

The Vision by 2032

- Volunteering is something we all do across the different settings and stages of our lives. It has equal validity alongside public and private endeavours, and we are proud to talk about it.
- Organisations involving volunteers understand how and when volunteers want to engage.
- Volunteer voices are embedded in the leadership and design of volunteering initiatives, driving how they are involved in volunteering activities.
- Volunteering is appreciated by individuals, communities, organisations and policymakers as helping to enrich lives and enliven communities.
- The appreciation and celebration of volunteering is supported by common metrics for measuring volunteering which have been adopted by central and local government, and organisations involving volunteers.

How should this feel for volunteers in 2032?

"Over my lifetime I've been involved in all kinds of different volunteering activities which have suited what's mattered most to me and my availability at the time."



Spotlight: Volunteering, naturally

A Kent Wildlife Trust project is enabling women in Romney Marsh to become involved in volunteering and community activity, often for the first time.

Supported by Sport England, Down to Earth participants, often with their children, connect with nature to improve their physical and mental well-being.

These women were encouraged to take ownership of and responsibility for ongoing activities, creating activities and roles that suit their individual circumstances - as well as spreading the word to others in the community. In total, more than 80 women have spent a combined total of more than 700 hours volunteering with some undergoing formal training, or being involved on a very regular basis, and others able to participate but with less responsibility.

"I have enjoyed connecting with like-minded families and gaining new skills."

- Down to Earth volunteer

The Vision by 2032

- Everyone can engage within their community, identifying what matters to them and building the future they want to see
- People supporting volunteers work alongside them as equals, channelling their interests and passions and supporting them to make change
- First-hand experience is valued and the focus is on people's ability to make change, whatever their role. People are supported to change roles - volunteering, paid work and accessing services
- Decisions are made by those best placed to make them, not based on a hierarchy
- We recognise who's missing in our volunteering spaces and have the confidence & ability to rectify and redistribute power
- People working alongside volunteers are accountable to communities as well as to government or funders. Our focus is on building equitable relationships and deep connections.
- Emerging social movements, causes and campaigns are supported and recognised within a wider movement for change. They work alongside and positively disrupt more established organisations. Larger or better-resourced organisations support and enable groups with fewer resources

How should this feel for volunteers in 2032?

"Things are done with, not to, me - I'm listened to, respected and my views are properly taken into account."



Spotlight: Active power

ACN runs programmes combining volunteering with sport and physical activity, ifor young people in inner cities across the UK.

Active Communities Network (ACN) aims to encourage young people in inner cities across the UK to become role models and leaders in their communities.

They're aware many communities have previously been subject to interventions in which outside organisations parachute in, tell them the outcomes that should be achieved, and impose a rigid framework for achieving that. So it's careful to value the first hand-experience of the community rather than making assumptions, and remains accountable to its communities. It always adopts a consortium-based approach: everything is delivered alongside grassroots organisations, making sure it never retains more ownership of a project than is strictly necessary.

"Loosely-connected networks have always solved the biggest problems in the world, not Governments or any single organisation."

- Oliur Rahman, Active Communities Network

The Vision by 2032

- We have built and continue to foster cultures that are inclusive of all who want to give their time, making sure volunteering can fit with people's identity, background and life experience
- By listening to people who experience exclusion from volunteering, organisations and groups remove barriers and provide additional support, so that everyone who wants to can volunteer
- We encourage people to raise concerns about discrimination or inequity, welcome it as an opportunity to improve, and effectively address issues
- Those in powerful leadership & governance roles look & sound like the communities they serve, increasing legitimacy and trust
- We consider who has relationships with marginalised people and collaborate with others to make sure everyone is included
- Good data on volunteering demographics is consistently captured, shared and used to drive change
- Those who support volunteers have the resources, networks, and time to learn and adapt in order to be more inclusive. We share our good practice.

How should this feel for volunteers in 2032?

"Wherever I choose to volunteer, I'm confident that I will be welcome and won't experience discrimination."



Spotlight: New voices on board

A new process for recruiting trustees has helped a more diverse range of people to join the boards of charities in Hertfordshire.

The charity Communities 1st's Trustee Speed Matching sessions are promoted across the community with an emphasis on inviting groups who may typically be underrepresented.

Communities 1st works to demystify trusteeship and challenge preconceptions among would-be trustees, as well as preparing hiring organisations to think more deeply about their needs and how to attract interest. The online sessions have led to 40 local charities bringing in a number of new trustees of all ages, from diverse ethnic backgrounds, with disabilities, who are members of the LGBTQIA+ community or identify as gender non-conforming or trans.

"I didn't think trusteeship was for me. Nine months later, I'm a vice-chair!"

- A newly appointed trustee

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- Organisations support and champion communities to drive their own collaborative activity and don't feel the need to 'own' activity
- Volunteers play an essential role in building seamless collaborations within and across all sectors
- Collaboration nurtures and supports new people and organisations to engage in new projects
- Moving between organisations and projects is normal and welcome – sharing of people, talent and connections is how we all work
- We tackle the barriers that organisations can put up – we recruit, train and work with volunteers jointly when we can
- Within an organisation or a movement, volunteers and paid staff collaborate well together - helping each other, learning from each other and recognising the value one another brings.

How should this feel for volunteers in 2032?

"I move freely between projects and organisations and am encouraged to contribute flexibly in whichever way works for me."



Spotlight: Collaboration in Watchet

An environment which values and actively encourages collaboration has been instrumental to a range of new volunteer-led services in the town of Watchet, Somerset.

In 2018, Watchet won funding through the Place Based Social Action programme to support residents to work together to identify the issues they felt needed addressing. This led to new links being forged between groups which had previously not worked together, leading to a community transport scheme, a printed community newspaper, and the refurbishment of a bookshop which now hosts training courses and a youth club.

The more collaborative approach allows the town's ecosystem of social action to set its sights on bigger ambitions than ever before.

"Organisations often don't realise how much common ground and shared goals they have. Get them talking, and great things happen."

- Georgie Grant, Onion Collective CIC

Experimentation

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- Experimentation is not reserved for times of crisis, but is incorporated into the way volunteering works day-to-day
- Communities are supported to experiment and innovate to develop their own solutions
- Those that create an enabling environment for volunteering - leaders, funders, trustees and government at all levels - support a culture of experimentation. This means that communities and organisations are trusted to design projects as they see fit, learn and adapt
- Relationships are built on trust. We avoid overly bureaucratic systems, instead balancing change and flexibility with the need to protect people's safety and wellbeing at all times
- We embrace a genuine learning culture – seeking out and listening to those with expertise, wherever this lies, building on what works well, learning when things go wrong, and staying curious
- We learn from and move on from approaches that are not working. We become less fearful of being seen to 'fail'

How should this feel for volunteers in 2032?

"I feel confident and able to try new things - if I give feedback on my experiences, and share ideas I know I will be listened to."



Spotlight: Experimentation matters

Experimentation has been key to the success of a Volunteering Matters project tackling loneliness and social isolation.

Pre-pandemic, volunteers and participants in the Lifelines project ran social activities for older people - from dancing and drawing to Spanish and exercise - which they wanted most, rather than following a predetermined, prescribed programme.

Covid-19 meant reimagining Lifelines into online and phone-based sessions in the new Getting Together Matters (GTM) project, which expanded to include any isolated individual, regardless of age. Flexibility from funder The National Lottery Community Fund again allowed experimentation and a person-focused approach. Having engaged more than 500 people in GTM through everything from a pen pal scheme to virtual museum tours, Volunteering Matters now invests in giving all staff more time and freedom to experiment.

"It's great to help members work with technology, try new activities, engage with others and reduce their feeling of isolation."

- Theresa McIvor MBE, GTM volunteer