

ISSUES



GMCVO's briefing on areas of policy, practice and the operating environment affecting the voluntary and community sector in Greater Manchester

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VOLUNTEERING

“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 most recent *Citizenship Survey* (April-Sept 2009) showed that 25 per cent of people participated regularly (at least once a month) in formal volunteering with 41 per cent of people taking part at least once a year. For informal volunteering this was reported as 31 per cent and 56 per cent respectively.

As well as being a popular activity, volunteering is also something which in recent years has had a higher national profile than ever before, with all political parties interested in promoting it as a means of dealing with some social and economic problems. 2005 was designated as National Year of the Volunteer, with a range of events designed to promote volunteering to the general public. In the same year the Government-sponsored Russell Commission into young people's volunteering made its recommendations, leading to the establishment in 2007 of the new youth volunteering charity, **v**, with **v**involved teams being funded in every local authority throughout England (see page 5). Volunteering is now firmly embedded in the citizenship agendas of schools, colleges and universities, and in the private sector through employer-supported volunteering.

In January 2008, the Commission on the Future of Volunteering, chaired by Baroness Neuberger, published its *Manifesto for Change* and included a number of recommendations and challenges to Government, public bodies, the volunteering infrastructure, volunteer-involving organisations and individuals, intended to help create the climate in which volunteering could flourish (see page 3). In recent years there has also been the creation of Volunteering England, the establishment of the England and Regional Volunteering Development Councils, the introduction of the national Do-it database of volunteering opportunities, national branding of accredited Volunteer Centres, the

Investing in Volunteers quality mark for volunteer-involving organisations, and the beginnings of a modernisation programme for local volunteering development agencies. Local authorities now have to report on their performance against National Indicator 6 (NI6) – ‘Participation in Regular Volunteering’ – and this has given rise to the development of many local volunteering strategies in recognition of the role of volunteering as a cross-cutting theme across Local Strategic Partnership areas (see page 7).

Volunteering England's very recent report, *Volunteering in the Recession*, reports that nearly 90 per cent of Volunteer Centres experienced an increase in the number of enquiries about volunteering placements between March and August last year, with many reporting twice as many enquiries as for the same period in 2008. This is certainly the experience of volunteering organisations across Greater Manchester. This increase in workload, combined with the lack of sufficient and sustainable resources, and a shortage of quality volunteering opportunities is, in turn, putting pressure on both volunteering infrastructure and volunteer management resources alike.

So the outlook for volunteering is very mixed. On the one hand we look forward to further opportunities to showcase volunteering as we move towards European Year of Volunteering in 2011 and the interest generated by 2012 Olympics and Paralympics and its volunteering legacy. On the other hand, the volunteering infrastructure, essential to support and sustain this increase in activity, is on very shaky ground indeed. It is against this background, and to address some of these issues, that the Volunteering Greater Manchester project will be working, together with its various partners and stakeholders (see page 3).

[* Definition of volunteering from *Manifesto for Change* – the Report of the Commission on the Future of Volunteering]

The volunteering infrastructure in Greater Manchester

There are a number of nationally-accredited Volunteer Centres in Greater Manchester, the majority of which are attached to a Council for Voluntary Service (CVS). In other areas with no Volunteer Centre, the CVS itself, or other volunteering infrastructure organisations has taken on this role and carries out many of the core functions of a Volunteer Centre. These organisations and projects along with the involved (youth volunteering) teams in each borough make up the Greater Manchester volunteering infrastructure

Levels of funding and staffing vary greatly across the volunteering infrastructure in the Greater Manchester sub-region, ranging from an unfunded and volunteer-run service to a Volunteer Centre with 10 full-time paid staff and 40 volunteers. In relation to the six core functions* of a Volunteer Centre, volunteering brokerage takes up much of the capacity of many of these organisations. Having said this, the Volunteer Centres and equivalents work hard to improve standards and practices in volunteer-involving organisations to ensure that volunteers have the best possible experience of volunteering. In all the Greater Manchester boroughs there is also some form of strategic level network or volunteer co-ordinators' forum which aims to develop volunteering in the area.

The core function that the volunteering infrastructure struggles with the most seems to be the one related to 'policy response and campaigning'. The Volunteering Greater Manchester project will, therefore, provide support for joint working across the sub-region on this function, and give the volunteering infrastructure a louder voice in campaigns and policy development, and a more co-ordinated approach.

Nationally, the Government has set 198 National Indicators for local authorities to demonstrate the impact of their work. One of those indicators is 'Participation in formal volunteering' (NI6). The Local Strategic Partnerships in Bolton, Rochdale, Salford and Trafford have all made this a priority indicator, and in other areas where NI6 has not been identified as a priority, local targets have still been set around increasing volunteering where it has been described as a local, additional priority. Interestingly, in Greater Manchester, the prioritising of NI6 does not appear, however, to directly correlate to the level of investment in the volunteering infrastructure from the local authority.

A mapping exercise of the volunteer brokerage services in the area show reach to a large number of people from a range of different backgrounds.

Our research suggests that almost 7,500 people registered with Volunteer Centres (and equivalents) between April 2008 and March 2009. Of these, 32 per cent were male and 67 per cent female, with 23 per cent from BME backgrounds. This number does not include the thousands of young people between the ages of 16 and 25 who registered with one of the Greater Manchester involved teams during the same period.

Almost all brokerage services in the area have seen a large increase in numbers of volunteers in the last six months, primarily as a result of the current economic climate which has given rise to a big increase in unemployed people wanting to volunteer in order to gain or retain work-related skills. In more than one Volunteer Centre, the average number of volunteers that register each month has almost doubled, and this mirrors the national picture. However, the increase has not been matched with increased funding, staffing or volunteering opportunities. In some areas of volunteering activity, the numbers of quality volunteering opportunities are too low to meet the demand, with the types of opportunities available often being a mismatch to the interests, level of skills and experience of the volunteers. There is, therefore, a real need to create more volunteering opportunities with real responsibility whilst avoiding job substitution.

The *Volunteering Greater Manchester* project will, therefore, be looking at ways of supporting the volunteering infrastructure to create more opportunities and increase the diversity of volunteers who access them through training, development and capacity building.

Megan Ohri, Volunteering Development Officer, Volunteering Greater Manchester

[* The core functions are: volunteering brokerage, good practice support, developing opportunities, promoting volunteering, strategic development, policy response and campaigning]

Modernising volunteering in Greater Manchester

Volunteering Greater Manchester is an exciting new project, hosted by GMCVO, which aims to bring about a radical change in the way people think about and support volunteering in Greater Manchester

It involves a partnership of volunteering service providers, including Volunteer Centres, local volunteering infrastructure organisations and local diversity organisations. Over the next three years the project will:

- Champion volunteering and volunteering infrastructure and raise its profile, leading to greater resourcing and sustainability;
- Provide strategic support for existing volunteering services and infrastructure;
- Create better access routes into volunteering for residents of Greater Manchester;
- Support volunteering by non-traditional groups;
- Co-ordinate work across local authority boundaries and enable greater collaboration and partnership work;
- Disseminate best practice in working with volunteers through information, training, mentoring and a variety of events.

The project employs three members of staff:

Lynne Kent as Volunteering Champion hosted by GMCVO

Megan Ohri as part-time Volunteering Development Officer based at Salford CVS Volunteer Centre

Gwen Mason as part-time Diversity Officer based at Refugee Action.

Funding for the three-year project has been awarded by the Big Lottery BASIS 2 (Building and Sustaining Infrastructure Support) programme.

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The Commission on the Future of Volunteering

The Commission on the Future of Volunteering was an independent body set up by the England Volunteering Development Council to develop a long-term vision for volunteering in England.

The Commission, chaired by Baroness Julia Neuberger, reported in January 2008 with recommendations directed at all sections of society – Government, private and public sector, voluntary sector and individuals.

Recommendations included:

- Raising the profile of volunteering (promotional events and volunteer champions)
- Making volunteering open to all (including removing obstacles and an Access to Volunteering Fund)
- Modernising volunteering and its infrastructure
- Reward and recognition for volunteering
- Training (for volunteers, volunteer managers and public sector staff)

Following the Commission's report, Volunteering England established action groups to tackle key themes identified in the Commission's recommendations, each led by an individual of influence in the area. These include:

- Promotion of volunteering
- Modernising structures
- Public sector action
- Skills and empowerment for volunteer managers
- Skills for volunteers
- Employer support for volunteering
- Inclusion

Volunteering Greater Manchester's modernising agenda is inevitably picking up many of the areas of work at a sub-regional level in its work with Volunteer Centres and other volunteering services, with volunteer-involving organisations and with the public sector.

Further information about the Commission's report, its recommendations and follow-up activities can be found on Volunteering England's website (www.volunteering.org.uk)

Eight steps to involving volunteers

1 Developing a volunteering policy

A Volunteer policy underpins an organisation's whole volunteer programme and demonstrates its commitment to volunteers. It helps to ensure fairness and consistency when dealing with volunteers. Volunteering England's guide *Get it Right from the Start* states: "Being able to refer to a written policy ensures that decisions are not made on an ad hoc basis, and that all volunteers are treated equally and fairly."

A volunteer policy gives a summary of what volunteers can expect in terms of recruitment, training, volunteer roles, expenses, supervision, insurance, and issues such as confidentiality and safeguarding. It needs to be clear and accessible to a range of ages and abilities.

2 Creating roles

When creating new volunteer roles you should involve all relevant staff. The advice from Volunteering England is:

- Think practically about tasks which staff members currently don't have time to do or about what support they might need to add value to their work.
- Think more adventurously about dream projects which your organisation doesn't have the resources to tackle.
- Think realistically about what an individual volunteer or group of volunteers could achieve.

Volunteers need to have a clear role or task description to ensure they know the remit of their role. This will also help you to recruit the right person for the task. It will inform them of the purpose of role, the tasks and qualities/experience/skills sought (where relevant), the location of the work and time commitment required.

3 Cost, budgeting and practicalities

Volunteers may give up their time for free, but volunteering itself is not free. When creating or developing volunteer roles it is important to consider what the cost implications will be and to budget for them. Costs might include: travel expenses, training, paying for a volunteer celebration event, CRB checks, and equipment and administration. Other practicalities also need consideration, eg if the volunteer is doing administrative work, is there a desk and computer they can use?

4 Recruitment and selection

Once the above steps have been completed, you

will be ready to start the recruitment process. This can be relatively informal, but where the role involves responsibilities such as work with children or vulnerable adults, or handling money, a more formal process may be appropriate. This might include application forms, interviews, requesting references and CRB checks. Be mindful of equal opportunities in recruitment campaigns and processes. Using different media, such as press adverts and local radio, as well as word of mouth, events, presentations, Volunteer Centres and involved teams, are just some of the ways of advertising your volunteering opportunities. You can also advertise opportunities online at www.do-it.org.uk.

5 Safeguarding

Although most health and safety legislation applies only to workers and employees, organisations do have a duty of care towards volunteers. This means that reasonable steps should be taken to reduce the probability and seriousness of injury to volunteers. It's a good idea to carry out risk assessments of the volunteer roles and use these to ensure volunteers are as safe as possible in their work. As well as making sure your volunteers are safe, organisations must ensure the safety and protection of their service users who volunteers will be working with. For some volunteer roles Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks are definitely required by law, but for other roles it will be for the organisation to decide in line with CRB guidelines. However, it is important that ex-offenders are not unnecessarily excluded from volunteering and if there is uncertainty as to when it is appropriate to carry out a CRB check, and what to do with the information you receive, advice is available from the CRB website – www.crb.homeoffice.gov.uk. The introduction of the Independent Safeguarding Authority is also making changes to the way in which safeguarding works; to understand and keep up to date with these changes go to <http://www.isa-gov.org.uk/>. It is also important to remember that CRB checks are only one aspect of a proper screening and safeguarding process which should include relevant application procedures, references, as well as appropriate training and supervision.

6 Induction and training

Training should be provided for each volunteer to ensure they are able to carry out their role safely and well. As part of volunteer induction it is important that the volunteer, other employees

and service users all fully understand the volunteer's role. The volunteer and the organisation should also be clear about the expectations in relation to health and safety, equal opportunities and other responsibilities such as confidentiality, data-protection, IT policies etc. While it is hoped that the volunteer won't need to use them, they should also be made aware of the organisation's complaints and grievance procedures.

7 Support and supervision

Volunteers need to be supported in their work, not just in the practical ways mentioned above (ie training, reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses etc), but also need to have good support networks. This could be peer support from other volunteers, or support and supervision from paid staff within the organisation. Each volunteer should have a named person that they can contact for information and support. Regular contact and supervision sessions with volunteers are essential and provide the opportunity to review their role, make sure they are able to carry out the work they have been tasked with, and formally evidence their progress. Some volunteers want or need such a formal record of their progress and achievements as evidence for

prospective employers, trainers and other agencies. Ask volunteers about this and support them to create personal portfolios or records of achievement. It is important to recognise that each volunteer will have different motivations and needs in relation to their volunteering activity and, therefore, the way they are supervised and supported may also differ.

8 Recognition

It's important for volunteers to know that their work is appreciated and their contribution recognised. Simple things like certificates for completing training, a 'thank you' card on completing a volunteer placement, social and celebration events will make all the difference. These things can be a great motivator for volunteers. In many areas, the local Volunteer Centre or equivalent will have an annual celebration event, possibly held in National Volunteers Week in the first week of June each year.

www.volunteersweek.org.uk.

For more information on developing a volunteer policy, or on any aspects of managing volunteers, check the Volunteering England website - www.volunteering.org.uk.

V for youth volunteering

V is the national youth volunteering organisation, created in 2006 as a result of the recommendations of the Russell Commission which consulted extensively about the future of youth volunteering in England, including with over 6,000 young people. v's brief is to bring about a 'step-change' in the quality, quantity and diversity of volunteering opportunities for 16-25 year olds.

One of its roles has been to establish vinvolved teams in every local authority area to ensure that young people from across the country can access advice and information about good quality volunteering opportunities, as well as influencing the way that volunteering is shaped in their area. Each team has three key tasks:

Creating new volunteering opportunities:

- Working with community and voluntary organisations to create more high-quality, diverse volunteering opportunities for young people in their local area;
- Supporting local organisations that work with young volunteers, by offering training, building local networks and sharing good practice.

Brokering 16-25 year olds into volunteering opportunities:

- Finding the right opportunities for new and existing volunteers;
- Helping young people to set up their own voluntary projects.

Championing youth-led action:

- Each team has a Youth Action Team, made up of young volunteers who advise vinvolved teams.

Anyone who is interested in offering volunteering opportunities for 16-25 year olds, one-off, part-time or full-time, can contact their local vinvolved team (see back page).

Involving volunteers from under-represented groups

A diverse volunteer base can benefit organisations with inclusive volunteer policies and wider society too

Equality is a by-word in local government and in national policy. It is right as a matter of principle, but it is also embedded in law, in the Equalities Bill, which not only asks public bodies not to discriminate, but actually lays on them a duty to promote equality

In 2008, the Rt Hon Harriet Harman stated in *Framework for a Fairer Future* (the Equality Bill) that equality: *"is essential for every individual. Everyone has the right to be treated fairly and enjoy the opportunity to fulfil their potential.....it's also necessary for the economy: a competitive economy is one that draws on everyone's talents and abilities and is not blinkered by prejudice.....and it is necessary for society: a more equal society is more cohesive and at ease without being marred by prejudice and discrimination"*

This thinking was echoed in the Compact Code of Practice agreed between the Government and the voluntary sector. It was agreed that organisations need to ensure equal opportunity and it is, therefore, legitimate for voluntary and community organisations to include, for example, the cost of enabling greater access to volunteering in applications for funding.

In more practical terms, how can organisations benefit from having a diverse volunteer base and from using volunteers from under-represented groups?

● **Language skills**

Knowledge of different languages in your volunteer base is a definite asset. There are savings on interpreter fees and more effective communication with non-native speakers. In Medway NHS Trust non-native speakers are kept on a database and used for interpreting.

● **Specialist knowledge and experience**

Volunteers who are themselves from an organisation's service user or client group often bring specialist knowledge and personal experience that can be positively applied to the service. DIAL Solihull (a disability advice service) believes that the success of their services is due to the expertise that disabled people bring based on practical and personal experience.

● **Community cohesion**

Involving volunteers from under-represented groups has enabled organisations to reach out to marginalised sectors of the community, break down barriers and remove prejudice. Greater Manchester Police Oldham Division cited building community trust and confidence as one of the principal benefits of their inclusive volunteer policy.

[the three points above are based on: *The costs, barriers and benefits of involving volunteers from underrepresented groups*, research report by Community Service Volunteers and Manchester Metropolitan University Sept 2009]

An inclusive project also automatically increases the pool of potential volunteers*.

A more diverse group of volunteers will:

- Offer a wide range of skills, experiences and perspectives;
- Increase the sustainability of the project;
- Reflect your community and provide opportunities for increased partnership working;
- Broaden staff and clients' understanding of diversity issues;
- Bring new ideas and a breath of fresh air.

Gwen Mason, Diversity Officer, Volunteering Greater Manchester

[* from: *The Benefits of being Inclusive* by Scope]

Investing in Volunteers is the UK quality standard for all organisations which involve volunteers in their work. It is managed in England by Volunteering England. The standard enables organisations to comprehensively review their volunteer management, and also publicly demonstrates their commitment to volunteering.

The standard is based on the four areas of volunteer management: planning for volunteer involvement, recruiting volunteers, selecting and matching volunteers, and supporting and retaining volunteers.

www.investinginvolunteers.org.uk

Measuring councils' performance on volunteering

Participation in Regular Volunteering is one of the national performance indicators against which local authorities will be measured for their performance, either on their own or in partnership with others. The indicator, N16, has been included as a government priority in recognition of:

- The importance of volunteering in empowering individuals
- The importance of volunteering in contributing to stronger communities
- The importance of volunteering
- The importance of volunteers in supporting the range of activities undertaken by third sector organisations and in adding value to the delivery of public services.

It is believed that a culture of volunteering will be an asset to each local authority area and Local Strategic Partnerships have been encouraged to consider:

- how volunteering may contribute to supporting 'hard-to-reach' groups in their area;
- whether they wish to involve the local population in the delivery of public services;
- where volunteering can contribute to a range of other policy priorities, eg improved community cohesion and civic participation, a stepping stone to employment and/or training, the provision of positive activities for children and young people, to mention just a few.

Although only four Greater Manchester local authorities (Bolton, Rochdale, Salford and Trafford) have included N16 as one of their LAA priorities, it will be measured and assessed in every local authority area by means of the new national Place Survey based on questions used in the Government's *Citizenship Survey*. The questions asked assess activity actually undertaken rather than just an individual's perception as in most other areas of the survey. Many of the boroughs of Greater Manchester are, therefore, currently in the process of producing volunteering strategies and the Volunteering Greater Manchester team is exploring ways of helping our partners in the local authority areas to engage with this process. The Volunteering Champion has also been involved in supporting the NW Government Regional Office staff in producing a toolkit for all local authorities across the country based on N16, and will be piloting this in a couple of Greater Manchester areas in the near future.

For further information see:

http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/cabinetoffice/third_sector/assets/ni_6_briefing_note.pdf

National Support Services: Modernising Volunteering

The *Modernising Volunteering* workstream, led by Volunteering England is one of nine national workstreams funded by Capacitybuilders' National Support Services programme until March 2011.

Work is being undertaken in four key areas:

- **Overcoming barriers to volunteering:** Work in this area is focused on making volunteering more accessible to marginalised/socially-excluded groups through the development of best practice policies and strategies. Regional and national Policy Action Community Teams (PACTs) are focusing on different marginalised groups and identifying why they are under-represented in volunteering and what needs to be done to engage them.
- **Supporting new forms of volunteer involvement:** This area of work is exploring the role of social network services in supporting volunteering. An online blog has also been set up with topical information and updates.
- **Developing skills-based employer-supported volunteering:** In summer 2009, three pilot projects were selected to set up skills-based employer-supported volunteering (ESV) partnerships between local employers and frontline volunteer-involving organisations. A local business partnership co-ordinator has been recruited at each project to broker the volunteering partnerships, matching the skills and expertise of employees with the needs of the community. The next stage of the project will see the development of a skills-based ESV good practice guide and delivery of training sessions.
- **Faith-based volunteering:** Six faith-based projects have been selected with the aim of improving young people's leadership, increasing the quantity and quality of youth engagement from faith-based communities and promoting community and cross-faith cohesion.

Volunteering contacts

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Greater Manchester districts:

Bolton:

Volunteer Centre Bolton

Tel: 01204 546062

involved team

Tel: 01204 546141

Bury:

Bury 3rd Sector Development Agency

Tel: 0161 797 1968

involved team

Tel: 0161 253 7914

Manchester:

Experience Volunteering

Tel: 0161 230 1436

Manchester Events Volunteering

Tel: 0161 234 1530

involved team

Tel: 0161 228 6520

Oldham:

Volunteer Centre Oldham

Tel: 0161 633 6222

involved team

Tel: 0161 621 9309

Rochdale:

Volunteer Centre Rochdale

Tel: 0161 631291

involved team

Tel: 01706 631291

Salford:

Volunteer Centre Salford

Tel: 0161 707 7067

involved team

Tel: 0161 787 3838

Stockport:

Volunteer Centre Stockport

Tel: 0161 477 0246

involved team

Tel: 0161 477 0246

Tameside:

Volunteer Centre Tameside

Tel: 0161 339 2345

involved team

Tel: 0161 339 5454

Trafford:

Volunteer Centre Trafford

Tel: 0161 976 2447

involved team

Tel: 0161 962 1880

Wigan:

Wigan and Leigh CVS

Tel: 01942 514234

involved team

Tel: 01942 514234

National organisations/services:

Volunteering England – www.volunteering.org.uk

Institute of Volunteering Research – www.ivr.org.uk

Red Foundation – <http://www.redfoundation.org/>

Do-it volunteering opportunities database – www.do-it.org

vinspired – www.vinspired.com

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GMCVO is the voluntary and community sector infrastructure organisation for the sub-region of Greater Manchester. It aims to strengthen the voluntary and community sector, build bridges with other sectors, and influence local and national policy. GMCVO's work involves representing, promoting and developing voluntary and community organisations, and working in partnership with local, regional and national infrastructure. GMCVO is also the sub-regional lead body for ChangeUp.

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