

PARTICIPATION

EQUALITY



ACTS

Volunteering In Monmouthshire

RECOGNITION

SUPPORT

Monmouthshire A County That Serves - Draft Volunteering Strategy 2016-2019



monmouthshire
sir fynwy

It's even more than the place, it's the people.

Elected Member Foreword

Monmouthshire's people are our greatest asset and are vital to our success as an organisation and county moving forward in such challenging times. We must support, enable and value our people, both on and off our payroll, to meet the changing demands of our organisation and society. The volume of support we receive from volunteers contributes extensively to the priorities of Monmouthshire County Council, so it is vital that we create the conditions for volunteerism to thrive. This involves investing in our both our staff and volunteers, to equip our people with the tools and support they need to flourish.

We believe that through unlocking the potential in our rich social capital, it will allow Monmouthshire County Council and our remarkable communities to work even closer together. This relationship is something we have been focused on and working hard to improve, helping our people to be real contributors to solutions. This follows the work driven by Monmouthshire's Single Integrated Plan and its focus on creating sustainable and resilient communities.

As part of developing Volunteering in Monmouthshire, we have been searching for global best practice, looking at expertise in both the public and third sectors as well as listening to our volunteers. This has allowed us to develop a considered approach to our Volunteering Strategy. We have already achieved much success working in partnership with volunteers, there is a lot to be taken from these successes and they have significantly influenced the development of the strategy. This varied learning allows us to create an approach which is appropriate for Monmouthshire.

The Volunteering Strategy aims to provide a cohesive approach to volunteering, which will bring people together from across our organisation and our communities. Highlighting our priorities, approach and support for our volunteers. This draft strategy provides a basis for us to continue existing and open up new discussions with our people on the proposals. We will seek to progress ideas, develop current and new approaches and feedback on all aspects of the strategy and action plan. We aim to provide a far reaching, comprehensive and varied consultation and engagement process. Therefore there is also an opportunity for you to comment by utilising the link below. We look forward to hearing your thoughts.

<http://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/training-and-volunteering>

Cllr Phil Murphy
Cabinet Member for Resources

Volunteer Foreword

What does Volunteering mean to you and how do you see the Volunteering Strategy helping volunteers in Monmouthshire?

Volunteering for me can be seen as falling into two categories; as a huge benefit to the individual and an opportunity or a hindrance, as it can take up a lot of your time. It's about helping people and my biggest impact now includes mentoring and supporting other volunteers, which for me is giving back because I have been where they are. Volunteering is hugely beneficial to be engaged in and can enable someone to find their niche and understand what they can offer.

If I didn't have initial contact with the Mon Leisure team and become engaged in volunteering things could have been very different for me. From my start seven years ago volunteering and the support from the team has given me skills, knowledge and development. This has contributed to me becoming a well-rounded sports development individual and has opened up opportunities that I wouldn't have had access to. Simply having people who believe in you and your ability to lead as well as the mental support has had a huge impact on me. It's been support and direction through some tough times, but has given me a positive profile and had a huge impact on me personally.

For me the Volunteering Strategy is crucial to bring together the way the organisation can support volunteers. The benefit of the strategy is also about bringing an organised and recognised programme with buy-in from MCC. This changes from just getting volunteers involved to showing a clear commitment to their wellbeing, development and goals. It's worth noting that many of the volunteers are the future workforce and we should invest in them.

The strategy shows a clear plan, right from the top level to grass roots for volunteer development. When Volunteers can see they are being valued, it's key to keeping volunteers engaged. It puts Monmouthshire ahead of the game and shows you what a complete package you can offer a volunteer. I hope it will encourage the whole workforce to think about how they can support the volunteer journey.

I think volunteers can help the strategy by making sure it's not a fixed idea and has maximum effect over a number of years and a sustained period of time. It's worth engaging volunteers in the strategy development as it will allow it to evolve, keep it fluid and effective over the whole organisation. We must have a journey together; from strategy to delivery, it's important for you to think how can we help volunteers and also how can they help us.

I agree with the models and priorities of the strategy and what it is trying to achieve. I know that my opportunity was through someone I knew, so publicising opportunities and the training available clearly to everyone would be a benefit. Development of volunteers is another positive to keeping them engaged in the long term, so the meetings and support are needed. The support given makes sure volunteers are coming back and the impact made is greater. Training and opportunities allow you to build a great CV and makes the volunteering package complete.

Ieuan Coombes – Volunteer with Mon Leisure



Executive Summary

The Volunteering Strategy and Action Plan 2016 - 2019 sets out the ambitions of Monmouthshire County Council to enable and develop volunteering across the county, and to encompass support by partnerships across voluntary, public and private sectors. The strategy's development was led by Monmouthshire County Council in collaboration with Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations, Wales Council for Voluntary Action and contributions from a cross sector working party.

The strategy and action plan is an integral part of the [People and Organisational Development Strategy](#) 2014 - 2017 where it states that MCC will 'enhance volunteering development and co-ordination'. The strategy directly supports Monmouthshire's Single Integrated Plan's key vision of building Sustainable and Resilient Communities. We feel that volunteering can make a positive impact on all of the priorities outlined in the Single Integrated Plan; nobody is left behind, People are confident, capable and involved.

Monmouthshire County Council's Volunteering Strategy recognises the positive impact of Volunteering for individuals, communities and organisations. The Impact of volunteering is far reaching and highlights an increased sense of pride and inclusion, the ability to offer provision not previously possible and demonstrates community collaboration to tackle challenges. The ability and opportunity to work together with the tools, passion and experience that an effective social network can unlock is an exciting prospect and one this Strategy encompasses.

We have a long and healthy history of volunteering and local social action in Monmouthshire. For ten years our volunteer drivers have been supporting the Grass Routes Transport Service, helping to tackle social isolation in rural communities. Mon Leisure are supported by seventy Sports Ambassadors, delivering activities directly to their own communities. Volunteers are active and effective in many departments and communities throughout Monmouthshire. This highlights that within Monmouthshire there is already a sense of civic pride and reinforces our examples of Global, National and local activism. Globally we are an active member of the Cities of Service coalition, sharing our learning with our counterparts in the United States. Nationally we support and learn from partners across the United Kingdom; we have been part of Cities of Service volunteer network sessions hosted by the European capital city for volunteering [Team London](#), as well as presenting our programme to the Wales Policy Network. Locally we are active members and currently chair the cross sector Monmouthshire Volunteering group, all examples of how we are helping to shape the future of and sustainability of volunteering.

Our vision in Monmouthshire County Council is to further enrich our county, to assist people within our communities take ownership and to create the conditions that enable people to help each other. We want to establish and embed a movement that mobilises our strong social capital to respond to the priorities identified by our communities.

At local, national and global levels volunteering is respected as a key mechanism by which communities can be strengthened. Nationally this has been highlighted by Welsh Government's Volunteering Policy Supporting Communities, Changing Lives (2015). The policy states;

'The Welsh Government recognises the benefits in providing funding and support to volunteering. The Welsh Government values volunteering as an important expression of citizenship and as an essential component of democracy.'

Acknowledging and recognising the effectiveness, strength and diversity of our communities, we want to create the environment that will enable all those who wish to take an active role in Monmouthshire life, developing a supportive culture. Monmouthshire County Council's strategy will address the challenges that were evidenced using national research data, in addition to local volunteer consultation data supported by volunteer and support staff focus groups.

Our Journey

Monmouthshire - 'A County That Serves'

With volunteering being well established across Monmouthshire it was key to understand how volunteers were currently making an impact and where we could support further development. This initial mapping exercise is pictured on page 7.

The delivery programme behind the Volunteering Strategy '[Monmouthshire - A County That Serves](#)' has been created with vision to invest in and mobilise our communities in order to add value to the delivery of public service in Monmouthshire. The programme received support from the Invest to Save report passed in March 2015, a significant



strategic investment in volunteering by Monmouthshire County Council. This foresight and horizon scanning means we are ahead of other local authorities in Wales in the way that we are developing cohesive and sustainable approaches to volunteering. It is a vehicle to drive the strategy and associated plan, Monmouthshire ACTS aims to support and develop volunteering in Monmouthshire, enabling volunteers to share talent, energy, passion and skills - making a measurable impact and contributing to our core purpose of creating sustainable and resilient communities.

Effective partnerships with third sector volunteer centre, Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations and other voluntary organisations are examples of the significant developments within Monmouthshire. We have been recognised for our sector leading practice by the Wales Council for Voluntary Action for our partnership approach and have been asked to support a current work stream focussing on volunteering within Local Authorities. A distinct example of our the third sector partnership is the recruitment of a 'Volunteer Coordinator' at Mardy Park Resource Centre, collaboration between a Monmouthshire Council department - Changing Practice, Changing Lives and third sector partner Community Connections Befriending Scheme. With the experience and infrastructure in a befriending volunteer programme being present in the third sector it has been mutually beneficial for the partnership to develop.

Monmouthshire ACTS sets out to provide robust and coherent guidance on engaging volunteers in the organisation, focus is placed on how we provide volunteers with the volume of support they require. Preliminary work has been with individual departments supporting volunteers who have shown ambition and to further develop their volunteer programmes. Support around 'Role Profile' development, safe recruitment and impact measurement has been key to the programme achieving initial outcomes.

We have benefited considerably from the experience of our colleagues in the third sector, seeking out best practice locally and also globally with our coalition to the Cities of Service programme. This has allowed us to shape a programme that will benefit our volunteers and the communities they serve immediately and into the future. As a local authority we understand our corporate responsibility to our community and we aim to offer valuable and worthwhile volunteering opportunities to support volunteers and employability development.

Vision and Key Objectives

Monmouthshire County Council aims to assist, support and enable volunteers to make a measurable impact, contributing to our core purpose of creating sustainable and resilient communities.

We believe volunteers are vital to the development and future success of our communities. Volunteers bring optimism and enthusiasm, different opinions and points of view, create positive impact and share diverse skills and experiences that lead to enhanced outcomes for our communities.

Key Objectives: -

1. To develop a clear, consistent and collaborative approach to volunteering across Monmouthshire County Council.
2. Promote volunteering in Monmouthshire by improving the profile, quality and range of volunteering opportunities.
3. Increase the level of support, training and recognition for volunteers and volunteer coordinators.
4. Ensure volunteer impact is measured and aligned to the priorities valued by communities.
5. Support the development and delivery of a 'Council of the Future'.

The accompanying action plan 2016 - 2019 is based on findings from the initial mapping exercise (pictured below) and consultation carried out by Monmouthshire ACTS. The actions have been considered by the steering group in order to determine key priority tasks to be completed. The action plan includes additional resources which will be required to deliver the strategy.

Volunteer Mapping

Current Volunteers



Co-ordinators

MCC **58**

External **27**

Outcomes



Toolkit
100%



Network
100%



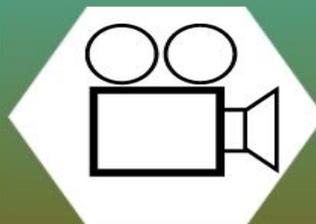
Publicity
80%

Development Priorities

Training



Digital Outcomes



Support and Brokering



What do we mean by Volunteering?

The definition commonly accepted across the UK and used by the Welsh Government is:

'Volunteering is an important expression of citizenship and an essential component of democracy. It is the commitment of time and energy for the benefit of society and the community and can take many forms. It is undertaken freely and by choice, without concern for financial gain.'

In Monmouthshire County Council we believe,

'Volunteering to us is the sharing of one's time, skills and experience to benefit others or the wider community without financial gain. Essentially it's 'People helping people'.

There are further definitions on the different forms of volunteering provided in Appendix 3.

Key principles of volunteering

There are five key principles we promote in order to enable volunteering to take place in its many forms.

Support - Excellent support, management and training for volunteers is essential for wellbeing and retention.

Choice - Volunteering is a free choice made by an individual to offer their time and support, there is no contractual agreement but the volunteer does have rights and responsibilities.

Equality - Volunteering should be open to all, welcoming and supporting diversity to promote equality.

Recognition – Volunteers offer their time without financial gain to contribute to personal, organisational, economic or community benefit but should receive appropriate and timely recognition.

Participation - Volunteering is a way in which individuals can participate and shape the activities of their community.

Why do we need a Volunteering Strategy?

Volunteering is at the heart of community development across the world. It encourages people to be responsible citizens and provides them with an environment where they can be engaged, share their skills and make a difference. It enhances solidarity, social capital and quality of life in a society. It can serve as a means of social inclusion and integration.

This is a living breathing document which provides the robust framework to support volunteering in Monmouthshire however, it must be adaptable enough to evolve and meet the ever changing needs of our volunteers and communities. Therefore the Action Plan is written on a twelve month basis and reviewed & evaluated in order to prioritise the work streams that are current and necessitated. The strategy and associated action plan gives us focus, clarity and targets, with the aim to thoroughly embed volunteering within the county.

Benefits of Volunteering and its many Forms

In Monmouthshire we believe that the positive impact of volunteering can benefit everyone, there are personal, social, economic or community benefit reasons why community involvement is key to future success.

Individuals

- A journey of personal development, learning new and sharing existing skills, increased confidence and sense of purpose, reducing isolation,
- Feeling of pride, involvement, shared intrinsic motivation and making a difference.
- Benefitting from training opportunities and potential accredited qualifications.
- Making new friends and social network, exploring and shaping your community more.
- Increased employability, trailing new careers paths, gaining new experiences, and building a CV.
- Improves health and well-being by encouraging individuals to become more active, providing opportunities for rehabilitation from illness.
- The positive feeling of 'giving back' to your community.

Communities

- Building sustainable, resilient and networked communities. With better integration of community members across generations and from diverse backgrounds, building understanding and reducing friction.
- Increased skills and confidence affecting employability by developing routes into employment which has an economic benefit.
- Increases inclusion and activism at a local level, with increased community spirit.
- Improves the health and wellbeing of the community with less reliance on services such as health.

Voluntary or Public Sector Organisations

- Creates conditions for collaboration and reduces the distance between the organisation and the local community.
- Allows the organisation to make more informed decisions based on the needs of the community.
- Enhances current service delivery by adding value and skills.

- Allows the possibility for growth and delivery of services in more innovative ways.

Employer Supported Volunteering

- Develop staff skills, wellbeing, customer and community knowledge.
- Improves local reputation and customer loyalty.
- Supports staff development strategies that may be in place.
- Meets corporate social responsibility objectives which supports the business ambitions.

Globally, Nationally and Locally.

Demographic trends – People are living longer, therefore challenges like social isolation and health pose threats. The introduction of volunteering programmes for the elderly have proved successful changing the mind set from ‘service user’ to ‘volunteer with skills and experiences to share’.



An example of this can be found in this video entitled ‘Dorina Hits all the right notes’ - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KYYtZhkMCy0&feature=youtu.be>

Public service budgets decreasing – Facing economic pressures with demand rising Monmouthshire is looking at different ways of delivering services in collaboration with the third sector and the community. Volunteers could play a part in these developments with the ethos of ‘People helping people’.

Direct vs Indirect Volunteering

We are lucky to be supported by volunteers in a variety of different roles across our organisation and communities. It is important to understand the volunteers supporting us can be described as two distinct groups: -

Direct volunteers are those that are enrolled on official volunteering programmes developed by Monmouthshire County Council directly under the control, supervision and therefore insurance of the council.

Indirect volunteers are those that may be contributing to our priorities whom we would be supporting however, the group does not fall under the control and therefore insurance of Monmouthshire County Council. An example of an indirect volunteer would be someone volunteering with a Friends group that develops and maintains one of our green spaces.

We value both groups of volunteers and the contributions they make to Monmouthshire, and it’s important that we understand the support needs both direct and indirect volunteers. There is a role for Monmouthshire County Council to ensure that we support alongside the expertise that our third sector colleagues GAVO offer our indirect groups in Monmouthshire. As the future of public sector delivery changes there has been a rise in the amount of indirect volunteering groups that are supporting us as an organisation, we must be able to adapt to meet these changes and provide appropriate levels of support and guidance.

Cities of Service - Impact Volunteering

Monmouthshire CC has been highlighted as a leading organisation and asked to be part of the well-established [Cities of Service](#) coalition joining officially in July 2015. We are one of only 9 Authorities in the UK and the only authority in Wales. Our aim was to identify support from current global best practice of social action within public sector organisations.

The **Cities of Service coalition** assists and empowers mayors and city chief executives to activate impact volunteering initiatives – city-led, citizen-powered programs that target specific needs and seek measurable outcomes. Cities or in our case counties, use established, proven tools and methods to engage community members in addressing needs such as revitalising



CITIES OF SERVICE
.ORG

neighbourhoods and supporting youth and education. Residents are recast as co-producers of solutions and work side by side with local government to create real and lasting change.

With comprehensive strategic planning, meaningful partnerships, cross-sector collaboration, and best practices, local government leaders in the Cities of Service coalition design and implement service strategies to address myriad local challenges and engage city residents who want to volunteer and improve their communities.

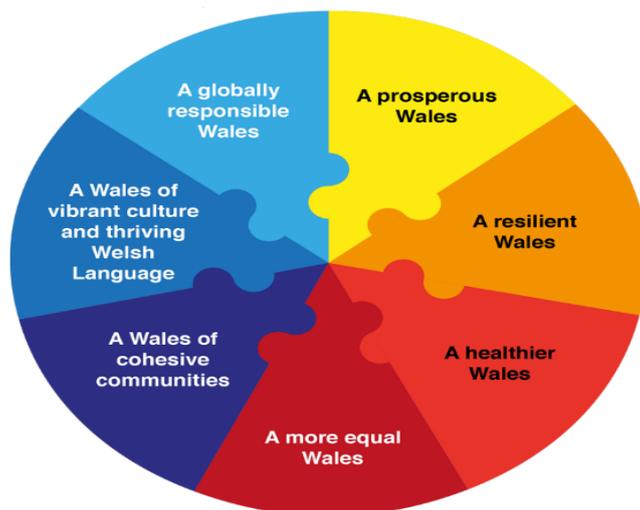
Founded in 2009 by New York City Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, the Cities of Service coalition is comprised of more than 200 cities in the United States and United Kingdom, representing more than 50 million people in 43 states, and more than 10 million in the UK.

How does Cities of Service relate to Monmouthshire?

In Monmouthshire we want to make an impact on community priorities by supporting, enabling and mobilising volunteers to take action. From research into global best practice we found our ethos aligns directly with the Cities of Service programme. After initial discussions with the Cities of Service office in New York we were offered a place within the coalition and have received direct support and mentorship from our counterparts in the UK and America. Guidance and detailed examples of best practice have been invaluable to us whilst developing our programme.

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The strategy has been influenced by the Well-being of Future Generations Act due to the priorities of improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. It ensured we prioritise long-term the advantages of working in a more inclusive manner with people and communities, look to prevent or minimise difficulties and take a more collaborative approach. The strategy and Monmouthshire ACTS programme has been planned according to each of the seven wellbeing goals highlighted in the image to the right. The evidence for this can be found in Appendix 2 Well Being Assessment.



The most prominent being ‘A Wales of cohesive communities’, by bringing together our communities enabling volunteering and social action to take place. This has been shown to have a positive impact on social networks and inclusion within communities. Our own volunteers stated in our survey that seventy percent of them had influenced others to take up a positive role in their community. This is something we are keen to build on, a cohesive approach to tackling priorities between Monmouthshire County Council and the community is key. Volunteers engaged on the programme will be linked via social networks through digital media, www.Monmouthshire.MadeOpen.co.uk and arranged meetings and training. The increased social networks will contribute the goal of cohesive communities. This is supported by the regular organisation of networking opportunities for Volunteers and the staff that support them. This reduces the feeling of isolation in a voluntary role, our evidence supports this with 67% of our volunteers in Monmouthshire asking for a ‘more active and connected

network for volunteers'. We aim to galvanise the volunteer network to increase inclusivity and increase the feeling of contributing to a common purpose and working cohesively.

OUR ENVIRONMENT

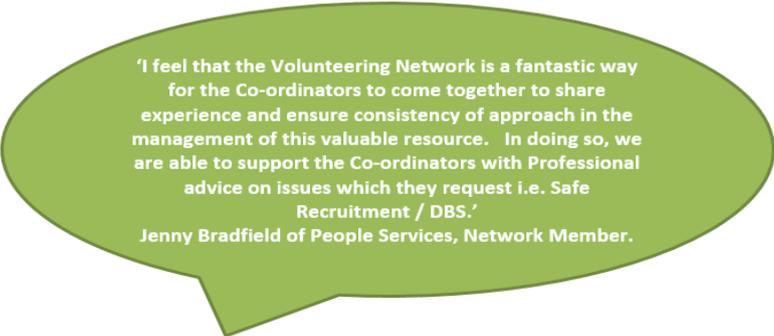
Supporting Volunteers

With our long history of supporting volunteers in Monmouthshire we have used various approaches to volunteering, a scattergun approach was present as an organisation. From early focus groups we quickly learned that all existing volunteers and indeed staff supporting volunteers, were looking for a transparent, trustworthy and reassuring approach to volunteering.

The way in which we support our volunteers is vital to meeting the needs of the individual and that of the organisation, there is a direct relationship between appropriate levels of support and volunteer retention. Within the Volunteer Toolkit we have developed guidance, checklists set out to ensure a volunteer has access to regular support, supervision and development. Our Leading Volunteers training delivered for volunteer coordinators focusses on raising awareness of the varying needs of volunteers, also raising the level of skill and knowledge in volunteer management.

Volunteer Network

At the request of everyone consulted for the mapping exercise, we have collectively created a volunteer network. The Volunteer Network meet quarterly to share good practices, challenges ensuring a transparent, coherent message throughout Monmouthshire. The network is currently fifty eight members strong, consisting of public sector and third sector partners. In order to progress the network we will continue to invite industry experts in when required. As part of the Volunteer Network we aim to implement a peer mentoring programme to further promote the sharing of best practice.



'I feel that the Volunteering Network is a fantastic way for the Co-ordinators to come together to share experience and ensure consistency of approach in the management of this valuable resource. In doing so, we are able to support the Co-ordinators with Professional advice on issues which they request i.e. Safe Recruitment / DBS.'

Jenny Bradfield of People Services, Network Member.

Volunteer Toolkit

Whilst working together we have been able to develop and deliver a [Volunteer Toolkit](#) that provides the support, consistency and best practice both volunteers and those staff supporting them required. The development of the Volunteer Toolkit took priority and was shaped by Volunteer coordinators and relevant officers alike, to provide ownership and ensure content was relevant, appropriate and timely. With regards to quality assurance, the toolkit was supported by advice and resources from WCVA, Third Sector Partners, as well as mentors from the Cities of Service programme via the Volunteer Toolkit implementation experience. Each section of the toolkit has been scrutinised by the relevant officers in Monmouthshire County Council to ensure it aligns with our wider policies and procedures.

The Volunteer Toolkit sets out guidance and procedures to ensure quality opportunities for volunteers and that consistency across the organisation is present. Its functionality is continually progressing and adapting but in essence provides everything someone supporting volunteers could require, therefore saving time and increasing the efficiency of the volunteering programme in Monmouthshire.

Leading Volunteers Training

The volunteer toolkit is complemented by 'Leading Volunteers' training sessions, our ambition is to deliver this for all staff who support volunteers as part of their role. The course aims for everyone to fully understand the standards required when we plan, recruit, manage and develop our volunteers in Monmouthshire.

The training course objectives are to: -

- Raise the awareness of the Volunteer Toolkit resource.
- Promote best practice of volunteer management through the Investors in Volunteers standards.
- Develop the awareness and confidence of staff when supporting volunteers.

Understanding the benefits of partnership working, we invite third sector representatives to each course to provide a masterclass on volunteering support in their respective areas. This brings in external expertise and experience and allows the opportunity for networking and again, the sharing of best practice.



I found the session very useful and I always love that I come away from such workshops feeling re-enthused for volunteering. I plan to get together with my colleagues in the New Year to work on a unified approach to our volunteers in Tourism, Leisure and Culture.

Kate Edwards – Volunteer Coordinator

The leading volunteer training also enables us to ensure the Volunteering Strategy is highlighted and communicated, giving us the opportunity to further promote clear, consistent guidance on the future of volunteering development.

OUR PEOPLE

The model below identifies and underpins our approach to supporting volunteers in Monmouthshire and forms the basis for the Leading Volunteers training delivered to Volunteer Coordinators.



People Services Offer

Currently under development out of the People and Organisational Development Strategy is the 'People Services Offer', this cohesive offer looks at the entire journey of someone supporting our organisation both on and off our payroll. It focusses on the way we plan for, support and develop our people. It is important to highlight that the Volunteer Journey posted above is exactly the same as the ones for employees and leaders in our organisation. The very fact that Monmouthshire ACTS was part of the research, development and now delivery of the People Services Offer is imperative. Also as an organisation we are now planning our support with the volunteers being part of the team is a milestone. This mind set change demonstrates the way we value our considerable volunteer impact and our desire to support them in the way that they need throughout their time with Monmouthshire.

Volunteer Training Pathway

Our belief is that if you contribute to the priorities of Monmouthshire you should have access to a volunteer training pathway, which allows you to gain or further improve skills, proficiency and expertise. We feel that the implementation of a robust training offer allows us to equip volunteers and our communities with the fundamental tools they need to make a positive impact. Raising confidence, knowledge and aspirations whilst also supporting development, for some volunteers can contribute to improving their employability and move them closer to achieving their personal goals. Understanding the skills, knowledge and behaviour required to effectively volunteer across our county allows us to build a training offer that meets the needs of our volunteers, subsequently giving Volunteers access to interesting, relevant, appropriate and varied training opportunities that can benefit both within and outside the volunteering commitment to Monmouthshire. Through our partnership work we aim to increase the amount and diversity of training opportunities for our volunteers, looking to improve access to opportunities that meet the needs of our volunteers.

Potential of Speed Volunteering

Volunteering and social action has long been part of the fabric of Monmouthshire, as mentioned above our organisation and communities have been effective at recruiting thousands of volunteers. Many methods are used with word of mouth being seen as the most effective method, our recent survey carried out with 198 Volunteers from November 2015 – February 2016 demonstrated that ‘70% of volunteers believe they influence others to take up volunteering’.

Despite this successful history we feel that with the growth of the digital generation and widespread digital migration there is unlocked potential. We base this opinion on the fact we piloted a futuristic approach with success on Micro Volunteering Day, which was highlighted nationally and can be found [here](#). This emerging trend identified as ‘micro’ or ‘speed’ volunteering opportunities are growing in popularity. Understanding that we must look to the future - our digital presence must be bold, professional and engaging. Time poor, skills rich volunteers are looking to become involved quickly without barriers on a short term or ad hoc basis. Research currently being led on Micro Volunteering by Help from Home <http://helpfromhome.org/> and the introduction of a Speed Volunteering application by Team London – European Capital for volunteering suggests belief and acceptance in such future developments. Collaborative digital platforms such as our own www.monmouthshire.madeopen.co.uk and WCVA’s www.volunteering-wales.net have proved successful and have a vital role to play in the future of volunteering.

Recognition

We understand that Volunteers don’t start because they’re expecting a reward, however it is important that we celebrate and value what the volunteers have achieved, their input and commitment. We aim to create a culture of thanks and in doing so ensure volunteers feel valued and supported, for this we need a mixture of formal and informal recognition methods. We understand if volunteers feel appreciated they are more likely to continue making an impact with our organisation. From our experience in Monmouthshire recognition needs to be personal, regular, and available to all volunteers across the county. It is important that we continue to support and raise the awareness of existing recognition schemes in Monmouthshire. Two formal accredited examples are the GwirVol - Millennium Volunteers framework for people under 25 and also Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations accreditation for volunteers over 25.

We aim to provide our volunteers with a Monmouthshire wide formal recognition event on a yearly basis, in partnership with GAVO. This will be part of a programme of recognition which will include localised events in development and those currently run by areas or volunteer programmes.

We also value the informal recognition that goes in in the county and seek to develop this approach to include all of our volunteers. Simply taking the time to say thank you or holding an informal coffee morning have proved successful in the past.

How will we know we are making a difference?

Measuring impact is a key development point of the Volunteering strategy, we aim to capture impacts made by volunteers across Monmouthshire. We understand that there is no ‘one size fits all’ approach to impact measurement that we can instantly apply to our organisation. Over the past few years we have been trialling methods of measuring volunteer impact, we have used elements like distance travelled tools and return on investment frameworks. These trials have allowed us to shape a framework that is developed to meet the needs of Monmouthshire and the diverse range of ways that volunteer are involved with our organisation.

We will look at impact assessment by measuring inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and therefore impact. We have recently received training in and access to the widely acclaimed Impact Assessment Toolkit developed by Institute for Volunteering Research and the National Council for Volunteering Organisations. This knowledge will be passed on to our volunteer coordinators and volunteers to support them in measuring the difference they are making in our communities.

Diversity and Inclusion

Volunteering and social activism help promote social inclusion by providing opportunities for marginalised groups, to engage in participatory development processes. Volunteers serve as important reservoirs of knowledge for development programmes and can help ensure that development-related priorities are relevant and legitimate. By participating in volunteering or social activism, or both, people can be empowered with the confidence, skills and knowledge necessary to effect change in their community. The challenge of increasing and sustaining participation depends on creating new, diverse and varied opportunities for involvement.

An example of this is our volunteer programmes. We can help to expand opportunities for engagement offered to the public. Investments in good volunteer management and the recognition of volunteers can result in more impactful change. The public, private and third sector wider community all have a role to play in fostering an enabling environment for people's participation

Volunteering Variety in Monmouthshire - Case Study on Volunteer Impact

Volunteer impact has been evidenced in many areas across Monmouthshire, one example of this is the annual firework display in Caldicot. Due to the previous local fireworks display disbanding the community identified this as a priority need for development. The priority was successful through community action, one hundred and fifty Volunteers from the local community joined forces with Monmouthshire County Council Officers to plan, set up and deliver the most successful fireworks display Caldicot had ever experienced, with eight thousand people attending the event. This group of Volunteers continue to run the ever popular event supported by Monmouthshire County Council yearly.

Another example of such success, is the Grassroots scheme.



GrassRoutes is the community transport service for residents in Monmouthshire. The service is supported by volunteer drivers who provide transport for isolated members of the community. The service has run since 2004 and has made a considerable impact on social isolation in Monmouthshire.

“It’s really rewarding. I am 71 and I wouldn’t do this if I didn’t love it. It helps to get people out of their homes and socialising with other people. Some people wouldn’t get out and see anyone otherwise.”

Dave Morgan, Volunteer driver.
Grass Routes.

Volunteer Video Case Studies

Please find links below for a range of volunteer case studies to support the proposal in the strategy



'Harry Helps at the Hub' -

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R2Ci6q2K_2E&feature=youtu.be



Mike - Volunteering at the Castle -

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FJkciVXOT_4&feature=youtu.be



Ian – Youth Service Volunteer – <https://youtu.be/tl4diCtVJKg>

Action Plan 2016 - 2019

The Volunteering Action Plan 2016 – 2019 is based on key findings from local, national data and initial mapping exercises focussed on volunteering in Monmouthshire. The Action Plan is grouped into the five key objectives which are: -

1. To develop a clear, consistent and collaborative approach to volunteering across Monmouthshire County Council.
2. Promote volunteering in Monmouthshire by improving the profile, quality and range of volunteering opportunities.
3. Increase the level of support, training and recognition for volunteers and volunteer coordinators.
4. Ensure volunteer impact is measured and aligned to the priorities valued by communities.
5. Support the development and delivery of a 'Council of the Future'.

The key themes to note are to:

- Promote and raise awareness of volunteering within Monmouthshire supporting the www.volunteering-wales.net database of opportunities in Wales.
- Increase the level and quality of training opportunities for Volunteers in Monmouthshire in partnership with Monmouthshire's Training Offer.
- Support and inform volunteer development within Monmouthshire.
- Indicate opportunities and restrictions which influence the work of the volunteer programme.
- Reflect best practice as identified by Investing in Volunteers Standards.
- Scope opportunities and new ways of engaging volunteer support.

In aiming to fulfil this plan Monmouthshire ACTS will work collaboratively with Elected Members, Senior Leadership Team, Managers, Volunteers, Staff, cross sector partner organisations and Trade Union Representatives through a collaborative partnership approach.

Volunteering definitions as outlined in the Welsh Government Volunteering Policy, Supporting Communities and Changing Lives

Volunteering takes many forms. Surveys tend to distinguish between 'informal' and 'formal' volunteering and volunteers of all sorts may contribute to the designed delivery of public services. It should be noted that some people may not agree that all of the examples below should be included within the definition of volunteering; they are included here for information but this annex should not be taken as definitive with regard to any such differences of opinion.

Informal Volunteering

Informal volunteering is undertaken by individuals for other people or community groups, although such individuals may not always regard themselves as volunteers. It includes help for neighbours, community action, participating in faith and community groups, helping out at local events. There are no formal processes for recruitment. This kind of volunteering is largely hidden within our communities but is strongly rooted within Welsh culture. It is to be celebrated and encouraged.

Formal Volunteering

Formal volunteering refers to situations where a volunteer's efforts are channelled through an organisation. Such organisations are sometimes described as 'volunteer involving organisations'.

Many volunteering opportunities are suitable for everyone, with appropriate induction and support. Some require volunteers to be trained extensively for their role (for example in advice work, youth work including scouts and guides, or emergency services). Some may require specialist expertise or prior qualification (for example many overseas volunteering opportunities). Volunteering may be a one off event, for a short period, or a longer term commitment.

Within the modern landscape of volunteering, there are some newer and changing forms, for example:

Virtual Volunteering

Virtual volunteering is also sometimes called e-Volunteering, or online volunteering, is a term describing a volunteer who completes tasks, in whole or in part, offsite from the organisation being assisted, using the Internet and a home, school, tele-centre or work computer or other Internet-connected device, such as a Smartphone. Virtual volunteering is also known as cyber service, tele-mentoring, tele-tutoring, and various other names.

Micro-volunteering

Micro-volunteering describes an un-paid task that can be done via an internet-connected device or telephone network and in small periods of time, for example sending a text or a photograph. It is distinct from virtual volunteering in that it typically does not require formal application or training and the duration is short.

Employer supported volunteering

An employing organisation may permit a number of hours of paid work time for employees to engage in voluntary activity, either through the employer's own scheme or through the employees' personal arrangements. The benefit to the employer is that it builds brand awareness and affinity, strengthens trust and loyalty among consumers and employees and enhances corporate image and reputation. In some instances, an employer will form a partnership with a third sector organisation or school and undertake a staff teambuilding project (typically redecorating/refurbishing) which also leads to a positive outcome for the community organisation.

Volunteering for accreditation

For young people, the Welsh Baccalaureate and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, include a volunteering element. A growing number of vocational courses (e.g. counselling) require students to gain relevant volunteering experience. Although volunteering is a compulsory component, which, it could be argued, compromises the principle that volunteering is undertaken by free choice, nevertheless such schemes often lead to participants deciding to continue volunteering beyond any compulsory involvement. Thus they embark on what may become their long term 'volunteer journey'.

Internships

Internships are for a defined period of time, to undertake a specific piece of work which is of benefit to the intern and to the organisation. These may be paid or unpaid and may take place within third sector, public or private organisations. Unpaid internships are a form of volunteering.

Volunteering as a work-related experience

An opportunity to volunteer may be sought by an individual as a means of gaining skills and experience to enhance a personal CV and build confidence in a working environment.

This is work-related experience. Its purpose is to increase access to employment.

Intermediary agencies may refer individuals to Volunteer Centres or volunteer-involving organisations with this in view.

Civic Volunteering

There are opportunities for residents in some communities to get involved in projects that relate to local civic life, for example town twinning projects, fair-trade movements and transition town initiatives.

The pioneering work of local activists can give rise to a range of volunteering opportunities including staffing stalls, running projects, organising events and campaigning. By and large these opportunities have no formal recruitment or management structures and are open to those who want to take part.

References

Cities of Service Play Book and associated resources - <http://www.citiesofservice.org/content/develop-citywide-service-plan>

Welsh Government Volunteering Policy, Supporting Communities, Changing Lives
<http://gov.wales/docs/dsjlg/publications/150805-volunteering-policy-en.pdf>

Wales Council for Voluntary Action, Advice and Guidance – <http://www.wcva.org.uk/advice-guidance/volunteers>

Volunteer Toolkit, Monmouthshire County Council -
<http://corphub/initiatives/VolunteersToolkit/Shared%20Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx>

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 – <http://gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/people/future-generations-bill/?lang=en>

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