

# **The State of Volunteering in Lancaster District**

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# THE STATE OF VOLUNTEERING IN LANCASTER DISTRICT

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

- Volunteering changes lives:
  - ◆ from the individual volunteer who develops increased confidence, new skills or satisfaction through helping others
  - ◆ to those that benefit from the freely given time of others
  - ◆ and communities where volunteering brings well-being and vibrancy to local life.
- This report was written by consultant Alan Chapman and explores the current state of volunteering in Lancaster District.
- It was commissioned by *Lancaster District CVS* and *Help Direct* on behalf of *Lancaster City Council* following the closure of *Help Direct Lancaster Volunteer Bureau (VB)*, and refers to existing research and data alongside feedback from representatives of 20 volunteer involving organisations\*
- Lancaster has a thriving volunteering sector with many individuals giving their time freely both formally and informally, bringing significant social and economic benefit to the District.
- There are a range of voluntary, community and faith sector (VCFS) and public sector organisations with considerable experience and expertise in working with volunteers including sections of the community that face exclusion.
- There are also a number of organisations providing information and practical support to groups that involve volunteers in their work.
- Two sets of recommendations are made around:
  - ◆ developing volunteer brokerage and improving co-ordination in areas such as information and publicity for volunteering
  - ◆ strengthening partnership working as a foundation for the further development of volunteering in the District.

\*Feedback gathered through a survey, a Lancaster District CVS Volunteer Co-ordinators meeting, email and telephone contact – with comment from *One Voice, Transition City, St John's Hospice, Community Learning Network, Lancaster Adult College, Friendship Centre, Lancaster and Morecambe Bay Chinese Community Association, Piccadilly Support Services, Positive Futures North West, N Compass, Signpost, Furniture Matters, Lancashire County Council, Peer Support, Making Space, Galloways, Blackburn Diocese, Marsh Community Centre, StrawberryFields Training Ltd, Lancaster and District Conservation Volunteers*).

## 2. WHAT IS VOLUNTEERING?

- Volunteering is any activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or someone (individuals or groups) other than close relatives. (*Volunteering England*)
- Formal volunteering refers to people giving unpaid help through groups, clubs or organisations; informal volunteering refers to people giving unpaid help to others as an individual.
- Central to this definition is that the decision to volunteer is a choice freely made by each individual.

## 3. PARTICIPATION IN VOLUNTEERING

39% of adults in England volunteer formally at least once in 2010-11 ( <i>NCVO UK Civil Society Almanac 2012</i> )*
55% of adults volunteer informally at least once a year
25% of adults volunteer formally at least once a month in England
29% of adults volunteer informally at least once a month in England
23.9% of adults participate in formal volunteering once a month in Lancashire ( <i>Place Survey, Communities and Local Government 2008</i> )
25.7% of adults participate in formal volunteering once a month in Lancaster - <i>national figures on volunteering participation point to significant additional levels of informal volunteering or "neighbourliness" in the District.</i>
<i>*Drawn from the ten year National Citizenship Survey which points to an overall reduction in volunteering participation over the period, although bodies such as Volunteering England are cautious - from feedback via local Volunteer Centres - about overstating any trend towards a decrease in volunteering.</i>

## 4. THE VALUE OF VOLUNTEERING

- *National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO)* calculates that if people volunteering formally once a month in England in 2010-11 were replaced by paid staff it would require 1.1 million full-time staff, costing (on median hourly wage) a total of £19.4 billion. (*NCVO UK Civil Society Almanac 2012*).
- Lancaster District CVS estimates 867,301 annual volunteering hours in the District in 2011-12, equivalent to a total value of £5,273,190 (based on the current minimum hourly wage). CVS views these figures as not reflecting fully the contribution of voluntary trustees.

- One of the 20 respondents to survey and feedback work for this report, from St John's Hospice, referred to their organisation's engagement of 330+ volunteers in 2011-12 with a financial value equivalent to nearly £500,000.
- Government policies emphasise the value of active citizenship and volunteering in terms of benefits to social cohesion and social capital.
- *Big Society's policies* include: *community empowerment* e.g. localism, *opening up public service delivery* and *social action* e.g. National Citizen Service, Community Organisers.
- *Lancashire County Council's Corporate Strategy 2011-13* includes *increasing the opportunities for local people to be involved in volunteering* as a key priority for its *Making Lancashire Communities Stronger Objective*.
- *Lancaster City Council's Corporate Plan 2011-14's* recognises the role of the VCFS and its contribution to local life in its priorities (*Partnership Working and Community Leadership*).
- Organisations that engage volunteers are clear that the benefits of volunteering extend far beyond its financial value.
- Volunteering brings multiple health benefits to the individual volunteer and those they support. (*Volunteering and Health: Evidence of Impact and Implications for Policy and Practice: Institute of Volunteering Research*)
- It contributes to individuals on a pathway to employment with new skills, experience and confidence building. (*A Gateway to Work? The role of Volunteer Centres in Supporting the Link between Volunteering and Employability: Institute of Volunteering Research*)
- It makes a major difference to people affected by issues such as exclusion and mental health problems helping individuals become connected to others and feel more self-confident. (*Mental Health, Volunteering and Social Inclusion: Community Service Volunteers*)
- It supports the rehabilitation of ex-offenders and helps them to make a positive contribution in their local community. (*Volunteers Can, Towards a Volunteering Strategy to Reduce Offending: National Offender Management Service*)
- It can make a major contribution to employees in terms of personal development and new skills from volunteering and contribute to success in business. (*The Business Case for Being a Responsible Business: Business in the Community*)

## 5. ORGANISATIONS THAT INVOLVE VOLUNTEERS

- A broad range of formal volunteering activity takes place across Lancaster district within VCFS and public sector bodies particularly, alongside individuals carrying out informal volunteering or "neighbourliness" in their local communities.

- *Lancaster District CVS's* database of 250+ groups - from which its calculation of 867,301 annual volunteer hours is based - gives a picture of a varied local formal volunteering landscape across urban and rural areas in the District.
- Volunteer involving organisations range from small, informal and community based VCFS groups to larger staffed service providers, the area's two universities and statutory bodies such as *Lancashire County Council*.
- Organisations that involve volunteers range from village halls, sports and recreation clubs, schools, heritage societies, charity shops, arts and drama groups, health service providers, faith bodies, equalities, disabilities, campaigning and black and minority ethnic community groups, housing bodies, recycling projects, environmental, advice, advocacy and animal welfare groups, universities, those working with offenders, peoples affected by substance misuse, international development work, social care organisations (from self-help to service providers), social enterprises, community centres, tenants groups, and organisations working with children, young and older people.
- *Lancaster VB* placed 1,326 adults with volunteer involving organisations between 2008 and 2012: 75% with VCFS groups, 14% Councils and NHS, 6% and other e.g. Police and 5% Commercial.
- The majority of its VCFS placements were with organisations for health and social care, with over half for work with the elderly.
- The list of nominating bodies (each with multiple nominees) for *Lancaster District CVS's* Volunteer Awards 2011 gives a flavour of the diverse range of local organisations that involve volunteers: *Lancaster and District Conservation Volunteers, Lancaster Homeless Action, Morecambe and District Junior Anglers, Slyne with Hest Football Club, Ashton Hall Restoration Project, Thumbprint, NCBI, Friendship Centre, Animal Care, Lancashire County Council Volunteer Service, One Voice, Signposts, Help Direct, Hua Xian Chinese Society.*
- The District can point to many examples of innovatory work with volunteers across age ranges, including hard to reach individuals and communities.
- Organisations such as *Thumbprint* have extensive experience of providing a positive supported volunteering environment as part of its services around employability, working with its service users, learning disabled people.
- Other organisations offering supported volunteering provision includes *Piccadilly Garden* and *Lancashire County Council*.
- *Lancashire Drug and Alcohol Services' DRIVE* (Delivering Recovery in Volunteering Environments) offers opportunities including volunteering in its community focussed work with adults recovering from substance misuse.

- *Lancaster and District YMCA's Yz Up* Project has been highlighted by *Lancashire LINK* as an example of a project that benefits both its ex-offender volunteers and the young people they work with at risk of offending. (*More than a Sentence: Investigating Mental Health in Prison: Lancashire Link*)
- *Lancashire LINK* stressed the need for more of this type of provision in its ability to reach, through its voluntary offer, those otherwise at risk of exclusion and – in this example – of offending.
- Volunteering is increasingly been viewed as a key resource in asset based community development work that seeks to build on existing strengths in communities and address disadvantage.
- There are opportunities to build on these innovations in the further development of volunteering opportunities to different sections of the community in the District.
- Other possible development areas such include encouraging employers across sectors to support their staff taking up volunteering (i.e. employer supported volunteering).

## 6. INFORMATION ON VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES

- The District has a number of information channels, particularly online, about volunteering opportunities for members of the public to self-refer, from websites of individual groups and those that advertise others' vacancies.
- Individual organisations seeking self-referrals from volunteers range from large, staffed service providers e.g. *University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust* to smaller volunteer led bodies like *Lancaster and District Conservation Volunteers*.
- Websites advertising others' vacancies include *One Voice's Changing Lives* which provides information and contact details for 120+ organisations offering volunteering opportunities with, where available, website links. This site is currently being redeveloped.
- The volunteer-run *Virtual Lancaster Community Resources and Visitor Guide* also provides information to the public on local volunteering opportunities.
- A recent visit to the site provided information/links on opportunities for potential volunteers from 13 VCFS and public bodies.
- The groups listed illustrate the range of local organisations that encourage self-referrals for volunteering opportunities: *Lancashire County Council Volunteer Service, Lancaster University Volunteering Unit (LUVU), Lancaster District CVS, Animal Care, North Lancashire CAB, Furniture Matters, Lancaster Homeless Action, Lancaster and District Conservation Volunteers, St John's Ambulance First Responders, Virtual Lancaster, Leonard Cheshire, Direct Payment Support Group, WRVS*.

- *Virtual Lancaster* also provides a link to *Youth Net's Do It* website, the most widely accessed national database for advertising local volunteering opportunities and used by most of the 260+ Volunteer Centre (VC) s in England.
- *Lancaster District CVS's* website includes links to *Help Direct*, *Lancashire County Council*, *Volunteering Lancashire* (a County wide network for volunteer development organisations), *vInspired* and *Do It* website.
- *vInspired*, a national body, had information on 5 local opportunities for 14-25 year olds it had uploaded to *Do It* –plus a link to the main site.
- *Lancaster City Council's* website has a volunteering page with information on becoming involved in local "litter picks", neighbourhood watch, having a say in your local area – and links to *Help Direct*, *Lancaster District CVS* and *Do It*.
- *Timebank's* national database lists 29 local volunteering opportunities which were extracted from the *Do It* site.
- A recent search of the *Do It website's* (linked in a number of sites referred to above) for opportunities within 5 miles of Lancaster yielded a list of 57 volunteering placements offered by 13 VCFS groups, a mix of local and national charities.
- This figure is low compared to most neighbouring districts in the Lancashire sub-region searched at the same time e.g. Blackpool 339, Preston 197, West Lancashire 161, Burnley 197 and Blackburn 201.
- All the areas listed above have a local VC\* or staff within a CVS with a volunteer development role that includes uploading information on vacancies onto *Do It\*\**.
- The recently closed *Lancaster VB* maintained its own database of local volunteering opportunities and did not use the *Do It* site.
- *Help Direct's* work has also included *Timebank* development in the District whilst its website continues to provide information on volunteering opportunities – 40+ on a recent search - with a telephone helpline offering assistance with signposting.
- *Help Direct* also offers a range of its own in-house community volunteer opportunities through its website.

## 7. WHO VOLUNTEERS AND WHY?

- UK figures for formal volunteering (once a year) in 2010-11 show that employed adults formed the largest group at 42% followed by economically inactive at 34% (*NCVO UK Civil Society Almanac 2012*)

\*VCs are local development agencies affiliated to *Volunteering England* and, in many cases, located within CVS. \*\*The national *Do It* site also includes information uploaded by other organisations including national charities.



- *Volunteering England's* survey of VCs in 2010 -11 found that unemployed people formed the largest grouping of its volunteers (31%) followed by employed (24%) and students (23%). (*Volunteering England Annual Membership Return 2010-11, Institute for Volunteering Research*)
- *Lancaster VB's* volunteer characteristics between 2008 and 12 included: 46% unemployed/ 20% long-term sick/disabled, 12% retired and 11% students.
- The Bureau's strong links with unemployed and hard to reach clients reflected its working links with Jobcentre Plus (the body with most referrals - 26% -over the Bureau's lifespan) which saw a gradual movement away from work with retired people.
- It had also developed strong links with bodies such as Lancaster Adult College, Mental Health Team, Children's Centres (for young mums) as well as Social Prescribing Services.
- The District currently lacks a mechanism for bringing together knowledge, intelligence/ statistics from the range of organisations that engage volunteers.
- This becomes most significant when seeking to identify and address gaps in provision and access to different sections of the community.
- However, given the breadth of volunteer involving organisations (and snapshots such as nominees for Lancaster District CVS's annual volunteering awards) it is clear that volunteering is taken up by a wide range of ages and backgrounds.
- *Volunteering England* sets out a range of reasons why individuals coming forward to volunteer.
- This includes those who view volunteering as a stepping stone e.g. gaining self-confidence, skills or enhanced employment prospects to those give something back by contributing their time and skills to help their local community.
- Alongside different motivations for volunteering there are also a range of potential barriers for different sections of the community.
- *Volunteering England* highlights areas like CRB checks and a lack of clarity regarding the impact of volunteering on an individual's benefits as issues which can inhibit organisations' involving volunteers or individuals coming forwards to volunteer. (*Free Volunteering From Red Tape: Volunteering England*)
- Feedback received from local VCFS groups during preparation of this report highlighted fears of those in receipt of benefits for illness or disability about the impact on benefits should they volunteer and have their "fitness for work" reviewed.
- Other factors such as providing a quality volunteering environment and understanding the needs of different types of volunteers can also impact on an inclusive approach to work with volunteers.

## VOLUNTEER CASE STUDIES

### **MARK WALSH** VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR 2012 ( LANCASTER DISTRICT CVS AWARD)

Mark works the equivalent of full - time hours on a voluntary basis through the motivation and passion he derives from his own experience of being in recovery – and making recovery a reality for everyone he comes into contact with. He is a volunteer within *Inward House Supported Housing Project* where he does daily drug and alcohol testing of the residents. He provides emotional and practical support to the residents. He takes the lead in weekly residents meetings. He resolves issues within the house and takes on admin duties. He is also a volunteer within *Journey 2 Recover (J2R) and Addaction* in Lancaster and is involved with the wider recovery community activities currently being organised through *J2 R* in Lancaster and Morecambe. He attended a 4 day training course facilitated by *Addaction* and *J2R* which has given him the skills and knowledge to support his volunteer role. Mark provides a vital, personal link between residents and staff. He is trusted and respected by both residents and staff alike. He takes the workload off paid staff by working with the residents and taking on admin duties. In doing this he allows more people to maintain recovery than otherwise would have been possible. He has led by example in on going recovery and has been an inspiration to residents. His voluntary work is not just within these two treatment providers. He is active within the recovery community and is involved in the current moves to establish a larger scale community spirit through establishing activities, social events and support networks for all people who find themselves clean and dry. This is a time where many people relapse back into their old lives but the work of Mark and his peers is vital in reducing this terrible statistic and there are many people across the area who owe their on-going personal recovery to Mark.

(Nominated by ***Journey 2 Recovery.***)

### **KYRAN WILKINSON** YOUNG VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR 2012

As a member of *Timebanks* Kyran has given over 50 hours of his time to assist other members by putting out and returning wheelie bins, dog walking, shopping, gardening and small painting jobs. Kyran has also helped at community events organised by *Help Direct* and *Age UK* as well as providing invaluable assistance in the office by photocopying, archiving and assisting staff with IT presentations. He has contributed to the promotion of old fashioned community spirit giving the recipient of his volunteering a sense that someone cares, befriending people as well as bringing peace of mind through getting jobs done. Kyran engages effectively with people from all walks of life, is always reliable and goes “the extra mile” to help someone if he can. He is not only a good ambassador for volunteering – helping to promote health and wellbeing in the community – but also a great ambassador for young people, helping to break down barriers and misconceptions of youth in the community.

(Nominated by ***Help Direct.***)

## 8. SUPPORT FOR INDIVIDUALS INTERESTED IN VOLUNTEERING

- *North Lancs Social Enterprise Network* is in the process of launching a new *Timebank* project - a scheme where an individual's volunteering time entitles them to receive volunteer help in return.
- Organisations such as *LUVU* and *University of Cumbria Student Union Volunteering* operate well developed brokerage services for students.
- As listed above, a range of organisations in the District publicise in-house opportunities through their own and/or others' websites.
- Since the closure of *Lancaster VB* in March 2012, there is no organisation providing an initial point of contact and brokerage for potential volunteers across the District.
- Brokerage involves holding and promoting information on local opportunities through links to local organisations and working with potential volunteers to match their interests and then refer them to appropriate opportunities.
- It can be valuable as a service where an individual lacks confidence or is unsure of how best to fulfil their individual aspirations or needs in relation to local volunteering opportunities.
- *Volunteering England* has recently voiced its growing concern from national research over the impact of reduced government funding for volunteer brokerage and the potential closure of some of England's 263 local VCs - which perform a broadly similar brokerage role to Lancaster VB. ("*Loss of Core Funding Threatens VC Network*": *Volunteering England*)
- This was highlighted in terms of the potential loss of VCs' contribution to the local community, averaging 1,798 annual enquiries to volunteer involving organisations and 326 placements per district.
- Recent feedback from ex users of *Lancaster VB* gathered as part of work on this report included positive messages about the value of volunteering and the VB's support - for relatively modest funding. (*Help Direct: Volunteers Survey May 2012*)
- *Help Direct* has also set out a number of case studies illustrating the benefits and impact of volunteering from users of *Lancaster VB*. (*Help Direct: Volunteer Bureau Business Case March 2011*)

## 9. SUPPORT FOR VOLUNTEER INVOLVING ORGANISATIONS

- *Volunteering infrastructure* is a term describing organisations and services that:
  - ◆ encourage people to volunteer for other agencies
  - ◆ support these agencies in the development of high quality volunteering programmes and opportunities
  - ◆ act as a voice for volunteering.
- *Volunteering England* sets out six core functions for its network of local VCs: brokerage; good practice development; development of volunteering opportunities; policy response and campaigning; strategic development and volunteering.
- The District has a mix of organisations that contribute to this range of support to volunteer involving organisations.
- Current channels for promoting local organisation's volunteering opportunities are set out in an earlier section.
- *Lancaster District CVS* provides a range of volunteer management good practice training to VIOs alongside running a volunteer co-ordinators network, an annual volunteer awards programme and providing a broad range of information and advice to the VCFS.
- The District has a number of VCFS groups with specialist expertise in areas such as equal opportunities and working with particular groups within the community which are relevant to organisations seeking to provide volunteering opportunities as accessibly possible.
- Some volunteer involving organisations have considerable experience and expertise around in-house recruiting, training and supported volunteering.
- There are also VCFS groups that are able to provide support in areas like CRB checks – a service previously provided by *Lancaster VB* as part of its brokerage service - to organisations in the process of taking on a new volunteer.
- As described above, there is no general volunteer brokerage service, whose role would include referrals to volunteer involving organisations, following the closure of *Lancaster VB*.

## 10. RESOURCES

- Organisations that work with volunteers across the public and VCF sectors are facing considerable resource pressures from the current financial environment.
- Bodies such as *National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO)* draw attention to the impact of cuts to public spending on the resourcing of the VCFS (*NCVO Counting the Cuts*).

- *Capacitybuilders' Fifth Survey of Local Third Sector Providers 2011* highlights the particular challenges facing infrastructure organisations such as VCs which support volunteering at a local level.
- This includes continuing high demand for their services alongside major reductions in funding from the public sector, charitable trusts and others.
- This is taking place at a time when Government policy has a strong emphasis on volunteering and the benefits it brings to the local community.
- One of the key messages from bodies such as *Volunteering England* is that whilst volunteering brings major social and economic benefits to local areas there are financial costs attached to the provision of a supportive, safe, inclusive and good practice environment for volunteering.
- For volunteer involving organisations this includes costs in areas such as volunteer management.
- For volunteering infrastructure organisations there are costs to providing brokerage, training and broader co-ordination and development services.
- Continued pressure on resources does create challenges for the further development of a thriving volunteering environment.
- Collaboration is an important part of making the most of existing volunteer development provision whether through a single organisation as lead or joint working between a partnership of delivery bodies.
- This report has been prepared following the closure of Lancaster VB with an opportunity for further investment to support volunteering in the District.
- Whilst there are a range of exciting opportunities for the further development of volunteering there is also a risk that without additional investment gaps in support such as brokerage provision may undermine the existing work of volunteer involving organisations.

## 11. OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

### BUILDING ON VOLUNTEERING IN THE DISTRICT

- Lancaster has an active volunteering sector with many individuals giving their time freely and bringing major social and economic value to the District both formally and informally.
- There are a range of VCFS and public sector organisations with considerable experience and expertise in working with volunteers from different sections of the community including work with excluded groups.

- There are also a number of organisations providing support to organisations that involve volunteers in their work.
- This provides a foundation for developing further, opportunities for formal volunteering across the District including extending the “volunteering offer” and enabling more people to become involved.
- This will help maintain and enhance the considerable social and economic value that volunteering brings to the life of the District.
- Volunteering is increasingly forming part of innovatory approaches to engage those at risk of exclusion.
- Investment – as emphasised in the previous section - and development work to support and develop the local volunteering environment should include encouraging provision that reaches out to those who may otherwise not be able to participate in the life of their local communities.
- This includes brokerage and ensuring that there is sufficient specialised training for volunteer involving organisations e.g. working with ex-offender as volunteers.
- Opportunities for development work also includes the increased engagement of employers across sectors in supporting their employees to take up volunteering.

### INFORMATION AND BROKERAGE

- There is a range of useful information on formal volunteering opportunities across the District.
- However, this information is often fragmented and there is little co-ordination across the District in areas such as publicity and promotional campaigns.
- There is also currently a lack of a mechanism for bringing together information on volunteer participation or its local impact - including where there are gaps in access.
- The District lacks a single point of contact for individual volunteering enquires and/or a shared gateway, whereby a member of the public can access consistent information on volunteering opportunities.
- Since the closure of Lancaster VB there is no local brokerage service offering advice and matching individual’s interests with opportunities.
- This may not be an issue for some organisations that rely on self-referrals provided they are able to promote their opportunities.
- However, it may be a barrier for those individuals in need of advice or guidance about appropriate opportunities and for volunteer involving organisations with limited resources to publicise opportunities.
- Informal volunteering or “neighbourliness” is a core feature of healthy and positive local communities.

- The publicising and promotion of formal volunteering should also acknowledge the value of being a good neighbour and that there are many in our local communities in Lancaster District that already “walk the extra mile” for those in need of help.

#### PARTNERSHIP WORKING

- Improving co-ordination in publicity and the gathering of baseline information on volunteer participation were amongst a number of recommendations for action within Lancaster District Volunteering Strategy 2009 commissioned through the Local Strategic Partnership.
- The lack of follow up to the Strategy highlights the need for a more joined up approach to volunteering at both delivery and strategic levels.
- This will enable maximum benefit to be achieved from different activities with volunteers already underway and the effective use of further investment in support for local volunteering following the closure of Lancaster VB.
- It will facilitate improvements in areas such as access to volunteering for different groups through better working links between current volunteer involving organisations - including sharing information on participation - and support evidenced based investment by funding bodies where it is needed most.
- It will also help ensure that potential barriers to volunteering such as perceptions around the impact of volunteering on state benefits can be challenged - e.g. through the active involvement of bodies such as *Jobcentre Plus* in a partnership approach to volunteering that includes effective communication/ information sharing.
- An enhanced approach to partnership working should include representatives of the VCFS, public and private sectors:
  - ◆ VCFS organisations make a vital contribution to volunteering through their wide range of activities in the community
  - ◆ the public sector has a key role in supporting volunteering through its range of direct and indirect engagement with volunteers and support for volunteer involving organisations
  - ◆ the private sector makes important contributions in cash and kind to the work of the VCFS and has a key role in potential development areas such as employer supported volunteering.
- Existing strategic partnership arrangements and sectoral networks should be assessed for their capacity to contribute to a shared vision and strategy for volunteering in the District.

## 12. ACTION AREAS

It is **recommended** that resources should be invested in two broad areas to support existing work and the further development of volunteering in the District including the “volunteer offer” and its reach across communities:

### 1. Volunteer Brokerage and Co-ordination

a. Providing an accessible drop-in facility for members of the public, offering initial guidance and support to individuals interested in volunteering and referring them on to appropriate opportunities in local volunteer involving organisations.

b. Working with volunteer involving organisations to:

- Enhance information on opportunities available to potential volunteers including uploading information onto *Do It* and improving access to/ and links between existing sites that advertise opportunities.
- Produce volunteer information/ promotional information which can be used/ adapted by individual organisations.
- Develop a shared brand for local volunteering which - whilst recognising the independence of individual groups - points to a consistent, collective approach to volunteering in the district (linking with bodies like *Volunteering Lancashire*).
- Supporting co-operation between relevant volunteer development /support organisations to maximise existing resources and address gaps, including training, networks, good practice and practical support e.g. CRB checks.

c. Using improved working links between organisations to support centralised intelligence gathering on local participation in volunteering including take-up, gaps and impact. This will enable the effective future use of resources for targeted development and promotional work with sections of the community not accessing volunteering.

*These steps will create a more visible and coherent “shared gateway” into volunteering for members of the public, characterised by access to consistent, quality information available through a range of organisations. Brokerage provision should be developed with reference to Volunteering England’s model, which is used by 263 locally based Volunteer Centres in England – including provision in other parts of Lancashire.*

### 2. Partnership Working

a. Organisations across public, private and VCF sectors signing up to a *local volunteering commitment* which sets out a working protocol for improved co-operation between organisations whose work impacts on volunteering and volunteer involving organisations. This will raise the profile of volunteering as well as enabling improvement in practical areas from communication and addressing “live” issues e.g. benefits changes to getting the most from local volunteering promotional campaigns e.g. shared publicity, use of partners’ premises/ facilities.

b. This should be led by senior partner representatives across public, private and VCF sectors making use of existing strategic partnership arrangements and include the appointment of a “volunteering champion” for the district.

c. It will provide a foundation for further volunteer development work including:

- creating a more enabling environment for employer supported volunteering across public, private and VCF sectors
- encouraging sponsorship and increased investment in volunteering.