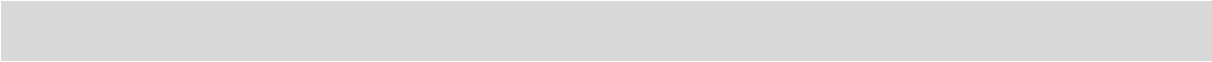# Suffolk Volunteering Strategy
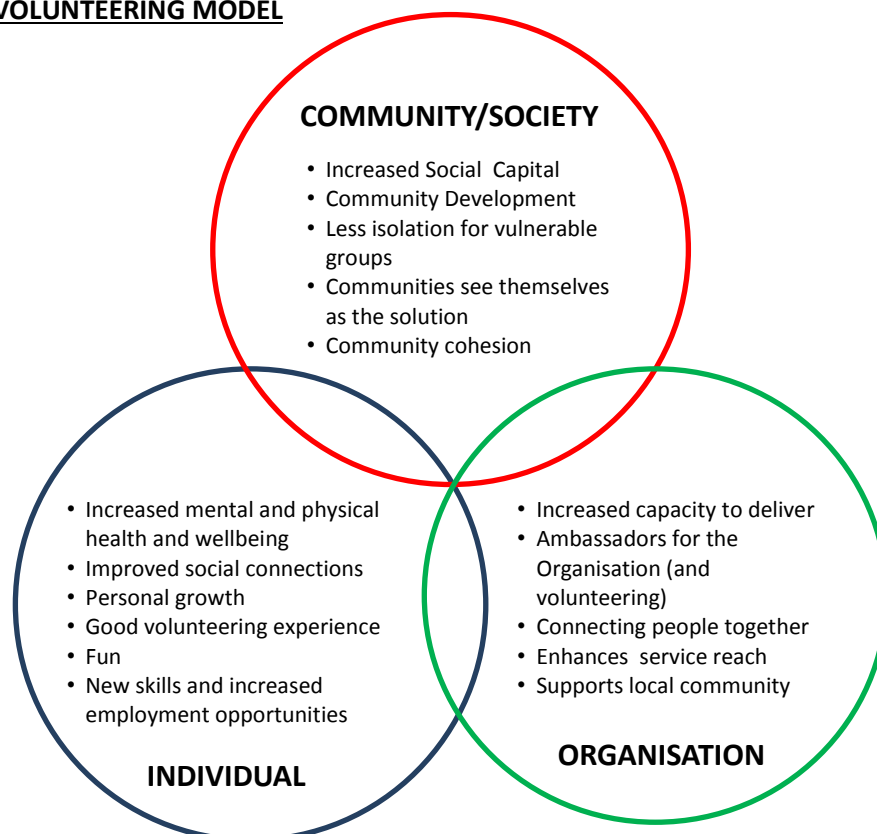
5/11/2015
Community Action Suffolk
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Suffolk Volunteering Strategy

We know that volunteering works. When people freely give their time and skills, something magical happens. People choose to volunteer for many reasons, they may want to help others or to develop new skills and meet new people. Sometimes they want to support a particular cause or try an activity. When they do, their effort has a threefold effect: it helps those they help by enhancing and extending services, it keeps those that volunteer happier and healthier and offers personal growth, and it builds the capacity of our communities to help themselves and makes Suffolk stronger. Volunteering helps to make our communities more resilient too, with people from different backgrounds and ages coming together.

BENEFITS OF VOLUNTEERING MODEL

COMMUNITY/SOCIETY

- Increased Social Capital
- Community Development
- Less isolation for vulnerable groups
- Communities see themselves as the solution
- Community cohesion

- Increased mental and physical health and wellbeing
- Improved social connections
- Personal growth
- Good volunteering experience
- Fun
- New skills and increased employment opportunities

INDIVIDUAL

- Increased capacity to deliver
- Ambassadors for the Organisation (and volunteering)
- Connecting people together
- Enhances service reach
- Supports local community

ORGANISATION

This strategy has been produced through a consultation process (which included face to face meetings, as well as an online survey) with stakeholders from public, private and voluntary and community organisations across Suffolk, as well as members of the public.

The development of the Strategy has revealed the need for more local intelligence about volunteering. Data on the national picture of volunteering behaviour, impact and innovation is clear, but local data will help support policy makers and front line delivery of services and build community resilience.

Why do we need a volunteering strategy?

Almost every aspect of Suffolk life benefits and enjoys the successes from volunteering, from our sports clubs and arts organisations, our churches and community centres to our public services such as school, hospitals and community safety.

For volunteering to be strong in Suffolk, we need a strong framework to enable effective support and promotion from all sectors of Suffolk - Public, Private, Third sector and residents. By working collaboratively, we will enable more people to be involved, benefit from volunteering and benefit others too, and create a stronger Suffolk for all.

This strategy builds on success already recognised in the county, such as community cohesion and resilience that Good Neighbours Schemes offer, and moving towards prevention through the development of schemes such as 'Home from Hospital' or Community Home Carer and Befriending Programmes, to name only a few. Such a change towards communities helping themselves through a more neighbourliness approach allows finite resources to be used in the best way, and allows the people of Suffolk to shape their own communities.

The strategy will look to build a countywide picture of formal and informal volunteering (including micro volunteering) by collecting data and sharing it, thereby supporting policy makers to prioritise finite resources towards ensuring good quality provision is delivered in Suffolk.

Our definition of volunteering

'Volunteering is the commitment of time and energy, for the benefit of society and the community, the environment, or individuals outside (or in addition to) one's immediate family. It is unpaid and undertaken freely and by choice'.

This definition refers to both formal volunteering (carried out with, or under the auspices of an organisation/group) and informal volunteering (carried out outside the organisation, often at neighbourhood level but outside, or in addition to, the immediate family). It comprises the widest spectrum of activity for example, community development, arts, sport, faith based, education, neighbourliness, youth, environmental, health and direct care, community safety. The definition also includes micro or 'one off' volunteering.

Our vision for volunteering in Suffolk

Our vision is for Suffolk to be a county where people are encouraged, inspired and enabled to volunteer.

Our vision is underpinned by the following values. :

- **Fairness and Equity:** Volunteering should be open to everyone.
- **Volunteering is voluntary:** There should be no compulsion to take part**.**
- **Mutual Benefit:** Volunteering should be reciprocal and benefit both parties involved (those that volunteer and those that are helped.)

Objectives

The four key objectives for the Suffolk Volunteering Strategy:

1. **To raise the profile of volunteering in Suffolk**
2. **To enable people to volunteer and be more engaged in their community**
3. **To engage employers and business leaders in providing and promoting volunteering opportunities.**
4. **To deliver enhanced services and opportunities across Suffolk which build social capital and local capacity**

These key objectives were agreed through a consultative process with partners and are expanded upon below. For each of the objectives, key priorities have been identified, which form the basis for action.

1. To raise the profile of volunteering in Suffolk

- To build the capacity of organisations who involve volunteers, to develop new approaches to volunteering that make giving time easier.
- To ensure clear and accessible information on what volunteering is and what opportunities exist.
- To ensure everyone has the opportunity to volunteer through a diverse and accessible volunteering 'offer.'
- To promote the benefits of volunteering in Suffolk.
- To enable everyone to capture measurable outcomes and the impact of volunteering.

2. To support people to volunteer and be more engaged in their community

- To value the relationship between the individual and the organisation they volunteer with.
- To increase youth volunteering for young people aged 12- 18yrs.
- To enable people to volunteer and be more engaged in their local community, matching their skills or 'assets' with what needs to be done.
- To reduce isolation, particularly amongst vulnerable people through volunteering.
- To encourage and support individuals and communities to take responsibility for their neighbourhoods.

3. To engage employers and business leaders in providing and promoting volunteering opportunities.

- To encourage employers to develop and support Employee Supported Volunteering schemes.
- To increase the number of organisations which involve volunteers to build relationships with, and promote their volunteering opportunities to employers.
- To encourage employers in Suffolk to enable staff to use their skills locally to increase community cohesion and economic growth.
- To recognise key contribution volunteering makes to the Suffolk economy.

4. To deliver enhanced services and opportunities across Suffolk which build social capital and local capacity

- Create a shared Suffolk tool for measuring and reporting the impact of volunteering.
- Share good practice and build the skill base within organisations who involve volunteers (Volunteer Involving Organisations.)
- To develop shared toolkits and support to enable people to be more engaged in their community and build their local capacity.

Next Steps

- The Suffolk Volunteering Strategy will now look to continue to engage across Suffolk (the public, private, voluntary sector and community organisations working within Suffolk) to engage and support the strategy to be implemented across sectors and organisations
- After endorsement from the Health & Wellbeing Board, it is proposed that an Action Plan to be commissioned to determine priorities, timescales and resource requirements. The Action Plan will bring the Strategy to life and ensure delivery and outcomes are met
- The Action Plan will seek the explicit commitment of organisations and agencies across all sectors to deliver its ambitions for Suffolk.
- The action plan will work to bring together a partnership of a diverse range of key agencies to work together to maximise volunteering opportunities, the resources that enable volunteering and the benefits for Suffolk residents and the services that they need. This will build on the members of the Steering Group and Focus Group, but will also look to engage with further groups to ensure a spread of knowledge and reach across all sectors.

PROCESS AND STAKEHOLDERS ENGAGED

Community Action Suffolk began engagement in April to work with partners across the System to develop a whole system strategy for Suffolk.

A steering group was formed which first met in June and has met regularly to produce the strategy. Invitations were sent to 32 partners across the statutory, public and private sectors and there were attendances from;

- Directorates in SCC - CYP, ACS, Public Health and Business Development
- CCG's
- All District and Borough Councils
- Chamber of Commerce

Engagement outside of meetings was conducted with Education and Police, as well as a focus group of VCS organisations. This focus group met regularly from July and fed into the main steering group.

In addition to meetings an online consultation was compiled to collect data to inform the strategy. This saw 406 individuals, 154 organisations (77 Public sector, 11 private sector, 66 VCS) answer questions.

The draft strategy was circulated wider than the steering group for comment and feedback, including organisations who had not be able to attend meetings.