

# **Wiltshire Volunteering Strategy and Action Plan 2011-2014**

## ***A framework for developing volunteering across voluntary, public and private partnerships in the county***

*“Local people helping their communities through volunteering”*

### **Executive Summary**

The Wiltshire Volunteering Strategy and Action Plan 2011 – 2014 provides a framework for developing volunteering across voluntary, public and private partnerships in the county. The strategy’s development was led by Wiltshire Council, in close collaboration with Volunteer Centre Wiltshire and steered by a cross-sector group.

The strategy was subject to a 12-week consultation period with volunteers, volunteer-involving organisations, voluntary and community sector infrastructure support organisations and the public and private sectors. The purpose of the consultation was to agree a strategy and action plan that would be relevant across all departments and sectors

Currently, there is no comprehensive data for the extent, nature and impact of volunteering in Wiltshire and research to fill this gap in our knowledge is on-going. Therefore, based on data collected from national surveys, estimates have been made on what is likely to be revealed in Wiltshire.

The strategy recognises the benefits and positive impact of volunteering for individuals, communities, and organisations. These include a sense of pride, the ability to provide services not otherwise possible and building more stronger and more harmonious communities. The importance of ‘word of mouth’ as a route into volunteering is also identified. Consequently, a focus on working with a wide range of organisations that have face-to-face contact with the public is highlighted as an effective way to directly communicate the volunteering message to particular groups.

Barriers and challenges to be addressed by the strategy were identified using national research data as well as discussions with local focus groups. Those who volunteered less than once a month were asked what stopped them volunteering more often and the top three reasons mentioned were:

- work commitments (57%)
- having to look after children (31%)
- having other things to do with their spare time (29%).

The strategy aims to tackle these barriers and others through:

- developing employer supported volunteering schemes,
- reducing the bureaucracy surrounding volunteering (such as with CRB checks)
- improving the transport network for volunteers,
- supporting unemployed volunteers and other under-represented groups
- developing supported volunteering for people with diverse additional support needs
- raising the profile of Volunteer Centre Wiltshire while working to ensure appropriate placements are made for potential volunteers.

## **Why the need for a Volunteering Strategy and Action Plan?**

At both local and national levels, volunteering is regarded as a key mechanism by which communities can be strengthened and civil society built. Furthermore, the forecast demand on services, in tandem with economic pressures, highlights the need to look to local communities to provide some of the support needed themselves. It is in this context that volunteering will become increasingly critical to meeting these challenges.

## **Vision, Key Objectives and Actions**

The volunteering vision for Wiltshire is:

***“Local people helping their communities through volunteering”.***

This vision will be achieved by the development of an action plan to deliver the following five objectives, which were drawn up by the steering group and developed at a workshop with the VCS Assembly in March 2011:

1. Develop a joined up approach to volunteering.
2. Promote volunteering by improving the profile, quality and range of volunteering opportunities.
3. Provide flexible volunteering opportunities that consider individuals' diverse needs and overcome barriers to getting involved.
4. Ensure volunteering leads to results that are valued by communities
5. Identify and prioritise community needs, appropriately.

The action plan is based on key findings from initial research and consultation. These actions have been considered by the steering group and others, to determine priority tasks and the organisations that can play a role in delivering them. An initial attempt has been made to identify any additional resources that will be required to deliver the strategy. In addition to the considerations of the steering group, the feedback from the public consultation highlighted the three most important actions for year one as;

- Volunteering opportunities developed in each community area, so that people can find volunteering roles close to home.
- Encourage businesses to develop volunteering schemes for their employees.
- Enable young people to get good voluntary experience and skills that can help them into work.

## **Next Steps**

The strategy will inform decision-making about the development of volunteering in Wiltshire over the next three years. In order to monitor and evaluate delivery of the action plan, the steering group will continue to meet as a volunteering reference group on a quarterly basis and ensure progress towards achieving Wiltshire's volunteering vision. Once robust baseline data on local volunteering has been gathered, it will be possible to set more defined and measurable SMART<sup>1</sup> targets in the action plan. In the meantime, the strategy's success will be measured largely by the increase in the number and diversity of participants actively

---

<sup>1</sup> SMART = Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timed

engaged in volunteering in the county, and improvement in support for volunteering and community participation.

Finally, we wish to thank all the many thousands of people who volunteer across Wiltshire. Their contribution to community life and the local economy is invaluable and the county would be a far poorer place without them.