

Volunteering in Suffolk - a strategy for 2006-2009

(for full document see www.volunteeringinSuffolk.org)



1. Increasing the number of young people involved in volunteering		This key objective aims to ensure that young people are enthused by, and involved in, volunteering. Action must be prioritised on Suffolk's young people if volunteering is to truly become an integral part of Suffolk's culture.				
ACTION: We will work to develop a youth volunteering strategy that young people have contributed to and that all can identify with.	ACTION: We will develop relationships between organisations and groups working with young people at both county and local levels and directly with young people themselves.	ACTION: We will build on the work being done in schools to increase the number of young people involved in volunteering.	ACTION: We will develop volunteering opportunities that are "engaging and purposeful and which reflect the aspirations and ambitions of young people."			
2. Increasing the number of people volunteering in sport		These are exciting times for the sporting and voluntary sectors with the forthcoming 2012 Olympic Games. However, they are also challenging, as all organisations involved are faced with the task of working together in new and innovative ways in order to bring the maximum resources into Suffolk and to ensure that these resources have the maximum impact.				
ACTION: We will work to bring about a culture shift to increase engagement, since many volunteers in sport see themselves as 'sports people' rather than as 'volunteers'.	ACTION: We will build upon the partnership work that has already started in the county.	ACTION: Volunteer Centres will engage with sports volunteering groups at a local level and assist them with the development and implementation of best practice.	ACTION: We will ensure all key staff are fully aware of links between Suffolk Sport and generic and specialist infrastructure through training and information packs.	ACTION: When guidance for volunteer recruitment for the Olympics and Paralympics 2012 is released, we will work to ensure maximum impact within Suffolk.		
3. Increasing volunteering among the 'hard to reach' groups.		Those who are under-represented in volunteering are often those who are least aware of the benefits of volunteering and how to get involved in it. More effective promotion of volunteering will be central to the work to make volunteering accessible to all. In Suffolk rurality appears to have a positive effect on the propensity to volunteer – findings which are supported in other volunteering research.				
ACTION: We will continue to maintain ease of accessibility to volunteering information through the low cost single telephone number for volunteering. 08452 235 335	ACTION: We will pilot local and targeted volunteering campaigns, assisting in the achievement of the objectives of the LSP Community Strategies.	ACTION: We will produce publicity material for local and countywide volunteer recruitment. This will include materials targeted at "hard to reach" groups for example and we will continually focus on making these as accessible as possible to all.	ACTION: We will develop marketing skills focused on volunteer recruitment. This core skill has been identified as a key learning need in the VCS to help promote active citizenship and community cohesion.	ACTION: We will build strong working relationships with Suffolk ACRE to forge partnerships between rural communities and agencies, promoting communal self-help through volunteering.	ACTION: We will consider the impact of volunteering in rural areas and provide solutions to meet rural needs and circumstances.	
4. Increasing the number of people volunteering in cultural activities		Culture means different things to different people. In its narrowest terms it may mean fine arts or classical music, while in the widest definitions it will include sports and recreation, countryside activities, museums, libraries, archives, theatre, arts and crafts, music, historic buildings and landscapes.				
ACTION: We will raise the profile of cultural services in Suffolk, celebrate our cultural diversity, and demonstrate the economic, social, health, educational and environmental benefits of cultural volunteering activity.		ACTION: We will promote diversity, successfully helping organisations to nurture creativity and innovation and thereby tap hidden capacity for growth.		ACTION: We will promote environmental volunteering as not only a great way to conserve the environment but also as an excellent opportunity to get outdoors, get some fresh air and keep active. By volunteering people will come to realise that not only can they shape the environment, the environment can also shape them.		
5. Increasing Employer Supported Volunteering schemes		Although 75% of Suffolk employers employ fewer than 20 people there are still 774 larger firms with the means and flexibility to introduce employer supported volunteering schemes. Both large and small employers are an untapped market.				
ACTION: We will promote the awareness of volunteering and its value through employer supported volunteering schemes.	ACTION: We will ensure that Employer Supported Volunteering Schemes engage a range of organisations with a direct and indirect interest in volunteering	ACTION: We will develop the 'Volunteer Flying Squad' project, a county-wide initiative aimed at developing new volunteering opportunities, employing new forms of recruitment and deployment and new forms of volunteer management.		ACTION: We will deploy the Volunteering England Employer Supported Volunteering toolkit; comprehensive advice and guidance for volunteer development agencies who would like to start or develop their employer supported volunteering brokering service.		
6. Improving the volunteer experience		This objective aims to ensure that volunteers are welcomed and valued by organisations which involve volunteers and that those volunteers are given guidance, training and support to develop through volunteering, according to their individual needs and aspirations. This support must be viewed as a process of constant improvement.				
ACTION: We will investigate the possibility of providing mentors for the Investors in Volunteers programme.	ACTION: We will work to identify and develop a wider range of volunteering opportunities which are innovative, interesting, flexible and fun.	ACTION: We will work with public sector agencies at a local and county level to increase understanding of volunteer needs.	ACTION: We will take steps to reduce the negative impact of the increasing bureaucracy as it applies to volunteering.	ACTION: We will develop a Suffolk award/recognition of volunteering.		
7. Raising standards of volunteer management		Volunteers are involved across a wide range of agencies and in many different situations in voluntary and community organisations as well as statutory bodies. Wherever they are engaged it is vital to ensure that volunteers are managed in the best possible way and this management is recognised as a process of continuous improvement.				
ACTION: We will look to becoming preferred providers for Volunteering England Volunteer Manager training and other nationally based training.	ACTION: We will develop the "High Voltage" training programme - a downloadable programme/toolkit for self-development and development resource for volunteer managers.	ACTION: We will use the Suffolk Compact launch to update volunteer using organisations on latest developments and on good practice and to promote the Compact in Suffolk Volunteering Code of Practice.	ACTION: We will ensure wide distribution of the SVF "Little Orange Book of Volunteering" a good practice guide for volunteer involving organisations.	ACTION: We will establish a network and database of Volunteer Managers or nominated contacts responsible for volunteers so they receive regular updates on volunteer management, training and best practice.	ACTION: We will promote Volunteer Development Agencies across the county as providing advice on volunteer management.	ACTION: We will collate and publicise information about existing training providers and opportunities through local, sub-regional, regional and national research.
ACTION: We will identify and address gaps in available training.	ACTION: We will investigate making training available in alternative formats.	ACTION: We will promote and develop the use of the Investing in Volunteers quality mark.	ACTION: We will encourage and support all Volunteer Development Agencies to achieve Volunteering England Quality Accreditation by September 2007.	ACTION: We will promote and develop the use of the Volunteering Impact Assessment Toolkit.	ACTION: We will consider ways in which recognition can be given to volunteers and volunteering in Suffolk.	
8. Reconfiguring Volunteering Infrastructure		All specialist infrastructure organisations, whose remit is volunteering, should be encouraged to engage wholeheartedly in a process of change and embrace a volunteering model for the 21st century whilst securing the legacy of the good work currently taking place across the county.				
ACTION: Following the ChangeUp process, Volunteer Development Agencies will continue to have dialogue with funders to explore new collaborative ways of delivering high quality, cohesive volunteering services across the county.			ACTION: We will develop a common system of monitoring and evaluation in Volunteer Development Agencies for the capture and measurement of volunteering activity.			

The Volunteers' Charter

Signatories to the Compact in Suffolk Volunteering Code of Good Practice, agree to adopt this Charter and use it as a basis for developing good practice within their own organisations.

Volunteers' Rights

- To have their tasks and responsibilities within the organisation clearly explained to them.
- To be given the name of someone in the organisation who will look after their interests and who will offer them appropriate support and supervision on a regular basis.
- To be assured that any information they share with the organisation will be kept confidential.
- To be given the same protection under health and safety regulations and insurance cover as paid employees.
- To be offered opportunities for training and skills development, appropriate for their role and tasks as a volunteer.
- Not to be exploited - volunteers should not be used to replace paid workers, have unfair demands made on their time, be expected to give more time than originally agreed or be asked to do something which is against their principles or beliefs.
- To be given the chance to play a part in decision making within the organisation.
- Not to be out of pocket through doing voluntary work. Out-of-pocket expenses should be offered to all volunteers; where organisations do not currently have a budget for this they will make it a priority to include as a budget item in future funding applications. There should be a clear procedure for claiming expenses and a culture within the organisation that makes it clear that it is acceptable to do so.

Volunteers' Responsibilities

- To accept the organisation's aims and objectives and work within agreed policies and procedures.
- To do what is reasonably requested of them, to the best of their ability.
- To treat information obtained whilst volunteering as confidential - such as information about clients or about other volunteers or staff.
- To recognise the right of the organisation to expect quality of service both from paid staff and from volunteers.
- To recognise that they represent the organisation and therefore need to act in an appropriate manner at all times while volunteering for the organisation.
- To honour any commitment made to the best of their abilities, notifying the organisation in good time should they be unable to keep that commitment (e.g. for holidays).
- To be willing to undertake appropriate training as necessary for the voluntary work undertaken. This could reasonably include Health and Safety, insurance liability and general good practice.
- To share any concerns or problems, or any suggestions for changes in working practices with the named person in the organisation who is responsible for their interests.