



Volunteering Strategy

What Can I Do?

Join In and Become Involved

Help Others Be the Best They Can Be

Together Building a Better Leigh

Contents

| | | |
|---|---|----|
| 1 | Trustee's Foreword | 3 |
| 2 | Introduction and Context | 5 |
| 3 | The Volunteering Strategy | 7 |
| 4 | Objective 1: Recognising the value and promoting the benefits | 9 |
| 5 | Objective 2: Enhancing accessibility and diversity | 12 |
| 6 | Objective 3: Improving the experience | 14 |
| 7 | Objective 4: Ensuring Quality Standards | 17 |
| 8 | The Way Forward - Our Journey to Success | 18 |

1 Trustee Foreword

1.1 Volunteering is crucial to ensure 'Trust in Leigh' is successful. As a result, all the Trustees will have responsibility for volunteering within the 'Trust in Leigh' organisation and the social network across Leigh. We are delighted to be responsible for bringing forward our first ever Volunteering Strategy which we hope will contribute to achieving our purpose of improving the well being and lives of those who live in, work in, or visit Leigh.

1.2 People volunteer for all sorts of reasons - some to help others or to develop new skills and social networks, others because they are interested in a particular issue or activity. Whatever the motivation, hundreds of people volunteer across Leigh every day and this strategy aims to create the conditions that will enable volunteering to grow and flourish.

1.3 Volunteering makes Leigh a better place for all of us to live in. It helps people connect with each other in our community. It impacts on almost every aspect of everyday life – the communities we live in, our physical environment, our sport and leisure activities, where we work and worship, our schools and hospitals benefit from volunteers.

1.4 In developing the Strategy, best practice across the UK was investigated and reviewed. As a result, we are confident that this new approach stands robust scrutiny against best practice anywhere in the world and that it is reflective and fit for purpose for our 21st century society.

1.5 Going around Leigh we have been greatly impressed by the time and energy volunteers contribute to our community. It is essential that we continue to nurture and realise

the capacity and capability that exists, making it easier for people to contribute their time and views in creating the kind of society in which they want to live.

1.6 Volunteering makes all our lives better – it is in all our interests to embed a robust culture of volunteering in Leigh. This strategy will play a significant part in achieving that aim.

Now is the time for everyone to ask ones self – What can I do? – then join in and become involved, to help others be the best they can be, and together building a better Leigh.

A Leigh we can 'Trust in '.

Les Thomas

Trevor Barton MBE

Mike Baker MBE

2 Introduction and Context

2.1 Supporting volunteering makes good sense. Almost every aspect of everyday life – the communities we live in, our physical environment, our sport and leisure activities, where we work and worship, our schools and hospitals benefits from volunteers.

2.2 Volunteering impacts on the delivery of many Government initiatives delivered across a range of policy areas. This three year Strategy creates a strong policy context to provide the conditions which will enable volunteering to flourish and ensure its impact on life in Leigh is maximised.

2.3 In May 2013 Wigan - State of the Voluntary Sector research report was published. This report gave a comprehensive and up-to-date picture of volunteering across Wigan from the perspective of individuals and organisations. This research along with extensive experience from working within the sector formed the basis of evidence to inform the Volunteering Strategy.

Why a Volunteering Strategy?

2.4 In Leigh we have a strong history and ethos of volunteering. Volunteering underpins much of our community life and the services which benefit people and on which we rely. It is estimated that over 30,000 people regularly give time to formal volunteering in Wigan Borough and these volunteers give 86,000 hours¹.

¹ Wigan State of the Voluntary Sector 2013

2.5 Volunteering impacts on how service is delivered across a range of policy areas such as community cohesion, sport , education, criminal justice, health and urban and rural development.

2.6 In 2011/12 there were 1,467 community and voluntary organisations, co-operatives and Social Enterprises in Wigan, with the contribution of volunteers in the sector valued at £77 million each year²

2.7 This Volunteering Strategy has been designed to create a strong policy context providing the conditions that will enable volunteering to flourish and to ensure that its impact on life in Leigh is maximised. This Strategy will determine the framework for volunteering activity in Leigh for the next three years. This will enable more people to be involved in volunteer action to help others be the best they can be, and together building a better Leigh.

² Wigan State of the Voluntary Sector 2013

3 The Volunteering Strategy

3.1 The Volunteering Strategy sets out a new strategic framework for volunteer development in Leigh under 'Trust in Leigh'. It aims to involve more people in volunteer action.

3.2 Vision

'Trust in Leigh's" vision for volunteering is a society where:

- Everyone values the vital contribution that volunteers make to community well-being.
- Everyone has the opportunity to have a meaningful, enjoyable volunteering experience.

3.3 Definition

'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'.

3.4 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.

3.5 This is underpinned by the following values:

- **Fairness and Equity:** Volunteering enhances social inclusion and good relations. It should be open to everyone.
- **The importance of free will/choice:** Volunteering is a matter of free choice and there should be no compulsion to take part.
- **Mutual Benefit:** Volunteering is a shared experience. It is rewarding and of benefit to the volunteer in building skills, confidence and extending social networks. Volunteering is of benefit to society in contributing to the building of social capital and progressive social change.

3.6 Objectives

The four key objectives developed for the Volunteering Strategy are:

- 1) Recognising the Value and Promoting the Benefits
- 2) Enhancing Accessibility and Diversity
- 3) Improving the Experience
- 4) Ensuring Quality Standards

3.7 These key objectives form the overarching objectives for the strategy. These objectives are expanded upon and explained more fully in the following paragraphs. For each of these objectives key priorities for action during implementation have also been identified.

4 Objective 1 - Recognising the Value and Promoting the Benefits

4.1 Volunteering is at the heart of a vibrant society where people can contribute to social change through giving their time. Volunteers are important in delivering the many things we take for granted such as youth activities, sports clubs, faith based activities, arts festivals, social housing and many other services and activities that make a positive contribution in our society.

4.2 In Leigh we have a strong history and ethos of volunteering. However, in the current economic climate and increasing requirement on voluntary service/social enterprise the demand for volunteers is high. This situation reflects the need to move volunteering further into a position where it is valued and seen as an important aspect of every day life. There needs to be widespread recognition across society for the value of volunteers and the benefits of volunteering to people and their communities.

4.3 We need to provide clear information in a variety of styles and formats about volunteer opportunities in order to recruit new volunteers. The need for new ways of communicating with Social Enterprises and volunteers is recognised such as an interactive portal or the use of social networking sites or media.

4.4 The majority of adults across Leigh are active in a workforce, making engagement with employers important in promoting and encouraging volunteering. A key challenge is to encourage and enable employers of all sizes to take part in encouraging employees to volunteer. Employer Supported Volunteering is widely valued as a mechanism for encouraging participation, developing corporate social responsibility and building skills, which in turn will benefit employers and their businesses.

4.5 Many people give their time to volunteering in a faith-based context across a wide range of activities such as youth and children's work, befriending, luncheon clubs and transport. The faith-based sector involves significant numbers of volunteers. Implementation of the strategy will provide an opportunity to work constructively across sectors to share good practice, increase recognition and improve the experience of volunteers in a faith-based context.

4.6 Sport is also a major sector involving volunteers. There is a need to ensure increased recognition for volunteering and the part it plays in supporting participation in sport at all levels. There are large significant regional cultural and sporting events and organisations, which have a large volunteering component and these should be built upon to create a longer-term recognition for volunteering.

4.7 A range of legislation impacts upon volunteering such as safeguarding vulnerable groups, minimum wage or health and safety legislation. Volunteering is also impacted by policy on issues such as welfare benefits, sport, careers guidance and youth work. There is a need for 'Trust in Leigh' to remove by sensible advice and solid plans the bureaucracy that inhibits or results in unintended negative consequences of legislation or policy changes.

4.8 Volunteering is an excellent way to improve skills, gain experience and confidence. This is especially true for young people of those attempting to re-enter employment. Employer Volunteering is widely valued and recognised by employers as a mechanism for developing and building skills, improving self-esteem, that improves the employability of people especially young people.

4.8 'Trust in Leigh' in recognising the value and promoting the benefits of volunteering will prioritise action to:

- **Build public recognition for volunteering.**
- **Develop processes that identify volunteering requirements across Leigh**
- **Develop processes that communicate with social enterprises and volunteers**
- **Identify where there are gaps in volunteering provision**
- **Recruit more Volunteers**
- **Establish, promote and maintain an Employer Supported Volunteer Scheme across Wigan Borough**
- **Measure, including time and value, the impact of volunteer involvement on volunteers and organisations.**
- **Seek to protect volunteering from the unintended negative consequences of legislation and Government policy on volunteering**
- **Encourage volunteering to develop skills and improve employability**

5 Objective 2- Enhancing Accessibility and Diversity

5.1 Volunteering should be open to everyone, regardless of age, disability, gender, sexual orientation, religion, race or where they live. Volunteering can be an excellent way of developing better community relations.

5.2 'Trust in Leigh' experience has shown that volunteering has a role to play in bringing different communities together. Diversity in volunteering is a strength; good practice places a strong emphasis on volunteering being open to everyone across the plural communities of Wigan.

5.3 The key challenges facing the Voluntary Sector in Leigh (Wigan) are assessed³ as reduced access to funding, rising costs, together with increasing demand for services. This situation calls for an imaginative and innovative approach, such as doing things differently, that includes using the skills and abilities of volunteers in a different way and indeed doing different roles.

An assessment⁴ of the breakdown of volunteers by job role reveals:

- 27% of volunteers are in management roles, including committee/board members
- 12% of volunteers are in administrative roles
- 56% of volunteers are in roles delivering services.

5.4 As part of this challenge to voluntary organisations, accessing these skills and knowledge from across or within our communities is difficult. 'Trust in Leigh' must support the voluntary sector of Leigh in attracting and securing the skills and abilities of volunteers to face

³ Wigan State of the Voluntary Sector 2013

⁴ Wigan State of the Voluntary Sector 2013

this challenge. In addition Trust in Leigh must provide easy access for people to use their skills and abilities for the benefit of others.

5.4 'Trust in Leigh' in enhancing accessibility and diversity of volunteering will prioritise action to:

- **Ensure that everyone has an easy and accessible opportunity to volunteer**
- **Voluntary Organisations are able to secure skilled and professional volunteers**
- **Volunteering is representative of the diversity of the community.**

6 Objective 3 – improving the Experience

6.1 Good volunteer management should not to be overly bureaucratic. It should nurture the desire of people to help and get involved while ensuring that it is done in a framework of good practice which supports and protects the volunteer and the organisation and the end service user. There is a need to develop the skills of the individuals responsible for managing volunteers whether they are doing it in a paid or unpaid capacity. These skills in recruiting and supporting volunteers should be embedded within volunteer involving organisations to ensure that every volunteer has a meaningful and hopefully enjoyable experience.

6.2 We should strive to improve standards of volunteer management. Organisations can offer training, accredited or otherwise, to volunteers which will develop the skills of the volunteer and enable them to carry out their tasks in a better, more fulfilling way. 'Trust in Leigh' is aware of good practice in volunteering and will support the voluntary sector across Leigh.

6.3 Volunteers should have an enjoyable, rewarding and effective volunteering experience. Volunteers should be engaged in meaningful activity – responding to their passions and interests. Opportunities should be attractive, varied, flexible and well managed. Organisations should look to extend the range of roles available and to ensure that they challenge the boundaries of what activities can be done by volunteers. Greater diversity of roles leads to a more diverse volunteering population and a greater number of volunteers.

6.4 Time is a precious commodity, 'Trust in Leigh' experience and previous research shows that the pressures of other work and home commitments are amongst the biggest

barriers to volunteering. We need to find ways of allowing volunteering to have a better fit in people's lives. Organisations need to develop greater flexibility in their volunteering opportunities and training to allow people to give time and still meet their other commitments. This might mean, for example, volunteering during weekends or evenings or virtually, by working on projects online.

6.5 Volunteering can provide an important opportunity for people of all ages to develop skills. In studies relating to volunteering, people of all ages report that it gave them opportunities to: develop new skills (including social skills); develop confidence; improve employment prospects and, in some cases, to gain a recognised qualification. Volunteering can also provide an opportunity to get experience of a chosen career for example, through Service Learning where young people bring academic knowledge to real world problems and so provide solutions as well as vital experience for the young people involved. Many adults opt to volunteer to try a new career or to maintain skills after redundancy or retirement. This Strategy recognises that not everyone comes to volunteering to build their skills but, where they do, volunteer involving organisations should examine ways to ensure that learning opportunities are provided and volunteers are able, where appropriate, to get recognised accreditation for the skills developed.

6.6 'Trust in Leigh' in improving the experience of volunteering will prioritise action to:

- **Improve volunteer management offering training and support resources**
- **Increase the number and quality of volunteering opportunities.**

- **Encourage and support the development of skills by volunteers**
- **Encourage initiatives that support the effective use (and review) , welfare and conditions of volunteers**
- **Encourage a flexible approach to volunteering across the Voluntary Sector of Leigh**
- **Encourage and support the development of young people or those suffering some disadvantage through volunteering**

7 Objective 4 – Ensuring Quality Standards

7.1 Investing in Volunteers (iV)⁵ is the UK quality standard for all organisations that involve volunteers in their work. 'Trust in Leigh' will adopt and promote the 'Investing in Volunteers' Quality Standards in volunteering.

7.2 It is believed that Investing in Volunteers demonstrates real achievement measured against a rigorous national standard. Achieving Investing in Volunteers will benefit an organisation in many ways, including:

- Enabling to publicly demonstrate your organisation's commitment to volunteering and effective volunteer management
- Increasing volunteers' motivation and enhancing their experience
- Encouraging more people to volunteer
- Enhancing reputation in the local community and with funders
- Minimising any potential risks arising from the involvement of volunteers.

7.3 'Trust in Leigh' in ensuring Quality Standards in volunteering will prioritise action to:

- **Achieve Investing in Volunteers Quality Standards Accreditation**

⁵ .iV is owned by the UK Volunteering Forum, which consists of the chief executives of the National Volunteering Development Agencies (independent charities), namely Volunteer Now (Northern Ireland & Republic of Ireland); WCVA (Wales); Volunteer Development Scotland and the *Executive Director of Volunteering and Development* at NCVO.

8 The way forward- Our Journey to Success

8.1 Delivering Objectives and Priorities

These objectives and priorities will be used to drive a programme of work which will support the implementation of the Volunteering Strategy. An Action Plan will be developed to deliver this programme of work throughout the life of the strategy.

8.2 The Volunteering Strategy Action Plan will be a living document, implementing a range of actions, continually updated, reviewed, revisited and agreed across all sectors through the life of the strategy.

8.3 The Volunteering Strategy Action Plan will be overseen by both the Trustees of 'Trust in Leigh' as well as the 'Trust in Leigh' Strategic Board. In addition a Volunteering Steering Group will be established with representation from across the sections of Leigh's voluntary sector.