bring to the voluntary and community sector.

In understanding the range of added value that hubs bring to the voluntary and community sector there needs to be an acknowledgement of the distinction between hubs as separate entities and the work programmes they deliver.

Hubs as entities

We would suggest that most voluntary and community sector organisations that are aware of ChangeUp are unclear about what the hubs are and how they are different from the accountable bodies and partners. We believe that the hubs as branded new entities have added confusion for the sector about where to seek advice and support.

A wide range of people that we have spoken to, including members of the England Volunteering Development Council, have questioned why have a Volunteering Hub. This questioning has not arisen from the work programme. Rather it has come from a belief that, wherever possible, national support should be delivered through existing known and trusted organisations. The key underlying theme that has emerged relates to the development of Volunteering England⁴. We have been told that the delivery of a work programme through a branded Volunteering Hub appears to be a retrograde step given the rationale for the creation of Volunteering England – it has been suggested that activity should be seen as co-ordinated and/or delivered by Volunteering England rather than by a separate Volunteering Hub.

We welcome the opportunity to work with Capacitybuilders to consider the best way of delivering the national components of the ChangeUp programme.

Volunteering Hub activity

We believe that the Volunteering Hub is delivering a programme of work that brings new resources to the support available for volunteering. In building on what already exists, the Volunteering Hub has sought to enhance existing services in ways that users have requested and to develop new activity to meet the demands that the sector had identified through a variety of mechanisms.

Some examples of this activity include:

- Meeting the demand for more widely available national information and advice for people in the field of volunteering. The Volunteering Hub has invested in enhancing the existing Volunteering England Information Service:
 - Doubling the opening hours of the freephone information helpline (an additional 20 hours/week).
 - Drawing together a wide range of existing good practice materials, ensuring that these were current and accurate, and creating a new area of the Volunteering England website to make this resource widely available.

⁴ The rationale for this creation of Volunteering England was multi-faceted. Amongst these were some key statements of identified advantages that generated substantial support. These related to:

- The creation of a 'joined up' national volunteer development functions with strong local roots;
- Enabling increased local buy-in of national initiatives;
- A reduction in duplication of effort combined with economies of scale;
- A stronger voice for volunteering.

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- Developing and disseminating new information resources to fill identified gaps in provision, and ongoing activity to extend this into specialist areas of volunteering.
- Reviewing all of the contents of the Volunteering England library, acquisition of new resources, re-cataloguing all materials, making the catalogue available on-line, and promoting its existence to enable greater usage by practitioners.
- Enabling the information service to be more proactive in dissemination and support of good practice through attendance at local, sub-regional and regional events. The majority of these focus, at the request of local volunteer involving organisations, on volunteers and the law, the appropriate use of the Disclosure Service, and risk management.
- Meeting the demand for more interaction and public facing services on www.do-it.org.uk through improving linkages with other resources and introducing volunteer blogs.
- Enabling specialist organisations to bring together good practice in volunteer involvement within their sectors and publish the results.
 - The Evelyn Oldfield Unit has produced good practice guidelines for refugee and asylum seeker voluntary and community sector organisations.
 - NACRO has produced good practice guidelines for the involvement of ex-offenders as volunteers.
 - MENCAP has produced good practice guidelines for the involvement of volunteers with learning difficulties.
- Building on the activity that had already been undertaken to provide common branding for 180 Volunteer Centres through:
 - Branding an additional 122 Volunteer Centres and providing these with stationery, promotional/marketing/exhibition materials and Thompson Directory advertisements.
 - Preparing a marketing campaign for all branded Volunteer Centres to be run in September 2006 and January 2007.
 - Promoting Volunteer Centres as a local source of support for volunteer recruitment and involvement, for example through joint branding and inclusion of text within the joint hubs brochure.
- Working with the England Volunteering Development Council to support:
 - A review and updating of *Building on success: strategy for volunteering infrastructure in England 2004-2014* currently being consulted on and due for publication in November 2006.
 - Increasing depth of activity through establishing the nine regional bodies of the Council.
 - The development and funding of the Commission on the Future of Volunteering.
- Exploring the potential for future developments in support for volunteer management and employer supported volunteering with the Excellence in Volunteer Management Programme Advisory Group, the Employees in the Community Planning Group and Investing in Volunteers resulting in:
 - The development of a national training strategy for Volunteer Managers.
 - Creation of a variety of support and training resources for Volunteer Managers.
 - Development of additional materials to support organisations to become involved with Investing in Volunteers either as a framework for organisational improvement or through accreditation.

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- Awarding 74 small organisations grants to enable them to work towards Investing in Volunteers accreditation.
- Development of support and training materials for managers of employer supported volunteering programmes.
- Development of Investing in Volunteers for Employers as a framework for organisational improvement for employer supported volunteering schemes with an accreditation option.
- Development of a training programme for Volunteer Centre managers.
- Additionally, catalysed through this investment:
 - The Employees in the Community Planning Group has agreed to become part of the Excellence in Volunteer Management Programme Advisory Group.
 - The Employees in the Community website (www.employeevolunteering.org.uk) is becoming a part of www.volunteering.org.uk.
 - Volunteering England is moving responsibility for Volunteer Centre Quality Accreditation from the Volunteering Development and Grantmaking Directorate into the Excellence in Volunteer Management Programme and is currently exploring the potential for a dedicated staff member funded from unrestricted income to support this area of work.

An initial assessment as to how they are contributing to Capacitybuilders' objectives and whether they are on track to meeting their own specified targets.

The hubs were established to work toward specific ChangeUp milestones and contribute toward the high level objectives. The establishment of Capacity Builders during the pre-agreed workplan has added to the objectives that need to be worked towards.

The first year's milestone for volunteering was due to be achieved as the Volunteering Hub was awarded funding to commence its work. The milestone was achieved through Volunteering England's activity, and was not funded through the ChangeUp programme. The Volunteering Hub Business Plan was developed in order to provide services and resources that would support the achievement of the ChangeUp high level objective and the other milestones for the volunteering theme.

Although the Volunteering Hub Business Plan was developed before Capacitybuilders was created, the work programme is delivering a range of activities towards achieving Capacitybuilders' objectives.

- The Volunteering Hub is working as part of the delivery mechanism for the volunteering infrastructure modernisation agenda. Through training and development we are seeking to improve the quality of volunteering infrastructure support.
- The Volunteering Hub is undertaking specific activity on sustainable funding for local volunteering infrastructure, and would welcome the support of Capacitybuilders in achieving this shared objective. The Volunteering Hub is also developing impact assessment measures for the six core functions of volunteering infrastructure as defined in the Compact.
- The Volunteering Hub has actively sought to ensure that programmes reach diverse organisations. In the first year of activity the savings that were made provided investment in 74 small organisations enabling them to have support in ensuring that their volunteer involvement operates within established good practice, and to receive external accreditation of this fact.
- In order to ensure that the Volunteering Hub is able to be effective in securing sustainable funding for local volunteering infrastructure, the work that we are doing is being championed by

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Baroness Hanham of Kensington CBE (Chair of the Volunteering Hub Scrutiny Committee and the England Volunteering Development Council). We are also ensuring that this work links closely to the activity of the Volunteering Development and Grantmaking Directorate within Volunteering England, as it has responsibility for the volunteer development agency umbrella body function and has extensive experience of funding local volunteering infrastructure. Through Baroness Hanham and Christopher Spence CBE (Chief Executive, Volunteering England) we are engaged in a joint work programme with the Local Government Association culminating in their 2007 annual conference. Addressing issues of funding for local volunteering infrastructure providers forms part of this work programme. Volunteering England's role as a strategic partner of the Office of the Third Sector also has a key role to play in influencing funders. The work of the England Volunteering Development Council and the Commission on the Future of Volunteering bring these strands and key players together thanks to financial support from the Volunteering Hub.

During the first year of activity, the Volunteering Hub delivered its workplan to budget. Through effective management it was also able to agree with the Home Office additional work to be undertaken. This has also been predominantly completed.

Extent and quality of support and training offered to generic infrastructure organisations

The Volunteering Hub is concentrating its support for infrastructure organisations on those which support volunteering, thus ensuring that activity is targeted. The Volunteering Hub is undertaking a process of developing new support and training for volunteering infrastructure providers, including:

- Volunteer Centre branding (see above).
- Hosting a conference to explore the issues of regional volunteering infrastructure.
- Support for the development of *Building on success* (see above).
 - The England Volunteering Development Council has also sought to ensure a wide variety of generic and specialist volunteering infrastructure providers are included in its membership.
 - The Commission on the Future of Volunteering will specifically look at the implications of its recommendations on providers of volunteering infrastructure.
- Development of in-depth resources to enable Volunteer Centres to provide better and more cohesive information and support services to organisations that involve volunteers without a need for each of them to reinvent the wheel.
- Development of a funding framework for the provision of local volunteering infrastructure and a campaign to ensure its adoption by national and local statutory funders.
- Research into the current modernisation of local volunteering infrastructure as a result of *Building on success*.
 - This research is also exploring the involvement of local volunteering infrastructure with ChangeUp and the impact this is having on the modernisation agenda.
 - The research is currently being prepared for publication, and over the next year in-depth case studies will be undertaken and published to give the findings a human face.
- Mapping of all ChangeUp consortia plans against the six core functions of volunteering infrastructure as defined in *Volunteering: Compact code of good practice* and the four Volunteering Hub work themes to identify potential gaps in activity and areas of local, sub-

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regional or regional work that could be promoted or replicated in order to provide better support for volunteering.

- The development of an impact assessment toolkit for the provision of the six core functions of volunteering.
- Development of the next phase of Volunteer Centre Quality Accreditation based on the new impact assessment toolkit.

Extent and quality of support offered to sub-sectoral, specialist, functional infrastructure organisations – including responses to the equalities and diversity agenda.

In many ways the volunteering infrastructure can be viewed as sub-sectoral, specialist and/or functional, and on this basis the above responses could be deemed to also apply to this criterion. Similarly, the work with the Evelyn Oldfield Unit, NACRO and MENCAP provides sub-sectoral support.

The Volunteering Hub has given careful consideration to other areas of work being undertaken on diversity and volunteering in order not to duplicate activity or effort. These have included:

- The Russell Commission/v and their detailed consideration and activity in the field of young people and volunteering.
- WRVS and the work it is doing through the government funded Volunteering in the Third Age programme exploring issues of older people and volunteering.
- Work being done by SCOPE on issues of access to volunteering by disabled people.
- The Rural Volunteer Point Project being undertaken by Volunteering England (see below)
- Pan European activity being led by Volunteering England and project managed by CEV (the European Volunteer Centre) on the role of volunteering in the integration of migrant communities, and other work being co-ordinated in this area in England by the Tandem Partnership.

In the design of all Volunteering Hub activity, consideration is given to the way in which this responds to the diversity agenda. In addressing diversity the Volunteering Hub has been keen to take a wide view of diversity in order to make volunteering accessible to all.

- The Volunteering Hub Scrutiny Committee considered issues of rurality during an in-depth discussion. As a result of this discussion:
 - A greater understanding of rurality was gained by Scrutiny Committee members, which leads to closer examination and questioning of all proposed work.
 - A plenary session on rural volunteering was led by Sylvia Brown (Chief Executive, Action for Communities in Rural England) at the regional infrastructure conference hosted by the Volunteering Hub.
 - Sylvia also presented on these issues at a meeting of the England Volunteering Development Council in order to encourage wider consideration by the volunteering sector. Specifically this gave rise to action by the Council on issues of the new licensing act on volunteering in rural communities which, together with action taken by others, led to a change in national guidelines.
 - Consideration was given to the £1,000,000 pilot rural programme currently being undertaken by Volunteering England, and Volunteering England was tasked with promoting this more widely and securing a sustainable future for this area of work (both of which are being actively implemented).

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- The Volunteering Hub Scrutiny Committee considered the work on mainstreaming diversity undertaken by Zahno Rao Associates and its implications on the Volunteering Hub, and look forward to the publication of detailed guidance for hubs within the context of the wider Equalities Strategy that was proposed in the report.
 - The Scrutiny Committee believe that the Volunteering Hub aims to make volunteering accessible for all irrespective of particular ChangeUp requirements - but these requirements are nonetheless being addressed. It was identified that ensuring the diversity agenda was being addressed is an area that Scrutiny Committee members specifically check in considering and approving tender documentation and the awarding of commissioned activity.
 - As a result of this discussion the Scrutiny Committee invited expressions of interest in order to broaden the diversity of its membership, as a result of which two new members were appointed.
 - At the request of the Scrutiny Committee, the England Volunteering Development Council will consider the diversity and equalities agenda at a meeting in the current financial year.
 - The Commission on the Future of Volunteering has been specifically tasked to address issues of diversity and volunteering. At its first meeting, members of the Commission identified a number of areas of work that they will undertake in order to ensure that diversity is included within themes of work and contributions actively encouraged.
- The criteria set for the award of grants by the Volunteering Hub to enable organisations to attain accreditation through Investing in Volunteers specifically targeted organisations from diverse communities including faith, rural and black and minority ethnic groups.

Extent and quality of commissioning – including direct commissioning and competitive tendering

The Volunteering Hub has commissioned the majority of its work from agencies other than Volunteering England. The majority of commissioning has been through competitive tendering, although some has not been.

The Volunteering Hub made a conscious decision to break activities down into bite sized components in order to make it easier for small organisations to bid for work. This has meant that Volunteering England has invested in building the capacity of commissioned agencies and supporting the partnership development necessary for effective delivery.

The Volunteering Hub has a staff team of two. Their work focuses on the management of the tendering of commissioned activity, together with the coordination of Volunteering England members of staff who act as Activity Leaders for specific pieces of work.

Decisions about the expenditure of the Volunteering Hub, including tendering and award of commissioned activity, are taken by the Volunteering Hub Scrutiny Committee. To date, there are only two members of the Committee from organisations that have been awarded funding from the Volunteering Hub, these being Volunteering England and YouthNet UK (both having been identified within the Business Plan as undertaking specific pieces of Volunteering Hub activity). A new member of the Committee has previously received funding from the Hub's Investing in Volunteers Grant Programme (this being the Consortium of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Voluntary and Community Organisations). The Volunteering Hub has therefore not faced many conflicts of interest issues.

However, with the volume of commissioning being undertaken through the ChangeUp programme, and the number of potential commissioned agencies that are also delivering work as part of consortia, we have noticed that it can be difficult to get a wide choice of agencies to bid for activity.

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This, together with the tight timetables necessary during the first year of activity, has meant that we have commissioned more work from consultants than we had envisaged.

Commissioning from a preferred providers list

In the Volunteering Hub Business Plan we identified that we would develop a preferred providers list. In June 2005 we advertised that the list was open, and encouraged applications. No application received was rejected.

During the early stages of commissioning, the preferred providers list enabled us to quickly advertise tenders to a range of individuals and organisations who had notified us of their interest in specific areas of our activity. We were therefore able to let early tenders through a quick competitive process.

Open tendering

As the Hub has developed we have increasingly moved to open tendering. This has been for two major reasons. Firstly, we have had more time and therefore have been able to allow a larger window for submission of documentation. Secondly, we were discovering that those agencies on the preferred provider list were often heavily engaged in other areas of the ChangeUp programme and the Year of the Volunteer and were consequently going to be unable to deliver work within the timescales that we required; at times this led to work having to go through a further tendering process. When going to open tender we always let preferred providers know of the opportunities. Open tender is now the preferred method for commissioning activity.

Commissioning from an identified agency

At times the Volunteering Hub commissions specified activity from only one agency. This has been done for a number of reasons:

- Where activity builds on an existing piece of work, for example the Volunteering England freephone information line; the rebranding of Volunteer Centres (which had previously been through competitive tender by volunteering England); work with YouthNet UK on the development of www.do-it.org.uk.
- Where the new activity can logically be bolted on to existing work that has been competitively tendered, for example work relating to website content management systems.
- Where work was identified within the Business Plan as being delivered by Volunteering England.
 - In one instance, Volunteering England had been identified as leading on the development of a commissioned marketing campaign for Volunteer Centres. Following further thought it was felt that this campaign would also need to be managed. Volunteering England did not have the resources to do this additional work, and given the time constraints, it was proposed that an identified expert consultant be brought in to develop and manage this work, including building the consortium to deliver the campaign. In this case the proposal was put to the Scrutiny Committee, which is also approving subsequent spending on the campaign. The content of the campaign is being carefully considered by an advisory group set up specifically for this purpose, and by Volunteering England's Volunteer Centre Advisory Group.

Evidence of leadership in developing/setting national standards in key areas of capacity building.

The Volunteering Hub is exercising leadership through the way in which it is building on existing thinking and activity in developing/setting national standards. This breaks down into five main areas of work:

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- The Volunteering Hub has supported making existing good practice materials more easily available, and has funded the production of good practice guidelines where there were identified gaps in current provision.
- The Volunteering Hub has built on developing thinking about the need for professionalisation of volunteer management. Specifically it has been developing training and support programmes for people who manage and lead volunteers. The Volunteering Hub has supported the development of a sustainable programme to support the development of volunteer management under the banner of the Excellence in Volunteer Management Programme.
- In order for volunteer management to flourish, it needs to happen within an organisational framework that is positive about volunteering. Investing in Volunteers is an organisational quality accreditation framework and process that provides this. Investing in Volunteers was originally developed by four volunteer bureaux in the Wandle Valley area of South London. The four national volunteer development agencies were asked to consider taking this to a UK-wide roll-out. This was accepted, and the intellectual property rights purchased. Investing in Volunteers is the only UK wide organisational quality accreditation framework for the involvement and management of volunteers. The Volunteering Hub has supported the development of this initiative in England.
- There is general consensus that there needs to be encouragement given to the development of employer supported volunteering programmes. This is seen as a key way of encouraging more people to volunteer whilst at the same time increasing corporate social responsibility. The Volunteering Hub is taking specific responsibility for development of training and accreditation for the employer supported volunteering elements of the corporate social responsibility agenda.
- Volunteering infrastructure, locally, sub-regionally, regionally and nationally whether generalist or specialist, plays an important role in supporting volunteering through the delivery of the six core functions described in both *Building on success* and *Volunteering: Compact code of good practice*. As part of this network of provision, Volunteer Centres play a key role in supporting volunteering at a local level. If the Volunteering Hub is to be effective we acknowledge that we need to work to support the existing capacity building programme being led by Volunteering England. The Volunteering Hub is specifically addressing issues of strategic sustainable funding of local volunteering infrastructure and funding the further development of the *Building on success* strategy.
- The Volunteering Hub has also identified the need to develop leadership in volunteering, and during the first year of its activity hosted a conference on this theme.

Evidence of supporting the development of good practice at the regional and local levels.

The Volunteering Hub has commissioned a range of work to be delivered by agencies working at regional and local levels. This work has included developing good practice as well as national frameworks.

Good practice develops through an iterative process. Mechanisms for this process to happen linking local, sub-regional, regional and national levels in generic and specialist areas already exist. The Volunteering Hub taps into these in the support it gives to good practice development.

Good practice development also needs to be disseminated. The Volunteering Hub has enabled the development of new programmes of support that link into the existing good practice frameworks (whether of information giving or more structured developmental change). The majority of the dissemination and development undertaken as a result of the Volunteering Hub's activity will be delivered locally, sub-regionally and/or regionally as appropriate. This will enable ongoing development to be informed by local practice.

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Extent and quality of partnership development work undertaken.

Partnership is a key principle of the Volunteering Hub, and without it we would not be able to deliver our work programme or have effective governance.

Much of the work that the Volunteering Hub has engaged in has been based on existing and developing partnerships. The Volunteering Hub has built on the existing partnerships of Volunteering England, as the accountable body. The Volunteering Hub has encouraged partnerships to develop in delivering commissioned activity. Where necessary the Volunteering Hub has sought to forge new partnerships to deliver specific pieces of work.

Most of the work that the Volunteering Hub has commissioned has also been informed by advisory/steering/reference groups. These groups might have previously existed, although in some cases they have been specifically convened for the purpose. An added advantage of these groups is that they also encourage further partnership development between members.

As the Volunteering Hub has commissioned a lot of activity in bite-sized chunks we have also worked to build partnerships between providers. This adds strength to programmes and encourages skill sharing within the sector. Interestingly, we have also found that partnerships have been developed by agencies wishing to tender for work.

Assessment of steps taken to ensure co-ordination across the hubs programme where appropriate.

The Volunteering Hub has worked with other hubs on a bilateral basis where this has been appropriate. Much of this activity has been in areas of workforce development, building on previous involvement between Volunteering England and the VSNTO. Volunteering England has also been working closely with the Governance Hub.

The Volunteering Hub has engaged in the Hubbers meetings, and been involved in appropriate joint activity, such as the Hubs Conference and the Hubs brochure.