

SUFFOLK VOLUNTEERING SURVEY SUMMARY



Key summary points from the 2021 Suffolk Volunteering Survey Completed by volunteers and volunteer leaders



Who completed the volunteering public survey?

The volunteer survey respondents were predominantly older, long-standing, frequent volunteers in leadership roles doing 'formal' volunteering who volunteer for multiple organisations.

Respondents predominantly were volunteering in health & social care, environmental or local community organisations.

The volunteer leader respondents were a mix of people in paid and volunteer roles.

Volunteer Experience

Survey data has shown there are high levels of volunteering satisfaction among respondents and that volunteering continues to be an enjoyable and beneficial experience for those who participate.

Social and networking opportunities between volunteers is important to respondents.



Employer Supported Volunteering

Employer-supported volunteering (ESV) makes up a small part of volunteer participation nationally, with 10% of recent volunteers giving time in this way and data from Suffolk reflects the national picture.



Main reason why people do not volunteer

Lack of time is the leading answer with limited awareness of role/charities a close second



Volunteering for young people - Pathway to employment

Survey data suggests that young people are particularly keen to volunteer as a route to employment, where the volunteering experience builds their skills and networks in sectors where they may be able to gain future employment.



Future

The survey cannot answer if the pandemic has shifted patterns of volunteering in Suffolk permanently. The data also shows that Covid has likely had a disproportionate impact on volunteering in Suffolk. The county has an older than average population.

Respondents also said that there are gaps in terms of the numbers of volunteers needed and a specific leadership gap where older experienced volunteer leaders are leaving or 'burning out' with a lack of a new generation of volunteers to replace them.



Volunteer leader's voice (paid & unpaid role)

Respondents who are coordinating or managing volunteers are facing challenges related to a lack of capacity and very few have volunteer management qualifications for their role.

Recommendations to improve volunteer experience



Flexibility & innovation

Develop more flexible volunteer roles and opportunities that adjust around the diverse lives of people and that is accessible to a wider group of potential volunteers. This should include remote and home-based activities, family-friendly volunteering and opportunities for people under 18. Family volunteering is potentially a good entry point for younger people and families.

Cause and impact

Volunteers are inspired by the causes they care about and need to have a meaningful experience. This is more important than the mechanics of the role. Volunteer opportunities should be clear about their impact, the difference it is making or the intended outcomes of the activity so as to maximise potential interest.



Time

Renewed focus on providing a good quality experience for volunteers that fits into people's lives and priorities and clearly makes a difference to the issues residents care about.

Social benefits

Volunteers are interested in the social benefits of volunteering and volunteer managers should incorporate social and networking activities into projects and activities as much as possible.



What next?

VCSE partners across Suffolk are meeting strategically and as task groups to discuss improvements to the volunteer experience in Suffolk. Discussions include how to support volunteer leaders.

To support volunteering involving organisations recruit more volunteers/leaders, CAS will be continuing to promote and lead campaigns and are launching a new ESV campaign in 2022.

