

Volunteering Strategy for Herefordshire

2006 - 2011



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Purpose

The Herefordshire Infrastructure Consortium with funding from the ChangeUp programme has commissioned Herefordshire Voluntary Action (HVA) and Community Voluntary Action (CVALD) to work with partners to produce a Volunteering Strategy for Herefordshire.

The general statement of principle is:

'The volunteering infrastructure organisations of Herefordshire, in support of national and local government policy to commit to supporting and promoting active citizenship, recognise the important role played by volunteers within the county and the valuable contribution made by volunteers to the local community in many areas of life, including social and community care, community development, the dissemination of information, environmental improvement, the economy, education and advocacy'.

The Volunteering Strategy:

1. defines volunteering
2. provides a framework for the voluntary agencies of Herefordshire to promote and raise the profile of volunteering and to increase within the sector the recruitment and retention of volunteers.
3. provides guidance for planning future service delivery for the period 2006 –2011 on volunteering and volunteers on which the relationship with statutory, not for profit, voluntary and community bodies countywide can be developed

As the way forward the voluntary infrastructure organisations of Herefordshire aim to apply the Volunteering Code of Good Practice in engaging and working with volunteers

Definition

“ Volunteering is the giving of time and energy, which can bring measurable benefits to the volunteer, individual beneficiaries, groups and organisations, communities, environment and society within the county of Herefordshire. It is a choice undertaken of one's own free will and is not motivated primarily for financial gain or for wage or salary”

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Herefordshire volunteering infrastructure organisations acknowledge the Home Office Volunteering Compact Code of Good Practice in offering the four underlying principles of this volunteering strategy:

1. Choice

Volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual. Any encouragement to become involved in volunteering should not result from any form of coercion or compulsion. Freedom to volunteer in the county of Herefordshire implies freedom not to become involved.

2. Diversity

In Herefordshire, volunteering should be open to all, no matter what the volunteer's background, age, race, sexual orientation, faith, etc. Inclusiveness can build bridges, helping a diversity of people to feel usefully involved.

Social exclusion barriers can be overcome by skills, experience, confidence and contacts gained while helping others.

Policy-makers and practitioners in all sectors can learn much from working with volunteers from different ethnic communities, age groups and other demographic sectors, who may bring considerable relevant experience from their cultural and other backgrounds. Equal opportunities principles are basic to supporting diversity.

3. Reciprocity

Volunteers offer their contribution unwaged but should benefit in other ways in return for their contribution to wider social objectives. In Herefordshire, giving voluntary time and skills must be recognised as establishing a reciprocal relationship in which the volunteer also receives. Benefits that volunteers can expect to gain include a sense of worthwhile achievement, useful skills, experience and contacts, sociability and fun, and inclusion in the life of the organisation.

4. Recognition

Explicit recognition of the value that volunteers contribute to the organisation, to the community, to the social economy and to wider social objectives, is fundamental to a fair relationship between volunteers, organisations and government policy and practice in Herefordshire.

The scope of volunteering in Herefordshire includes that described in the Code and by Volunteering England:

- Helping provide a service as an unpaid volunteer within a voluntary or community organisation, international development organisation, the public sector or a private sector body.
- Taking part in running a voluntary or community organisation as a trustee, board or committee member.
- Serving as a non-executive member of a public body or participating in civic governance.
- Leading a voluntary initiative, usually as part of a voluntary organisation or community group, to improve the quality of life for people in a neighbourhood or community of interest.
- Gaining skills and experience through volunteering which will be useful when applying for paid employment.
- A group activity, within a neighbourhood or community of interest, providing a community service, or campaigning for a public cause.
- Employer supported community involvement
- Helping develop public policy through involvement in consultation processes and campaigning.
- Volunteering overseas
- Volunteering through involvement in a faith, congregation or community

Background

Volunteering in Herefordshire is not only an essential resource in helping statutory, not for profit, voluntary and community organisations to achieve their respective objectives and so contributing directly to the economic prosperity of the county, but also assists the promotion of active citizenship and social inclusion.

'The Value of Volunteering to Herefordshire' has been compiled in 2006

The Herefordshire Partnership Social Inclusion Ambition Group has produced a leaflet to raise awareness of rural social exclusion in the county.

People volunteer in Herefordshire, many simply because they have been asked, for a variety of reasons that include:

- Altruism - sense of giving something back
- Personal and social – making new friends; reacting to something that has happened to family or close friends; feelings of belonging to a community whether it be geographical, cultural or of interest; to access social networks.
- To utilise existing or develop new skills and experience, maybe to improve employability; to do something different
- To make a contribution to the community, to improve a situation; to make Herefordshire a better place to live through social change; campaigning; exercising leadership

Volunteers in Herefordshire are from all age groups both male and female and come from increasingly different backgrounds, races and beliefs to volunteer in support of the work of statutory, not for profit, voluntary and community groups.

Aims of the Volunteering Strategy

Herefordshire Voluntary Action and Community Voluntary Action Ledbury & District aim to work towards achieving the core functions for the local volunteering infrastructure as redefined by Volunteering England:

- Brokerage – matching volunteers to volunteering opportunities
- Marketing Volunteering
- Good practice development
- Developing volunteering opportunities
- Policy response and campaigning and
- Strategic development of volunteering

Whilst aiming to achieve these core functions, HVA and CVALD, having recognised the importance of volunteering to the county, seek, through the promotion of volunteering opportunities and the statutory, not for profit, voluntary and community groups which benefit, to

- *increase volunteering activity throughout Herefordshire.*

This aim supports that of the Herefordshire Council for 'more active and involved communities' the success of which will initially be measured against current performance 'Hereford Council Customer Satisfaction Survey 2005 – 06' – percentage of adult residents reporting that they have engaged in formal volunteering for an average of two hours a week or more over the previous year.

To achieve an increase in volunteer activity –

- Volunteering opportunities will be promoted widely, in ways that are accessible to the whole Herefordshire community.
- The infrastructure organisations (HVA & CVALD) will continue to promote opportunities in particular on the national database – **www.do-it.org.uk**
(HVA & CVA) will encourage volunteer involving groups to communicate their needs and the infrastructure organisations will aim to co-ordinate promotions through events, the medias of TV, radio, local press, free 'delivered to the door' advertising periodicals and posters (not just on notice boards in the town centres, but where ever possible, throughout the villages of rural Herefordshire).
- Promotional material will be made more inclusive to minority groups and produced in different languages that reflect the increasingly diverse population of Herefordshire.
- Every effort will be made to make volunteering opportunities appealing and promotional materials will draw attention to the benefits to be gained from participation in volunteering.

The way forward

The infrastructure organisation of Herefordshire will:

- *set standards of good practise in working with volunteers*
(revision, updating, promotion and dissemination of the Herefordshire Voluntary Action Good Practice Guide)
Through the distribution countywide of the Herefordshire Voluntary Action 'Good Practice Guide', the volunteering infrastructure organisations will seek to promote principles of good practice.
- *recognise and promote the importance and value of volunteering throughout Herefordshire –*
recognition of the value volunteers make in Herefordshire will continue to be made through events such as the 'Volunteer of the Year Awards'
- *apply equal opportunities to volunteering and address the diversity of age, sex, language, religious beliefs, ethnic or cultural backgrounds and physical or mental abilities of individuals within Herefordshire to break down barriers and create more inclusive communities*

In line with the Government initiative "*Volunteering for All*", the aim in Herefordshire is to break down the barriers to volunteering for socially excluded adults,

- § people with disabilities or limiting long term illness
- § people with no formal education
- § people from BME groups, especially those not born in the UK

§ Further more the infrastructure organisations HVA, CVA and HCYVS aim to engage more young people in positive activities and incentivise volunteering for young people to encourage them to volunteer and become more involved in the Herefordshire community.

This aim is to be achieved by enhancing six key areas of volunteer engagement: peer mentoring, longer term opportunities, opportunities for volunteering in school, college etc. volunteering in public service and by taking a more flexible approach to volunteering.

- *support voluntary organisations in Herefordshire and improve channels of communications throughout the voluntary sector in the county through forums and newsletters.*
- *improve accessibility and opportunities of volunteering in the county*
- *promote the clarification of volunteer roles and responsibilities within the volunteer involving groups of Herefordshire*
- *advise on procedures, including Disclosure checks for vetting volunteers who will be involved with children or other vulnerable groups*

- *improve the quality of volunteering throughout the county –*

by the provision of information and co-ordinated training sessions, facilitated wherever possible by infrastructure organisations, notably HVA & CVSLD, in order to avoid duplication and to maximise the often limited resources of smaller or rural volunteer involving groups

- *facilitate awareness raising events throughout the county.*

Infrastructure organisations will make presentations in libraries, schools and colleges and to employers to encourage them to promote volunteering amongst their employees with a progression to employee volunteering where employers release staff for voluntary activities

- *recognise and address the issue that there is a lack of funding county wide for volunteers expenses*
- *identify and access, through a co-ordinated approach, by infrastructure organisation and volunteer using groups, funding sources for volunteering activities in the county.*

Increase awareness and distribution of the Herefordshire Funding Directory

The Rights of Volunteers

Infrastructure organisations will raise awareness and provide information and support to volunteer using groups of the rights of volunteers to:

- know what is expected of them – roles and responsibilities
- have clearly defined support and lines of supervision
- be valued and shown appreciation
- be insured
- be aware of their rights and responsibilities if something goes wrong
- be paid appropriate expenses
- receive adequate induction and training for any duties they are required to undertake
- be free of discrimination
- observe confidentiality
- experience personal development through participation

The Expectations of Volunteers

In engaging volunteers, Volunteer involving groups expect volunteers to:

- be reliable
- be honest
- respect confidentiality
- attend training and support sessions where and when agreed
- act with due care for their own and others safety
- adhere to policies and procedures
- carry out tasks in accordance with the aims and values of the particular volunteer using group
- work within agreed guidelines and remits of the volunteer using group
- be anti-discriminatory and promote equality of opportunity
- honour the volunteering commitment they have made

Monitor and Review

The infrastructure organisations aim to commit to continuous improvement, which will also assist to review this volunteering strategy in the light of future legislation and good practice to include clear benefits for the people of Herefordshire.

In this regard the infrastructure organisations of Herefordshire will: -

- Monitor volunteers within the guidelines set down by Volunteering England
- Report annually the level of volunteering within Herefordshire
- Monitor the Volunteering Strategy and Action Plan and report on a regular basis increases in volunteering activity
- Review the Volunteering Strategy on a bi-annual basis

Notes

- Infrastructure Organisations:
Herefordshire Voluntary Action
Community Voluntary Action Ledbury & District
Community First
Age Concern
- Voluntary Sector Infrastructure organisation
HCYVS
- Key County Agencies identified and consulted:
Citizens Advice Bureau
Herefordshire Partnership
Voluntary Sector Assembly representative
- Other interested parties invited:
WRVS
St. Michael's Hospice
Nature Trust

Wider consultation was carried out through the VSA and the Volunteer Co-ordinator's forums.

- Volunteer involving groups refers to any statutory body, not for profit organisation, voluntary and community group which has volunteer input.

Existing documents reviewed:

Voluntary Sector Assembly Steering Group paper on volunteer recruitment – produced by Margaret Flanders 29th March 2004

Working together: Attracting Volunteers – meeting held on Wednesday 30th June 2004

Strategy for Volunteering Infrastructure in England 2004 - 2014 - Volunteering England

Compact – Volunteering a Code of Good Practice

Herefordshire Volunteer Survey 2006-05

Hereford Council Customer Satisfaction Survey 2005-2006