WORCESTERSHIRE VOICES

Supporting an independent and influential Voluntary and Community Sector

Volunteering Action Planning

February 2015

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1. Summary

At both local and national levels, volunteering is regarded as a key mechanism by which communities can become stronger. Demographic trends indicate significant increases in the numbers of older people. We know that communities are more resilient, healthier and happier whenever they are enabled to help each other and do things for themselves.

A wide range of partners from the public, private and voluntary sectors have been working to support such developments. Worcestershire Voices organised an Action Planning Workshop on 4 December 2014 with over 30 participants from across the county to seek out common threads and coordinate action.

During the workshop examples of volunteers in action highlighted the diversity of opportunities.

A number of themes emerged.

1. Mentorship and Partnership and Business Brokering
2. Branding and Marketing and Digital Information
3. Charter and Shared Resources
4. Self Resilience and Community Connectors
5. Recruitment, Training, Support, Retention and Reward of Volunteers

Following the workshop small groups clarified the key areas for action.

A. Partnership particularly with Business Sector
B. Do-It website
C. Charter and Shared Resources
D. Self Resilience and Community Connectors
E. Promotion / Marketing / Branding
F. Recruitment / Training / Support / Retention / Reward of Volunteers

Coordination

There is considerable overlap and interdependency between these areas for action and the small steering group (Michael Hunter, Kate Harvey, Suzy James and Kath Cobain) will provide coordination as the work move forward.

Resources

A common strand which has emerged is that the key resources required are time and commitment from partners from across all sectors to work together. Some other resources will be needed but these may be provided 'in kind' or may be relatively small sums for events etc.

Involving others

Those involved to date are predominantly those who were able to attend the workshop in December 2014. However others may be better placed to help take the project forward and in particular to bring additional skills, experience, insight, etc into the mix. If you'd like to get involved please get in touch with Michael Hunter or one of those involved already.

2. Background

Introduction by Michael Hunter, chairman of Worcestershire Voices

- Background Papers – on Voices website
  - o Next Generation – Commitments to 2020 and 2040
  - o Voices Research Report 2013 – local evidence to confirm national picture
  - o People Helping People – the future of public services – Nesta 2014
- Volunteering – a rough and ready inclusive definition: "People – choosing to do – stuff"
- People don't identify themselves as volunteers – but with what they do – need to be careful of the language we use.
- Word of mouth needs to be part of the recruitment process – websites, articles in the local paper, etc can provide useful preparation/support.
- Communities (geographic or thematic) are made up of individuals who are all different – need to recognise and value that diversity.
- All people can volunteer.
- Volunteers bring energy and enthusiasm – need to match their interests to the 'stuff' to be done
- Half the people surveyed do 'stuff' for more than one organisation – and might do more or change roles.
- Self Sustaining Communities – as public services diminish so communities need to respond.
- Asset Based Approach – the individuals in communities have a rich resource of skills, knowledge and life experiences.
- Businesses have a key role – and will benefit from encouraging volunteering.

Following the workshop Carole Cumino forwarded a link (as agreed)

- http://iiv.investinginvolunteers.org.uk/

3. Case Studies

- Spec Savers – Wyre Forest – Vivien Hussey
- Street Pastors – Evesham - John Darby
- Beacon Dental Practice – Malvern - David Watson

4. Priorities and Outcomes

"Get Involved in Worcestershire"
Volunteering Strategy for the Future

Vision

To build stronger, more resilient, self-sustaining communities through volunteering.

Aims

1. To increase the capacity and capability of volunteering across Worcestershire.
2. To have a clear vision across organisations as to how to grow volunteering in Worcestershire.
3. Working together so that everyone has the ability and the opportunity to help themselves and others to fulfil their potential.

Purpose

It is recognised that resilient, self-sustaining communities are central to the future of Worcestershire and volunteers are a key element of those communities.

The purpose of this volunteering strategy is therefore to shape the next stage of growing volunteering in Worcestershire, by increasing and diversifying the pool of volunteers and volunteering opportunities. It is also to enhance the quality of the experience of volunteering within the County.

It sets out to engage key agencies (including businesses, schools, statutory and voluntary organisations) to harness the skills, experience and time of the people living, working and studying here. These are key assets and resources that can be unlocked within the county to improve life outcomes for local residents, and build a more self-sustaining community.

Definition

The brief definition of volunteering in communities used here is:

"Giving time, which is usually unpaid, to achieve social benefit."

Volunteering can range from formal, through an organisation, to volunteering which usually develops informally to meet a community need.

Background

The world is changing:
- More people live alone than they used to;
- Communities are becoming more fragmented;
- Loneliness is one of the key social issues of our day;
- Financial pressures mean a re-shaping of what the state can provide;
- The future feels very uncertain to many people.

Next Generation Vision: In Worcestershire three priorities were identified to improve the quality of life:
1. **Our prosperity**: working well;
2. **Our community**: living well, valuing our people, health and well-being;
3. **Our environment**: valuing our special place and our natural resources.

At both local and national levels, volunteering is regarded as a key mechanism by which communities can become stronger. Demographic trends indicate significant increases in the numbers of older people. We know that communities are more resilient, healthier and happier whenever they are enabled to help each other and do things for themselves.

Volunteering in Worcestershire: Great Today

We know that about two thirds of the adult population already volunteer in Worcestershire.

We also know from surveys that volunteers experience a wide range of benefits including: feeling part of community, making new friends, improved health and well-being and improved skills and employability.

Volunteering in Worcestershire: Even Better Tomorrow

The volunteering strategy will achieve the following:

- Worcestershire is a place where the full range of economic, social, environmental and personal benefits volunteering brings is recognised and experienced by people, organisations and businesses;
- Volunteering is encouraged and undertaken by a high proportion of people across diverse backgrounds;
- Volunteering is supported and rewarding, and everyone feels that they can make a difference;
- Volunteering brings people together and makes a significant contribution to all aspects of life.

Priority areas of focus

Active engagement with Business, Public and Voluntary and Community Sectors to explore how each can support and encourage volunteering generally and specifically within the following areas of focus:

1. Motivating people to volunteer and to keep volunteering
   - Including the development of volunteering approaches and structures that effectively support a mutually beneficial volunteer experience
   - Supporting businesses/organisations in delivering corporate social responsibility programmes that include employee volunteering
2. Building trust in and confidence of volunteers
   - Including the development of a charter and quality assurance framework
   - Encouraging the development of a community approach to the sharing of resources to enable good quality back up to ensure that volunteers are supported and receive appropriate training
3. Supporting and encouraging communities to respond to local needs

5. Common themes

During the workshop a number of themes emerged.

1. Mentorship and Partnership and Business Brokering
2. Branding and Marketing and Digital Information
3. Charter and Reward and Shared Resources
4. Self Resilience and Community Connectors
5. Recruitment / Training / Support / Retention of Volunteers

6. Work Strands

A. Partnership particularly with Business Sector:

Frances Howie with Richard Quallington, Suzy James.

    a. Felicity (Flis) Aston from St Paul's Hostel in Worcester has been pulling together a presentation and information pack for use by VCS organisations and others in building one-to-one partnering.

    b. Frances Howie has been in touch with Mike Ashton (Chamber of Commerce) and Angela Fitch (Federation of Small Businesses) who are prepared to give editorial input at the right stage.

B. Do-It website:

Kate Walton and Volunteer Centre colleagues

    a. Promotion of recently updated Do-it Website

        i. Mailshot to be drafted and sent to all event attendees for distribution to all linked networks:

- to encourage all organisations to register current volunteering opportunities with designated partners for inclusion on Do-it website (eg Jane Thomas – link to Health; Helena Bennett – link to Police)
- to encourage signposting of volunteering enquiries to website for information on diverse range available
- to encourage sharing of volunteers where skills do not match specific criteria set by organisations

        ii. Press Release to be drafted for publication to promote cohesive approach to volunteering across the county through Do-it website

    b. Branding for Worcestershire

        i. Gain consensus for branding and/or strapline to be used in promotion across county

- Circulate ideas emanating from the event and suggestions from other sources, eg Worcestershire 4 Good
- Include information about possible conflicts (local or national) to avoid confusion or duplication
- Obtain feedback

        ii. Adopt branding & identify further opportunities to promote

C. Charter and Shared Resources:

Jacqueline Smith with Carole Cumino, Lucy Hodgson and Suzy James

    a. Review the **Volunteer Charter**, drawn up by Kate Walton on behalf of Volunteer Centres in Worcestershire in June 2014, which is on the Worcestershire Voices website.
The Worcestershire Volunteer Charter is a good existing resource that needs to be more widely publicised in order to encourage its use. This would require both human and financial resources in terms of the time and cost involved with marketing and promoting the charter. A marketing strategy would need to be produced to facilitate this.

b. **Volunteer Resources**: Volunteer Centres need to be contacted to find out what resources they currently have available that they would be willing to share. Other voluntary organisations could also be approached. Shared resources would need to be collated and published on, or linked to, Worcestershire Voices website, and maintained. Advertising and promotion would need to be done to let voluntary organisations know what's available. There is primarily a need for human resources to manage this, rather than financial resources.

D. Self Resilience and Community Connectors:

David Manning with Kate Harvey, Richard Quallington, Helen Southwell, Jonathan Sutton, Doug Chaplin, Suzy James

a. This theme is taking a 'bottom up' approach.

b. It has identified that there is no 'one solution' – every community is different. There are examples from both rural and urban communities.

c. People do not think of themselves as 'volunteers'.

What are Community Connectors?

OVoE contractors Vanilla came up with the phrase "Super Connectors" – they are people who everyone in a community knows, they have local knowledge and are a contact point. Examples might be the vicar, pub landlords or engaged members of public etc. The drawback is, it's a lot of pressure on one person, so it's best to establish a network of people.

What does resilience mean?

The capacity, ability to cope, depend on each other, do it themselves, and come together as a community.

What are the potential outcomes?

- Reduce health and social care.

- But all organisations will have different outcomes/views – we need to be clear on benefits / outcomes to engage partners.

- Get communities to do an assessment of their own demographics – be aware of strengths and weaknesses – think about future, put things in place

- Try to improve the feeling of helplessness in some communities (unemployment, poverty).

- Get communities do more for each other.

- Helping people to have more fulfilled lives not just about Government saving money.

- Good thing to do – people are happier.

Resources?

There needs to be access to small amounts of money so needs to be a "funding pot". Herefordshire has set up an "innovation fund" as they are exploring same issues. Funds could come from range of partners.

This is a very wide ranging topic which overlaps with other strands of the work including Business Links and Branding.

E.   Promotion / Marketing / Branding:

    a.   The Do-It website could provide a single place for all volunteering opportunities to be promoted on-line by all partners.
    However raising the profile of volunteering in the 'real world' is important too.

    b.   Volunteering could be promoted to a wider audience at events which are already taking place by promoting a Brand (rather than specific organisations). The Branding could be used in publicity / documentation etc. This would need to be adopted by all sectors to be effective.

F.   Recruitment / Training / Support / Retention / Reward of Volunteers

    a.   *Recruitment:* A website or App is just one component of recruitment – face to face contact is required.

    b.   *Training and Support*: There is 'no one size for all' solution. Some roles may need some common induction whereas others will require extensive training and all require ongoing support – just like paid staff.
    Many organisations have well developed schemes whereas others do not.

    c.   *Retention:* Volunteers bring energy and enthusiasm that needs to be recognised. Ensuring continuing motivation (perhaps through changing/developing roles) is important.

    d.   *Reward*: Recognition of the contribution of volunteers is important and should not be underestimated as a motivational tool, both for those being recognised but also as a way of raising the profile of volunteering.
    However 'rewarding' volunteers needs to be appropriate to both the individual and the organisation ethos.

7. Getting Involved

Those involved to date are predominantly those who were able to attend the workshop in December 2014. However others may be better placed to help take the project forward and in particular to bring additional skills, experience, insight, etc into the mix.

If you'd like to get involved please get in touch with Michael Hunter or one of those involved already.

8. Workshop Participants

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