

## DAVENTRY VOLUNTEER CENTRE

### Volunteering Strategy 2014

#### Introduction

Daventry Volunteer Centre (DVC) is a registered Charity (No: 802879) since 1990, accredited with Volunteering England's Quality Standards Accreditation. The Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Membership of DVC includes around 300 local not for profit organisations. The work of DVC is based around Volunteering England's 5 core functions for Volunteer Centres.

#### Volunteering England's five core functions are:

1. Strategic Development of Volunteering - Through the activity of the Volunteer Centre and its engagement with local networks and decision makers there is a positive environment in which volunteering flourishes.
2. Good Practice Development - Through the activity of the Volunteer Centre organisations from all sectors (involving or providing volunteers) improve or attain positive consistency in their volunteering programmes.
3. Developing Volunteering Opportunities - The Volunteer Centre's development activity increases and improves the quantity, quality, and diversity of volunteering locally.
4. Voice of Volunteering - Through the Volunteer Centre's activities there is an increased awareness of the issues impacting on volunteering.
5. Brokerage - Through the Volunteer Centre's activities the general public and all sectors are better informed about, and have access to, an effective and efficient brokerage service. Both individuals and groups interested in volunteering are matched with appropriate opportunities in the local community. Volunteer Centres hold information on a comprehensive range of opportunities and offer potential volunteers support and advice matching their motivation to volunteer with appropriate volunteering opportunities.

DVC believes that volunteering and community action breaks down barriers and contributes to social inclusion, a sense of belonging and a better way of life, and that volunteering should be actively encouraged amongst disadvantaged groups to ensure as many individuals as possible are able to reap the benefits of volunteering.

Volunteering is part of the very fabric of our society – people coming together to help each other or to support a particular cause – and the voluntary organisations and community groups in the Daventry District would simply not be able to carry on without the support of volunteers.

Volunteering is important for the people that take part in it. Getting involved in volunteering offers different things to different people. For some, this is the opportunity to learn new skills,

build confidence and move closer to the jobs market, for others its a route to improved health and wellbeing, and for many it is the simple pleasure and satisfaction gained from helping others or 'putting something back'.

Volunteering is not owned by any particular agency or sector. It is for all of us, and happens for the benefit of those communities and the people in them.

Local research carried out during 2013/14 highlighted a number of barriers to volunteering that can be addressed through the implementation of DVC's Volunteering Strategy and Business Action Plan. A lack of awareness of opportunities and a lack of time are commonly stated as reasons for not getting involved. Local engagement suggested that the key things that would encourage people in Daventry District to volunteer are:

- having clear information
- knowing what opportunities are available
- that it benefits the local community

The strategy aims to tackle these barriers by:

- Greater promotion and recognition of volunteering and local opportunities
- Developing the quality of the volunteering experience by supporting local VCS groups to work to good practice standards, reduce bureaucracy and improve access to training and peer support networks
- Improving access to a wider range of volunteering opportunities through varied brokerage support, developing relationships between volunteer involving organisations, and encouraging new and innovative ways for people to become involved in volunteering
- Demonstrating the impact of volunteering to individuals, organisations and communities by developing appropriate methods of measurement

The strategy outlines the Volunteering Development aims and objectives contained in our Business Plan, and has been written to provide a coordinated and consistent approach to improving the Volunteering experience for people in the Daventry District, to increase the numbers of people volunteering, and to ensure a quality experience for volunteers.

The strategy links to the main aims of our partnership work with the Daventry Local Strategic Partnership. There are three main aims of the Daventry District Community Strategy 2010 -2026 (refresh 2014) which are:

- Health & Wellbeing –we want to encourage everyone in Daventry District to be healthier and have a better quality of life.
- Economy, Learning, Skills & Employment – we want thriving local businesses, high employment and a workforce that is skilled and can achieve their full potential.
- Protect & Enhance our Environment – we want to promote environmental sustainability and to improve the attractiveness of the district

Volunteering can make a direct contribution to achieving all three of these outcomes, and in particular to the Health & Wellbeing outcome (numerous studies emphasise the health benefits associated with volunteering e.g. Flanagan & Sadowski (2011) The Value of Volunteering).

The strategy also links to Government initiatives such as Big Society, and policies such as the Localism Act (2011) and the Giving White Paper (2011), and to the countywide Volunteering Strategy for Northamptonshire.

### What is volunteering?

DVC have adopted the definition of volunteering used by Volunteering England. This is viewed as: “An activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or individuals or groups other than (or in addition to) close relatives.” (Volunteering England).

There are two types of volunteering, formal and informal. **Formal volunteering** means giving unpaid help through groups, clubs or organisations (e.g. this could be leading a group or committee, organising or helping to run an activity or event, etc.). **Informal volunteering** means giving unpaid help as an individual that has not been organised by a group, club or organisation (e.g. collecting a neighbour’s shopping, helping them get from A to B, etc.).

People also give their time at different frequencies. **Regular volunteers** – give their time at least once a month over a year. **Occasional volunteers** give their time less frequently than once a month during a year. **Seasonal volunteers** give their time during particular months, for example during the summer holidays. **Episodic volunteers** give their time on a one-off basis.

There is also a broad distinction between **youth** volunteering and **adult** volunteering. Youth volunteering is considered distinct as it is more likely to involve a developmental element, (such as developing skills, personal qualities and receiving accreditation or incentives).

No matter what type of volunteering people undertake or how frequently they volunteer, DVC’s Volunteering Code of Practice sets out four fundamental principles to volunteering:

- **Choice:** Volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual. Any encouragement to become involved in volunteering should not result in any form of coercion or compulsion. Freedom to volunteer implies freedom not to become involved.
- **Diversity:** The people of the Daventry District bring varying qualities and experience to the third sector. Diversity is recognised, respected and valued. Volunteering should be open to all, no matter what their background, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion or belief, gender or disability. It is recognised that social exclusion barriers can be overcome by skills, experience, confidence and contacts gained whilst helping others. Ensuring a diverse volunteering base also makes our services more accessible and relevant to our diverse communities.
- **Mutual Benefit:** Volunteering should be a reciprocal, mutual relationship. Although a person is not paid for their efforts, they should feel a sense of worthwhile achievement. Volunteers gain useful skills, experience and contacts, sociability and fun, and are included in the organisation and the wider community. Volunteers should be complementary to and not a replacement for paid staff.

- Recognition: The value of volunteers to the organisation, community, the social economy and wider social objectives is fundamental to a fair relationship between volunteers, public organisations and the voluntary and community sector.

### **DVC's Aims:**

Our aims can be summarised into four main areas which are:

1. To provide every local resident, no matter what their background, with the opportunity to volunteer and contribute to their community
2. To make volunteering more recognised, visible and valued in the community
3. To ensure that local not for profit organisations, across all sectors, are able to deliver a quality volunteering experience and benefit from volunteering activity
4. To ensure an effective support service, where individuals are able to undertake quality volunteering opportunities and organisations are able to provide them

*We have developed a series of objectives that will enable us to achieve these aims which are linked to our Business Plan.*

### **Measuring Success**

The need for volunteer involving organisations to demonstrate the impact of volunteering is not simply seen as an optional extra, but as an activity that has depth and meaning. Evidencing the social return on investment of volunteering will be vital if the sector is to harness opportunities brought about by changes in the funding landscape, allowing new partnerships and innovative service delivery mechanisms to develop. DVC undertake regular monitoring and evaluation of the impact of our work in the local area, and providing volunteer-involving organisations with the tools to assess the impact of volunteering and encourage a collective approach to this, is an important part of our work.

Measuring the cost and Impact of Volunteering strives to:

- Measure the full impact of volunteering.
- Increase understanding of the value and impact of volunteering on local and countywide issues.
- Support organisations to demonstrate impact of their volunteering programmes.
- Measure the additional costs of supporting socially excluded volunteers and the value gained by their subsequent volunteering.

### **Barriers to Success**

The main threat to the future of the Volunteer Centre and its ability to deliver our strategic Volunteering objectives, is the reduction in the amount of statutory and other sustainable funding available to support the core activities of Volunteer Centres, which enable volunteering delivery.