

The Commission on the Future Delivery of Public Services – Call for Evidence

Volunteering Leadership - Changing Hearts and Minds

Introduction

1. Volunteer Development Scotland is the National Centre for Excellence in volunteering. We welcome the opportunity to provide a written submission in response to the Commission's call for evidence. This is short, focused paper is intended to highlight several key issues relating to volunteering and the reform of public services. We would welcome an approach by the Commission for further discussion of our submission during which we would be happy to provide more in-depth evidence and case studies.
2. Since 2007 Volunteer Development Scotland has been a strategic partner is taking forward the refreshed strategy for Volunteering in NHSScotland. This has provided us with a unique and first hand insight into volunteering within a key area of public service provision in Scotland and is one of the biggest examples of where a massive change in approach can be achieved with in a large public service. Additionally we have extensive experience in working with several public bodies such as Scottish Natural Heritage, Historic Scotland, sportscotland and recently have begun to work with Stirling Council to develop a 'whole authority' approach to volunteer development; again this has provided us with crucial insights into the involvement of local people in public services. As such the evidence base for our submission comes largely from our direct experience and also from our analysis of both research evidence and the existing literature.

Embedding Volunteering within the Values, Principles and Standards in Public Services

3. There are two key arguments in our submission, which we urge the Commission to consider carefully and to take forward with the Scottish Government. Firstly, there is already significant involvement of volunteers in the delivery of public services and volunteers already have a positive and direct effect on outcomes. This has to be recognised explicitly across government (which is not currently the case) and the resources and services which create the conditions for volunteering and enable this involvement must be maintained - it is these services which are often particularly vulnerable to downward pressure on budgets. By this we do not mean re-considering government's relationship with infrastructure bodies or intermediaries but rather a complete change in policy approaches where the citizen is at the heart of shaping and supporting services. This current context offers an unrivalled opportunity to expand the democratic involvement of citizens (as volunteers) in the design and choices of public services and to be co-operators in achieving shared goals and outcomes.
4. The crucial factor in both of these arguments is the need for significant cultural change in the public sector in both hearts and minds. The values and principles that underpin Government and public service needs for the first time to embrace the necessity of active citizen co-operation and set the scene for standards of practice that engenders co-production and better lives. There needs to be a major shift in the state's role and purpose at all levels as well as in the attitude and skill of professionals. A transformation in attitudes, delivery models and the levers of change is required for the long term. Professionals can be sceptical about and indeed resistant to handing responsibility over to citizens; often seeing certain tasks and activities as being part of their professional territory. Indeed some public services today were performed by citizens for free yesterday – not just within the public sector but the significant growth of the professionalised third sector. There needs to be a shift in the future to a different approach that build trust and mutual respect and consensus We have seen

the NHSScotland begin a journey towards a 'mutual' health service: the rest of the public sector in Scotland must also move in this direction. Effective engagement of volunteers in many different forms and activities must be a guiding principle of the new 'mutual' approach to public services.

5. Nothing less than a new vision for public services in Scotland is required. This vision must put the effective engagement of citizens at its heart. This vision is built on the value of trust, on the principle that volunteer development must be a core function of the public sector and on effective standards for enabling (and releasing) the willingness of citizens to become involved (an illustrative example of what these might look like is attached at Annex1 of this paper)

Understanding people (volunteers) at the Centre

6. Volunteers are already involved to a significant extent in the delivery of public services: good examples of this are the Children's Hearing system, victim and witness support, literacy and numeracy services and First Responders in the Ambulance Service, which all fundamentally depend on the involvement of volunteers. VDS' analysis of the Scottish Household Survey and our own research evidence suggests that over 50% of all volunteering activity in Scotland involves the delivery of various forms of public services.
7. The involvement of volunteers must be given increased recognition within public service providers, particularly Local Authorities. By taking a 'whole of authority' approach the value of involving volunteers becomes more visible and thus the resources needed to support it and make it sustainable are much more likely to be maintained. We suggest that local authorities particularly within their founding values, principles and standards should have a whole authority approach to involvement of their people, especially if the current emphasis towards outcomes continues.
8. Our experience of working with the public sector has convinced us that there is a great willingness by people in Scotland to give of their time, energy, care and compassion. Currently this is not always matched by the availability of suitable opportunities. In fact several geographical Boards in NHSScotland actually have 'waiting lists' for volunteering opportunities such is the imbalance between supply and demand. In this respect our evidence suggests that this is a cultural rather than a pragmatic issue in the health service and such "waiting lists" can be removed if the service were able to manage its processes more effectively, fully consider modern approaches to opportunities (and some examples exist already in the health service) and to engender a culture of mutuality with citizens rather than command and control i.e. fully embrace and respect the new Quality Strategy rather than focus on how the service will measure these strategies.
9. The Public Sector must enhance its capacity to involve citizens as volunteers. Examples include new and expanded roles for volunteers in helping to ensure early release from hospital and helping people to live independently for longer (reducing hospital admissions in the first place and so reducing pressure on the acute NHS sector). However, we do not believe that people want to 'take over' public services in the ways suggested in much of the rhetoric surrounding the Big Society and the Localism Bill in England: rather people want to be sure that we're getting the best out of the public pound and are prepared to contribute their own time towards the common weal and public value.

Obstacles and Challenges

10. Our experience with NHSScotland Local Authorities and other public agencies has demonstrated very clearly that this new approach will require significant cultural change: bold vision and inspired leadership are vital. Of equal importance is the issue of trust. Citizens have to be seen as assets who can make a positive contribution to outcomes This already happens in vital front line services where we trust volunteers: mountain rescue, the lifeboat service and First Responders – this now has to become evident across the board and at all levels.

11. In parallel with this cultural change there also must be a very practice-based up-skilling of staff to provide sufficient, well managed volunteer placements that achieve the desired outcomes. Many Local Authorities, for example, are ready and willing to move in this direction but would welcome practical guidance. It is vital that progress flows beyond Community Planning Partnerships — to directly engage service providers in this reform agenda. Here, the challenge will be to develop those ‘professionals’ who run our schools, health and social care services, parks and libraries with those with the expertise in volunteer involvement, and to have the resources and guidance required to enable this change.
12. It should be emphasized that not all of the obstacles are located within the public sector. There are barriers that affect the demand for greater participation from citizens themselves such as a lack of confidence, time and skills and also in other sectors where displacement of volunteers has taken place.
- 13 For the providers and commissioners of public services, there is a wider role to identify where volunteers already make a difference to these services and develop further opportunities. The challenge is to do this for the right reasons and for the long-term – to support the capacity of citizens to do more in cooperation with the public sector and not as a way to cut costs. If public agencies are to involve more volunteers in adding value to public services, the flip-side of this ‘ask’ should be their ‘offer’ in terms of staff time, skills, some resources and local venues. A useful next step would be to work with a small number of demonstration areas to extend volunteering in, for example, secondary schools, social care and advocacy.
- 14 Looking at new and expanded roles for volunteers within public services is by no means unproblematic. It requires careful analysis of what are appropriate roles for volunteers, negotiation and legitimacy about these roles, the level of training and support required and the need for buy-in from paid staff and managers and, of course, it needs resources. Additionally, there are crucial issues about job substitution and the perception that services are simply being delivered on the cheap. Volunteer Development Scotland recognises this and as a significant first step has developed a Charter on Volunteering with the STUC (attached to this submission at Annex 2). It must be emphasized, however, that there is a danger that volunteer involvement actually decreases. As budget cuts begin to take effect it is often those posts which support volunteers and volunteer services which are vulnerable. This inevitably filters down to the Third Sector organisations which involve volunteers

Conclusion

- 15 Volunteer Development Scotland calls for a radical change in the nature of public services in Scotland to put the citizen at the centre and explicitly recognise that volunteers have a crucial role to play in making choices about services and achieving positive outcomes towards shared goals. This change has several key elements:
 - Recognise the already significant involvement of volunteers in public services
 - Expand the scope of volunteer involvement
 - Significant cultural change based on inspired leadership
 - A new vision based on values, principles and standards in Government which embed volunteering in its widest sense.
- 16 We would welcome the opportunity to present evidence directly to the Commission and provide further supporting evidence based on our experience.

Annex 1. Standards For Engaging Volunteer in Public Services

In its report *Capable Communities* (2010) the IPPR identifies some of the key things that policymakers locally and nationally should do if the barriers to expanding the role of volunteers are to be addressed and greater power and responsibility is to be handed over to individuals, families and communities. We would support several of these actions:

- Ask people to come forward: most people have simply never been asked to volunteer, despite being willing to when probed. When asking people it is crucial to start small and to use personal contact. Frontline professionals should be trained in some of the techniques of community organising and development so that they routinely ask people come to forward.
- Let people know what opportunities are available: people lack information about the opportunities available locally and often don't know where to look or who to speak to. Local authorities should provide a central information point about the opportunities available in their area.
- Set up systems to coordinate time and skills within the community: people fear making too much of a commitment and so finding flexible systems such as Time Banks to coordinate people's time and skills is critical. Time-banking is an approach to volunteering whereby people can earn credits for making even small contributions offers a way of coordinating the activities of volunteers.
- Reward contributions: people don't want to be paid for making a contribution, but they do want to feel that their contribution has been recognised. Time-banking again offers a way of developing reciprocal relationships between citizens, putting something in and getting something out.
- Commission for participation: citizen participation is not typically an expectation among commissioners, but it should be made one.
- Challenge professional roles and attitudes: the way professionals see their role and that of the public needs to change. Any public organisation committed to this agenda needs to very proactively lead and train its staff in this direction.
- Re-think risk: risk aversion, disproportionate application of legislation and an unwillingness to trust local people are ongoing issues and public agencies need to consider whether citizens might be willing to sign up to accepting more risk in return for getting more of the public involved in delivery. Agencies need to consider whether they are being over-zealous in their application of rules and interpretation of legislation and guidance. Councils should consider whether they can themselves start insuring citizens so that they can participate.
- Training: people very often lack the skills or the confidence to take on new tasks. Public agencies should see people as assets and citizen training as a crucial part of achieving their goals, in part by using the talents and skills in the community itself.

Annex 2. The Volunteer Charter: Volunteer Development Scotland and The STUC

A Charter for Strengthening Relations between Paid Staff and Volunteers:

Volunteer Development Scotland and the STUC

This Charter sets out the key principles on which volunteering is organised and how good relations between paid staff and volunteers are built. It has been developed jointly by Volunteer Development Scotland (VDS) and the Scottish Trade Union Congress (STUC) and has been endorsed by the wider volunteering and trade union movements and represents a significant and indeed historic - advance in the development of volunteering in Scotland

Its' starting point is that volunteering plays an essential role in the economic and social fabric of Scotland. It is estimated that almost 1.2 million people regularly take part in formal volunteering and that this activity contributes some £2.1 billion of value to Scotland's economy. Volunteering helps build social capital and community cohesion and plays an important role in supporting the delivery of key public services. Volunteering is also beneficial for the volunteer: it helps improve health and wellbeing and provides opportunities for individuals to acquire skills and knowledge that can enhance career development or employment prospects. This Charter demonstrates the value and importance that both organisations place on volunteering and the time, skills and commitment given by volunteers.

This Charter recognises that volunteering and trade unionism share common values. Both are founded on the principles of mutuality and reciprocity, leading to positive changes in the workplace and community. The trade union movement itself is built on the involvement and engagement of volunteers.

Volunteer Development Scotland and the STUC acknowledge that, on the whole, relations between paid staff and volunteers are harmonious and mutually rewarding. They can, however, be enhanced by good procedures, clarity of respective roles, mutual trust and support. Good volunteering doesn't just happen; it is a managed process, requiring resources and investment. This Charter sets out the key principles to help underpin good relations in the workplace.

These principles should be used as a guide by individual organisations in all sectors to develop more detailed policies and procedures that reflect local needs and circumstances. This should be done, wherever possible, between local union representatives, employers and volunteering managers.

Paid work is any activity that is undertaken at the direction of an employer and is financially compensable. Volunteering is freely undertaken, is not based on any form of employment contract and is not for financial gain; it involves the commitment of time and energy for the benefit of society and the community.



Charter principles:

1. The key principle of volunteering is that it is activity undertaken as a freely made choice of the individual, if this choice is compromised in any way by a form of compulsion; the threat of sanctions or force, and then any resulting activity cannot be seen as volunteering.
2. While volunteers should not normally receive or expect financial rewards for their activities, they should receive reasonable out of pocket expenses.
3. The involvement of volunteers should add value to and support the work of paid staff, and should not be used to displace paid staff or undercut their pay and conditions of service.
4. Volunteers should not carry out roles formerly carried out by paid staff or hide the effects that non-filling of vacancies or cuts in services has on service delivery.
5. The added value of volunteers should be highlighted as part of commissioning or grant-making process but their involvement should not be used to reduce contract costs.
6. Effective structures should be put in place to support and develop volunteers and the activities they undertake, and these should be fully considered and coasted when services are planned and developed.
7. Volunteers and paid staff should be provided with opportunities to contribute to the development and monitoring of volunteering policies and procedures.
8. Volunteers, like paid staff, should be able to carry out their duties in safe, secure and healthy environments that are free from harassment, intimidation, bullying, violence and discrimination.
9. All paid workers and volunteers should have access to appropriate training and development.
10. Volunteer involving organisations should have policies and procedures in place to deal effectively with any issues arising between the volunteer and the organisation or between paid staff and volunteers within the organisation.
11. In the interests of harmonious relations between volunteers and paid staff, volunteers should not be used to undertake the work of paid staff during industrial disputes.

This Charter has been developed by Volunteer Development Scotland and the STUC as a statement of principles and good practice. It is also a model for use by individual unions, volunteer involving organisations in the public, third and private sectors and other bodies in discussions around the involvement of volunteers.