

Worcestershire Volunteering Summary Research Report



Researched and Written by S Basker Consulting

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research was commissioned by Worcestershire Voices, the strategic body for the voluntary and community sector. It was conducted between March and July 2013. The findings are drawn from the results of two surveys (one with organisations and one with members of the general public), interviews with key stakeholders; desk research and focus groups.

This report presents a profile of volunteering in Worcestershire in 2013. It explores the current extent of volunteering, attitudes, motivations and benefits, and presents a picture from seven key perspectives:

- General Public
- Volunteers
- Organisations with Volunteers
- Businesses
- Public Sector
- Recruitment and Brokerage Services
- National policy and innovations



Most importantly the research explores how the context for volunteering is changing in social, economic, technological and policy terms. It looks at what problems and issues need addressing, and how Worcestershire can best position itself to enable volunteering to grow and thrive in the future.

EXTENT OF VOLUNTEERING

Volunteering is an integral part of life in Worcestershire. Our household survey of over 300 adults showed:

47% give unpaid help as an individual to neighbours, friends and people in their communities (informal volunteering).

52% volunteer through clubs, groups and organisations (formal volunteering)

Overall 69% volunteer in some way

VALUE OF VOLUNTEERING

Volunteering brings enormous benefits to individuals, to organisations and to communities. This research provides powerful evidence about its social and economic impact. Key findings show:

71% volunteer to improve things/help people

Across all sectors, 95% have positive perceptions of Volunteering

Estimated annual economic value is £811M

STRONGER COMMUNITIES

Volunteering roots people in their communities and creates stronger social networks and a more cohesive society.

“Volunteering can provide a ‘heart’ to the community”.

In the face of economic downturn, cuts in services and increased unemployment and hardship there’s a clear need for communities to be more resilient and supportive.

Of respondents in our household survey who volunteered:

56% said it helped them feel part of the community

49% said it enabled them to make new friends. (60% of 60+ yrs olds)

27% said it gave them a social life (43% for those under 40)



In our organisation survey:

83% said volunteers provided 'connection with the community'

63% said they 'helped them provide a better service'

IMPROVED WELLBEING

Volunteering also brings benefits in people's health and wellbeing. With an ageing population and strains on health services the need for people to take care of their own and each others' well being has never been greater. In our household survey:

56% said volunteering made them feel good about themselves

30% said it improved their confidence

25% said it improved their health and wellbeing

66 organisations (36% of the survey sample) worked in the fields of health, care, disability and special needs. These organisations alone mobilised over 15000 volunteers.

IMPROVED SKILLS AND EMPLOYABILITY

Volunteering also has an important role in skills and employment development. In the household survey, of respondents aged under 30 who had volunteered:

70% said they'd improved their skills

64% added valuable experience to their CV

48% went onto further training and education

18% said it had led to paid work

Amongst the organisations:

69% provide training for volunteers

55% provide mentoring/personal support

34% provide career support



THE COST OF VOLUNTEERING

"People often aren't aware of the costs involved in managing volunteers and brokering placements. They think volunteers = free."

There are around a quarter of a million volunteers involved with groups, clubs and organisations in the county. The hidden costs include: publicity, recruitment, placement, training, support and supervision, communications, expenses, administration, health and safety, insurance, CRB checks, management and coordination.

Amongst the sample of 226 organisations in our survey there were 2034 volunteer managers and coordinators (over half were

volunteers themselves). They supported over 25,000 volunteers at a ratio of 1 manager to 13 volunteers. Crude estimates suggest as many as 20,000 - 30,000 are active in these roles.

“People with volunteer management responsibilities...have a challenging job. They need to be able to inspire people to give their time freely, maintain their motivation, ensure that they match skilled people with relevant roles, and ensure that paid staff and volunteers are able to work well together”
Nick Hurd, MP, Minister for Civil Society (extract from ‘Valuing Volunteer Management Skills’ (2010))

There was a significant need identified for more training and investment in volunteer managers. Where networks and district services exist there are benefits in terms of economies of scale though many are under-resourced.

ISSUES AND NEEDS TO BE ADDRESSED

Volunteering is established and growing across voluntary, community, public and private sectors. Of the county’s 2750 voluntary and community organisations, many are experiencing increased service demand in a significantly reduced funding environment.

An estimated 77,000 new volunteers will be needed in the year ahead.

Policy changes around Localism, Social Value, and Health and Social care, rely on a considerable ‘scaling up’ of volunteering in communities. However there has been little or no investment to support this. Our research showed: *Informal volunteering in Worcestershire is 15% below the national figure.*

In particular the expected growth in health and social care was raised as an area of concern and risk as well as a potential benefit.

Volunteering of the future is going to attract a broader and younger demographic. It’s going to offer more one off, short term and flexible ways of getting involved. It’s going to be more integrated with other aspects of our lives. It’s going to involve technology a lot more.



WHAT'S THE OPPORTUNITY?

Around 1 in 10 people don't know about any groups that need help, haven't thought about it or say they haven't been asked.

25% of those who already volunteer would like to do more. 40% of those who don't volunteer said they'd like to (33% more said they might)

43% said they would be interested in online volunteering (61% of those under 40 yrs old)

23% would be interested in using volunteering apps (43% of under 40s and 52% of under 20s)

63% of employees indicated they would or might volunteer as part of an employer scheme

1 in 3 of those under 50 would be interested in family volunteering and over half would be interested in volunteering with friends.

Members of the public, businesses and education institutions ARE willing to engage more in volunteering. However, currently opportunities to do so are fragmented, confusing and uncoordinated. They need the volunteering sector to clearly explain what's needed, make it easy, sell the benefits, and demonstrate the difference it makes.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WORCESTERSHIRE VOICES

- Create a high level countywide joined up approach to volunteering linking the voluntary and community, public and business sectors.
- Increase volunteering both in breadth and depth of engagement.
- Drive technology adoption as a tool for recruiting, delivering and evidencing the impact of volunteering.
- Improve access to volunteering for disadvantaged and under-represented groups.
- Make volunteering more visible, accessible, valued, and joined up.
- Enable organisations involving volunteers to excel at volunteering.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PUBLIC SECTOR

- Engage at a senior level in cross sector strategic work on volunteering.
- Embed a commitment to volunteering within strategic planning.
- Invest in supporting growth and development of volunteering.
- Provide opportunities for staff to volunteer in other organisations (through, for example, Employer Supported Volunteering programmes).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ORGANISATIONS WITH VOLUNTEERS

- Provide a range of volunteering options including flexible, short term, one-off as well as regular/long term opportunities.
- Use websites and social media to promote volunteering opportunities and make it easy for people to get in touch and get involved
- Think creatively about how volunteering itself could be delivered online
- Recruit volunteers from amongst beneficiaries/service users to create a 'virtuous circle'
- Keep volunteers informed about what's going on and changes ahead and ensure volunteers are heard
- Be 'thoughtful' about matching people to roles and managing expectations. Be clear about roles and commitment. Give choice. Ensure there's some 'fun'.
- Pay volunteers expenses and be clear about this in promotion/recruitment.
- Thank and appreciate volunteers in genuine and meaningful ways.
- Evidence the difference volunteering makes in your organisation. Make sure volunteers and staff are aware of this.
- Create healthy staff/volunteer relationships. Make sure leaders and staff understand, respect and appreciate volunteer contributions.
- Provide opportunities for staff to volunteer in other organisations.
- Recognise, support and invest in your volunteer managers and coordinators.

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