

# Valued Volunteering

Strategic Plan

2007 – 2012

Volunteering Bristol

**Royal Oak House, Royal Oak Avenue, Bristol BS1 4GB**  
**0117 989 7733** e-mail: [info@bristolvolunteers.org.uk](mailto:info@bristolvolunteers.org.uk)



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Registered Office: Royal Oak House, Royal Oak Avenue, Bristol BS1 4GB

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# 1. Executive summary

This strategy marks Volunteering Bristol's entry into its fifth decade serving the voluntary sector in Bristol. Its vision, mission, aims and values are as they have always been: to promote, support and develop opportunities for people and communities to enhance their city, through involvement in voluntary work.

To achieve our aims and support our values, our strategic aims have been re-aligned to focus more on service delivery to our various stakeholders and users based on feed back and other recent changes to the status the voluntary sector and volunteering receives within central and local government policies.

- **Section 4, Sub-section 1** describes our aim to motivate potential volunteers with additional needs and to develop our outreach activities in local neighbourhoods. We focus in particular on increasing volunteering opportunities for diverse and neighbourhood groups as part of our overall commitment to volunteering development across the whole city.
- **Section 4, Sub-section 2** describes how though being the centre of excellence in good practice in volunteer management, we will help improve the volunteering experience for volunteers, the volunteer-using organisations and the voluntary sector as a whole.
- And through our involvement with colleagues in the voluntary, business and statutory sectors through network and partnership working, we will be sufficiently resourced to deliver a high level of quality services, while growing and developing in to the future. Detailed in **Section 4, Sub-section 3**.

Over the past two years the organisation has made use of the opportunities presented by the ChangeUp support to consolidate and strengthen its own infrastructure, including recruiting new Management Committee members that has allowed improved governance and accountability. We have established or joined new partnership working arrangements with other voluntary sector support providers and have developed successful projects including the Time Together Refugee Mentoring Scheme as an agency of Time Bank and increased outreach events and outcomes through the CapacityBuilders' funded project work.

The strategy has been developed to build on the experience of those successful projects, as well as the other activities currently undertaken and their effectiveness and need. The plan will improve, expand or change our services to meet the needs and demands of our users, associates and funders.

The strategy recognises the requirement to develop sustainable funding, the necessity to work closely with partner agencies, avoiding overlapping services, and to develop both staff and volunteers in their roles that go to make up Volunteering Bristol.

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## **2. Vision, Mission, Aims and Values**

### **Vision:**

Our overall aim is to promote, support and develop opportunities for people to become involved in volunteering.

We want all volunteer-using organisations in Bristol to be able to access high quality support that meets their needs, when they need it.

By improving support we will help strengthen the voluntary sector in Bristol, increasing its ability to create a better quality of life for individuals and communities.

### **Mission:**

We promote, support and develop opportunities for people and communities to enhance their city, through involvement in voluntary work

### **Aims:**

#### **1. People in Bristol are motivated to volunteer**

- 1.1 Volunteering opportunities for all are increased
- 1.2 Bristol is a city of lifelong volunteering
- 1.3 Volunteering is actively promoted throughout the Bristol
- 1.4 New volunteering opportunities are developed city-wide

#### **2. People have an excellent volunteering experience**

- 2.1 Create a volunteering community
- 2.2 Organisations are supported in improving practice in working with volunteers
- 2.3 Volunteering is supported, rewarded and recognised

#### **3. The capacity and effectiveness of the VCSE sector is increased**

- 3.1 Strengthen governance of VCSE through access to volunteer board recruitment and training.
- 3.2 Build capacity of VCSE through volunteer provision.
- 3.3 Volunteering Bristol is a role model for volunteering best practice

#### **4. Volunteering is sufficiently resourced**

- 4.1 A stronger volunteering infrastructure is developed
- 4.2 There is investment in infrastructure to achieve aims 1 to 3
- 4.3 Income generating opportunities are identified and developed

**Values:**

- Working in Partnership with our community - We are one city great things happen when we work together
- Recognising the contribution of volunteering - Everybody can contribute to improve our community
- Open and honest in our relationships
- The voluntary sector is at the heart of everything we do.
- Good Role models - We inspire and provide best practice for volunteering.
- Equalities groups are supported in their volunteering – We treat everyone fairly and with respect. We challenge prejudice and discrimination

### **3. Introduction and Background**

Established in 1966, Volunteering Bristol provides a range of services with its core being the operation of the Volunteer Centre. The Volunteer Centre's main objective is to match volunteers to volunteer placements. This is supported by a website, e-mails, phone and postal enquiry service. In addition to the Volunteer Centre, outreach sites are furnished with information for potential and actual volunteers. Volunteering Bristol is the only organisation in Bristol that works citywide with volunteers of all ages and from all backgrounds.

Volunteering Bristol works closely with the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector (VCSE) in Bristol and hosts the Volunteer Organisations Forum (VOF). The VOF provides training, resources and support to VCSE organisations working with volunteers. More recently Volunteering Bristol has developed links with private sector organisations that wish to develop employer supported volunteering in Bristol.

In 2002 Volunteering Bristol was re-awarded the 'Volunteering England Quality Mark' in recognition for the Volunteer Development Agency Quality Accreditation being met. The accreditation was re-awarded in 2006. We are currently delivering a successful Refugee Mentoring project as agents of Time Bank and working on outreach development projects in key neighbourhoods in the city to encourage people on the fringes of society to become more involved in volunteering.

Over the past two years we have made use of the opportunities presented by the ChangeUp support to consolidate and strengthen our own infrastructure, including recruiting new Management Committee members that has allowed improved governance and accountability, as well as improving our IT services and launching a new website. We have established or joined new partnership working arrangements with other voluntary sector support providers

In 2006/2007 14,263 potential volunteers and over 425 Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector (VCSE) organisations accessed the services provided by Volunteering Bristol. There were more than 39,000 hits on the website.

#### **Clients and Members**

Volunteering Bristol has three distinct client groups; individuals (and their public and statutory agency supporters) who are interested in volunteering, VCSE organisations that require volunteers, and Private Sector organisations that wish to establish an employer-supported volunteering programme.

#### **Individual Volunteers:**

During 2006/2007 we had 4007 visitors to the Centre comprising some 2047 women, of whom 375 were from BME groups and 1960 men (369, BME). Though our outreach programmes, we also concentrate on supporting hard-to-reach, refugee and vulnerable groups who have particular difficulties in finding appropriate placements.

**VCSE organisations:**

Volunteering Bristol works with over 425 VCSE organisations in Bristol that offer volunteer placements. Volunteering Bristol has 60 member organisations that receive support through the VOF through network meetings, sharing experiences of working with and supporting volunteers and workshops on updating good practice in volunteer management. We help with advice and support, particularly those smaller organisations and newly formed groups put volunteer management processes and procedures in place.

**Private sector:**

Over the last few years there has been an increase in interest from the private sector to establish employer supported volunteering to fulfil Corporate Social Responsibility requirements. In 2006/2007 Volunteering Bristol received an increasing number of specific enquiries from businesses although a proportion could not be progressed because of lack of resources.

**Working in Partnership**

**Bristol Partnership:**

Volunteering Bristol is represented through the Bristol Consortium on the Bristol Partnership and has aligned some of our targets and outputs to support the achievement of the Partnership's objectives and LAA delivery, particularly in Safer Stronger Communities and Community Cohesion.

Volunteering Bristol provides the deputy chairperson of the Bristol Compact Steering Group.

**Bristol ChangeUp Consortium:**

This Consortium was set up as a response to the Home Office ChangeUp programme. Volunteering Bristol is an active member of the Bristol Consortium. In 2005/6, the first ChangeUp round, we delivered on the volunteering theme. Under the Consortia Project Programme 2006/8 we received Capacity Builders funding to increase capacity at Volunteering Bristol. Continuation funding was granted to continue this work during 2007/8. New funding through CapacityBuilders was awarded for 2007/8 to undertake enhanced outreach work to promote volunteering in local communities and among hard-to-reach groups.

**Bristol Youth Volunteering Network:**

Volunteering Bristol is working with Young Bristol and other colleagues from the Bristol Youth Volunteering Network on a funded project to increase the number of young people volunteering in Bristol.

**Time Together:**

Volunteering Bristol is working with Time Together providing a Refugee Mentoring service in the city.

**Regional and sub regional Partnerships:**

Volunteering Bristol is a member of the Sub-regional Volunteering Network (formerly run by Volunteering England, but now as a stand-alone network) which comprise Volunteer Centres in the former county of Avon and Wiltshire.

We are members of the South West Forum, the National Council for Voluntary Organisations and Volunteering England.

## **4. Strategic Aims**

During the past four years significant development in the provision of services to volunteering has evolved. The core work of the organisation demonstrates a significant increase in demand for both information relevant to volunteering and placing of volunteers. Our strategic aim is to meet those changing and evolving needs.

### **1. People in Bristol are motivated to volunteer**

#### **1.1 Volunteering opportunities for all are increased**

1.1.1 Strengthen and develop outreach activities encouraging neighbourhood volunteering in regeneration areas – Better located outreach centres with staff available at pre-determined times to support the local neighbourhood management teams in Bristol's most deprived areas to promote volunteering further.

1.1.2 Further opportunities to involve more volunteers with additional needs (language barriers, mental health issues, disabilities, addictions, offending behaviour etc) are developed – building on the success of the 'Time Together' programme develop buddying/mentoring scheme; provide support for organisations to increase their capacity to involve volunteers with additional needs

#### **1.2 Bristol is a city of lifelong volunteering**

1.2.1 Volunteering is open to all. Volunteering is encouraged among all neighbourhoods and among all age groups and abilities across the entire city.

1.2.2 Children and Young people are engaged in volunteering – Work with Young Bristol on the National Youth Volunteering Programme.

1.2.3 Employer supported volunteering is developed – work with Business in the Community to encourage employers in all sectors to provide employer-supported volunteering programmes.

1.2.4 Older people are valued as volunteers and projects are put in place that support their involvement – greater focus on recruitment of older volunteers, employers encouraged to include volunteering in pre-retirement programme.

#### **1.3 Volunteering is actively promoted throughout Bristol**

1.3.1 Further volunteering opportunities for incomer and transient communities are developed – continue work with Somali communities and refugees, possible research project for supporting new European

and other incoming groups into volunteering is investigated.

- 1.3.2 Equalities groups are supported in their volunteering – Working closely with Voscur and BDA ensure equalities organisations and community groups including BME groups are recognised for their volunteering practice and supported to further develop volunteering within their organisations.
- 1.3.3 The database of volunteering opportunities in Bristol is further developed and promoted – When the Bristol ChangeUp integrated ITC policy is realised Volunteering Bristol's database would be accessible online to the general public with the potential for organisations to add their volunteer placements online.
- 1.3.4 A promotion and marketing strategy is developed and delivered – The development of a strategy to promote awareness of volunteering to communities and influencers in Bristol.

#### **1.4 New volunteering opportunities are developed city-wide**

- 1.4.1 Specific projects are developed to include 'hard to place' volunteers – Following the success of the 'Time together' project Volunteering Bristol will develop and fundraise to introduce projects that enable specific groups to become involved with volunteering.
- 1.4.2 Flexible and one-off volunteering projects are developed – Volunteering Bristol will actively seek to identify one off projects for teams of employees to get involved with the VCSE e.g. painting building, creating green spaces

## **2. People have an excellent volunteering experience**

### **2.1 Create a volunteering community**

- 2.1.1 Create a sense of an integrated community of volunteering - By bringing together the VCSES, businesses and volunteers to their benefit and that of the wider community.
- 2.1.2 Private and public sector employers recognise the value of volunteering – Private/public sector employers buy in to and support the volunteering community by encouraging VCSE board membership, identifying placements for volunteers with additional needs.
- 2.1.3 Facilitate networking and sharing of best practice – Following recent consultation it was identified that VCSE organisations would welcome a more structured and frequent VOF that included more events and

opportunities to share best practice and greater representation at a strategic level with the LA and Government agencies.

## **2.2 Organisations are supported in improving practice in working with volunteers**

2.2.1 A basic volunteering framework of minimum standards is developed for small and newly established volunteer organisations – All small and newly established volunteer engaging organisations in Bristol are supported to put in place a basic framework for involving volunteers.

2.2.2 Investing in Volunteers is more widely taken up – Volunteering Bristol become assessor for Investing in Volunteers and encourage BCC/Quartet to subsidise the cost of assessment for VCSE organisations.

2.2.3 Training and support programmes are available for volunteer managers and boards – work with VOF to identify training needs and work with ChangeUp partners, Governance Hub and Volunteering England to ensure high quality, appropriate and timely training is available.

## **2.3 Volunteering is supported, rewarded and recognised**

2.3.1 The rights and responsibilities of volunteers are properly recognised by volunteer-using organisations and that the full Volunteers Charter, endorsed by the Bristol Compact is implemented and supported throughout the sector.

2.3.2 New annual award for volunteering is established – Working with UWE, UB, Young Bristol and other key stakeholders introduce an annual award to recognise and reward volunteers and volunteer involving organisations.

## **3. The capacity and effectiveness of the VCSE is increased**

### **3.1 Strengthen governance of the VCSE sector through access to volunteer board recruitment and training**

3.1.1 Training and support programmes are available for VCSE boards – Promote work being done by Consortium Partners and ChangeUp Regional and National specialists and Volunteering England to identify needs and to ensure high quality, appropriate and timely training is available.

### **3.2 Build capacity of VCSE Sector through volunteer provision.**

3.2.1 Assess and assist potential volunteers – offer a one-to-one interview facility to assess and assist volunteers in identifying the right placement, it would also help ensure the most suitable people are directed to the organisations.

### **3.3 Volunteering Bristol is a role model for volunteering best practice.**

3.3.1 By maintaining its Volunteer Development Agency Quality Accreditation status, and achievement of Investors in Volunteering, Volunteering Bristol will have in place examples of best practice and implement policies that will be a centre of excellence for other voluntary organisations.

## **4. Volunteering is sufficiently resourced**

### **4.1 A stronger volunteering infrastructure is developed**

4.1.1 Volunteering Bristol is able to meet the demands of the VCSE – increased ICT, fundraising and human resources support would better enable Volunteering Bristol to meet the increased volunteering infrastructure support needs of the VCSE.

4.1.2 Development and training – A key objective in meeting our infrastructure needs is the training and development of staff, volunteers and management committee.

4.1.3 Improved career development opportunities – staff and volunteers at Volunteering Bristol have a framework for identifying and supporting career development and succession planning.

### **4.2 There is investment in infrastructure to achieve aims 1 to 3**

4.2.1 BCC three-year SLA – BCC recognise the economic value of volunteering and the need for stable, well resourced infrastructure to support and increase volunteering in Bristol.

4.2.2 Continued support from the ChangeUp Consortium – working with consortium partners to improve the infrastructure support for volunteers and volunteer supporting organisations through partnership working and further Capacity Builders funding.

### **4.3 Income generating opportunities are identified and developed**

4.3.1 Employer-supported Volunteering – After pilot project with local employer which demonstrated that a demand for a managed employee volunteering service existed, and for which employers were prepared to pay. Further work is needed to identify the viability of such a service

and establishing community partnerships with the business sector.

- 4.3.2 Quality Assessor – Investing in Volunteers is a quality standard that requires assessors in this region Volunteering Bristol is well place to provide this service if there is a demand.
- 4.3.3 Special Projects – Volunteering Bristol will identify and bid to undertake one-off and specialist projects that help fulfil our strategic objectives.

## 5. Service Development

### Demands and Needs

Recent surveys<sup>1</sup> with volunteers and volunteering involving organisations identified a demand to increase the current level of service in a number of key areas discussed below:

- **Increased service provision for volunteers**

**Current Service** – Information provision, potential volunteers can access information about placements through the Volunteer Centre, from the web site, or via email/phone or from the information points.<sup>2</sup> Client is offered a number of brokered options based on requirement, such as placement in appropriate organisation.

**Demand** – A full information, diagnostic and brokerage service for potential volunteers. Information: client gives details and receives information about the service and access to database. Diagnostic: client receives one-to-one diagnostic interview (phone/face to face) to identify their needs and is given an action plan. Brokerage: Client is offered a number of brokered options based on requirement, such as placement in appropriate organisation, training, help with key skills. Follow up interview is conducted to assess success of the action plan and further support offered if necessary.

- **Increase service provision for volunteering involving organisations**

**Current service** – Information and limited brokerage provision; organisations give details of potential placements, gain access to best practice guides and membership of VOF. Good practice guides and advice are offered on request.

**Demand** – Full information, diagnostic and brokerage for volunteer involving organisations. Information: clients' details taken, pack sent out with guidelines for registering placements and resources available. Diagnostic: client receives one to one interview (phone/ face to face) to identify their needs and is given an action plan. Brokerage: client is offered a number of brokered options based on need, such as basic advertising of placement; preferred placement options\*; visit from Volunteering specialist to assess suitability of organisation for volunteers e.g. health and safety, implementation of volunteering policies; access to training for staff managing volunteers; membership to VOF. Smaller and newly established organisations seek special advice and assistance with setting up procedures and policies.

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<sup>1</sup> Annual Survey of VOF Members 2006; Special Survey of Voluntary Organisations in Bristol, Oct 2006; Consultation Workshop for VOF Members on VB Basis Bid, July 2006.

<sup>2</sup> The Park, Knowle West; The Mede, Knowle; The Gatehouse Centre, Hartcliff; Witherwood Community Centre.

\* Placements offered by organisations could be split into two levels. Level one: basic advertising of placement (current service) most suitable for one off need. Level two: Organisation becomes a preferred placement provider and is assessed by volunteering specialist to ensure base line standards for volunteering are in place, placements offered by a preferred placement provider will form part of the brokerage package for potential volunteers. This would create a stronger relationship between Volunteering Bristol, the volunteer involving organisation and the volunteer and help ensure a positive volunteering experience for all.

- **New service for private/public sector organisations**

Private sector organisations require support to fulfil CSR requirements; community work, employee teams, pro-help, employer supported volunteering, volunteering placements in the organisation.

**Current service** – support given where possible but nothing formal in place

**Demand** – Private/public sector organisations endeavouring to fulfil their CSR requirements request one-off projects for employee teams. However, recent research suggests that these organisations are interested in developing a wider range of volunteering options with support, such as volunteering placements for young people, support for VCSE boards, ongoing community projects etc.

- **Increased presence in priority areas**

**Current service** – Information about volunteering is made available at information points in priority areas. An Outreach Worker also visits key areas to offer face-to-face support to potential volunteers and visits organisations to raise awareness of local volunteers' needs, offer support to organisations through local recruitment fairs and VOF activities.

**Demand** – Based on recent outreach programme there is a perceived need to have a greater presence in these areas to encourage greater participation of local VCSE organisations and potential volunteers. It has not been established whether this needs to be weekly surgeries or whether improved phone support using the information database, assessment of need and skill, and brokerage system would meet the need.

- **Increased representation for volunteering community**

**Current service** – Service and Development Manager attends key strategic meetings such as ChangeUp consortium, Bristol Compact Steering Group, Sub-regional Volunteering Network.

**Demand** – More opportunities for the VOF to network and influence strategic direction, there is an identified need for one political voice at a citywide

strategic level able to represent volunteer involving organisations and volunteers.

## **External Developments**

- **Funding**

BCC have recognised the need to provide VCSE infrastructure organisations with three-year funding. The service and development manager is currently talking with Link officer to secure a three-year SLA for BCC. To achieve the demand for an increase in core activities Volunteering Bristol will require additional funding from BCC.

Funding needed to support the growing refugee community into volunteering to support greater integration in the local and wider community.

Continuation funding from Capacity Builders will require support from ChangeUp Consortium.

- **Competition**

### **Infrastructure Support:**

Volunteering Bristol is the only organisation that provides specialist resources and support for volunteer involving organisations. As a specialist infrastructure organisation there are some overlaps with the Generalist Infrastructure organisations such as Voscur and BDA. Current overlaps include: promoting volunteering to hard-to-reach groups (seen also as a task by BDA for them to perform, though limited in practice to certain BME communities). Advertising of placement opportunities on Voscur's website alongside paid employment, bypasses Volunteering Bristol's brokerage/advice facilities.

### **Volunteer recruitment:**

A number of charities and community based organisations in Bristol that have comprehensive volunteering programmes and carry out their own volunteer recruitment activities.

Further work needs to be carried out to identify why they don't use Volunteering Bristol's service more fully and whether they would use an improved service and potentially become one of the 'preferred placement providers' outlined in the previous section.

### **Employee Supported Volunteering:**

This is potentially a new service area that may lead to income generation. Current competition is Business in the Community who offer the following service.

- designing community engagement strategies and long-term programmes that are integrated with the business.

- advising on specific aspects such as choosing a charity partner, developing a cause-related marketing promotion or developing a community engagement programme
- developing employee volunteering policies and initiatives, researching employee involvement and its impact on staff and benchmarking results against other companies

Such a service is quite resource intensive and in the short term would be unsustainable for Volunteering Bristol. Start-up funding would need to be obtained to provide a viable alternative, or complementary service.

## **Internal Developments**

- **Staff and Volunteer**

Volunteering Bristol has the equivalent of 4 Full time employees (FTE). The staff are committed despite lower than average pay and reward package. The board have identified the need to improve pay and reward; in particular a succession management framework is to be introduced.

To meet the aims identified in this strategy Volunteering Bristol would aim to keep current staffing levels and increase by 2 FTE over the next two years. \* Needs discussion by MC (1 post for employee volunteering support. 1 post additional outreach/ interviewer) (Physical capacity of office space would have to be reviewed)

The role of the volunteer members of the Management Committee and those volunteers assisting staff in the Volunteer Centre is recognised as a key part of the organisation's sustainability. Governance and new financial information systems have been installed, and the Board restructured to improve delivery of the organisation's outcomes. Appropriate training and development for these roles need to be improved. Ongoing recruitment of suitable Trustees and support volunteers will be maintained.

- **Financial**

### **Sustainability**

The majority of current costs are fixed and partially covered by BCC grant funding. Funding for projects will include full cost recovery. The service is reliant on BCC funding for its sustainability and the aim is to secure three-year funding from BCC to enable longer term planning and greater stability to attract funding from other investment bodies.

### **Income generation**

A number of ideas for income generation are being discussed, these include:

Charging private/public sector to manage their employer supported volunteering programmes.

Building community partnerships with businesses to secure sponsorship and help in kind.

Investing in Volunteers assessor: working with Investing in Volunteers to carry out all assessments in the Bristol.