

CHARITIES AND VOLUNTEERING MAKE BRITAIN GREAT

WHAT THE NEXT GOVERNMENT CAN
DO TO HELP CHARITIES AND
VOLUNTEERING MAKE AN EVEN BIGGER
DIFFERENCE

National Council for Voluntary Organisations

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NCVO
**CHAMPIONING
VOLUNTARY
ACTION**

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Introduction

This document outlines in detail the proposals set out in NCVO's 2017 General Election Manifesto, and makes practical suggestions on how they can be achieved.

The proposals in our manifesto focus on the following areas:

1. Making it easier and more rewarding for people to volunteer
2. Supporting local communities for a generation to come
3. Making it easier for charities and volunteers to support public services
4. Making it easier for people to develop their skills and get a good job
5. Giving everyone a stake in post-Brexit Britain

The aim of our proposals is to enable charities and volunteers to play an even bigger role in our society and make a greater contribution to our economy. Charities and volunteers across the country and in all communities are already making a difference to people's lives and changing things for the better. With the right support and opportunities, they can do even more.

A note on our language

We refer throughout to charities and volunteers: we have used this as shorthand for a wider world of social action and of civil society organisations that exist to benefit the public.

Voluntary organisations and social enterprises range from large household name charities that work internationally and lead our country's medical research, to small groups entirely led by volunteers working in their community. It also doesn't describe the many different ways in which volunteers make a difference: not just preserving their local green spaces, but also helping get homeless people off the streets and find shelter, supporting victims of domestic abuse rebuild their lives, providing company and care to older people, giving advice and support to cancer sufferers and their families, to name but a few. Through what some are now calling 'social action', people's contribution goes beyond the communities and areas they live in, and can reach communities across the world in response to war, famine and poverty.

1. Make it easier and more rewarding for people to volunteer

We would like to make it easier and more rewarding to volunteer for everyone, so anyone who wants to has a chance to make a contribution to their community. We want to seed people's interest in and ability to volunteer, setting them on a path of contributing much more to their communities, by:

- getting more employers to allow **time off work for volunteering**, including time off for charity trustees
- **providing a support fund to address barriers to volunteering for people with disabilities.** This could make volunteering accessible to more people, helping with costs such as travel or adaptations to buildings or equipment
- doing more to **recognise the difference that volunteers make to their communities** and doing more to celebrate their contribution
- **strengthening volunteer development and management**, to ensure volunteers have the right skills and support to make a bigger difference, and a rewarding experience.

How would this work?

Time off work

The recent [House of Lords Committee on Charities](#) recommended “...that the Government holds a public consultation on the possibility of introducing a statutory duty to allow employees of organisations over a certain size to take a limited amount of time off work to perform trustee roles”. NCVO argued to the Committee that employees should be given reasonable time off to volunteer for certain public duties, such as trusteeship. Government is currently considering, but has not enacted, [proposals](#) to make large businesses and public bodies give employees the right to three days' volunteering leave.

Any right to time off should clearly operate within limits. Where trustees are given reasonable time off, this could operate in the same way that [companies must give magistrates reasonable time off to perform their duties](#).

Support fund to address barriers to volunteering

Government currently provides [Access to Work](#) grants, money for practical support for people with disabilities, health or mental health conditions. We think that volunteering is an important pathway to work for those trying to enter the labour market - and the extension of the fund

could help more people access volunteering opportunities, making both a contribution to their community and building their own skills and employability.

Recognise the difference that volunteers make

The [#iwill campaign](#) promotes social action amongst young people, aiming to make service to your community both widespread and recognised. Continued support from all parties for the #iwill campaign will help volunteering gain wider recognition. Other steps could include more employers recognising the value of volunteering and social action in their business processes, for example during recruitment processes. Similarly, education providers could be encouraged to more widely embed opportunities for students to make a difference through volunteering and social action as they learn.

Strengthen volunteer development and management

To ensure volunteers have the right skills and support to make a bigger difference and a rewarding experience, there should be targeted investment in high level and sophisticated volunteer management. This would recognise that volunteering has its own costs, and that volunteer management itself is a profession, which needs to engage strategically with volunteering and recognise the difference between volunteers and paid staff. Investment could also be targeted to areas of deprivation and to build a more diverse community of volunteers, giving access to volunteering opportunities and the necessary support to people of all ages and backgrounds.

An example that highlights how funding needs to go towards ensuring better quality volunteering rather creating demand is the Youth United Foundation. An investment of £20m awarded to the Scouts Association has ensured over 40,000 places were opened for young people to participate in uniformed organisations in areas of deprivation. Together with Girl Guiding, over 120,000 young people have been signed up, but they are now on waiting lists and close to 30,000 volunteers are going to be needed to address this.

Why is this worth doing?

Evidence from the Community Life survey suggests while the number of young people getting involved is rising, [overall levels of volunteering remain stable](#). Similarly, at a time when strengthening the governance and accountability of charities is seen as priority, increasing the breadth and diversity of trustees is a challenge. Getting more people involved in their communities, including in more challenging roles such as trusteeship, will need a wider range of approaches. Providing [support and encouragement](#) for those who want to volunteer is likely to help people who might not know where to start or where mutual benefit and reciprocity are more important drivers.

2. Support local communities for a generation to come

The recent [Commission on Dormant Assets](#) recently concluded that there is approximately £1-2bn of financial assets that could eventually be transferred for the use of good causes. It is not within the terms of reference of the Commission to make recommendations on how the proceeds should be distributed to good causes. These two proposals focus on distribution.

Build on the success story of local Community Foundations

This could be achieved by creating income-generating endowment funds. These can then be used to fund small and local charities now and in the future.

How would this work?

[Community Foundations](#) are a growing UK success story. They encourage local philanthropy, using the funds raised to make grants to local charities, based upon their expertise of what is needed and what works. They have already built an endowment of £500m.

Money from dormant assets could be used to incentivise further donations from philanthropists. A successful programme to build endowments - the [Endowment Match Challenge](#) - has already shown that this approach can work. £100m of philanthropic capital was generated with a £50m match from government in addition. The level of match required could vary according to the level of deprivation - with less match required in more deprived areas.

Why is this worth doing?

Investing half of the maximum total from dormant accounts - £1bn - could generate £40m/year in local grantmaking in perpetuity, more if match funding was sought from philanthropists. (This assumes a 4% rate of return.) Widening the network of endowed Community Foundations, and increasing the level of capital they hold, will generate investment returns from which small and local charities can be grant funded. At a time when local authority grants to charities are in decline, this is an opportunity to address the sustainability of small charities in particular and the communities that they work with, at little cost to the exchequer.

Put more assets in community ownership

We can create more facilities for the public's long-term benefit by using the money from dormant accounts to buy local community assets and put them in the control of local people.

How would this work?

In their paper '[Places & Spaces – The future of community asset ownership](#)', Locality propose investing £500m from dormant assets and using this to attract a further £500m match funding

from funders such as the Big Lottery Fund. This £1bn programme would support the process of community asset transfer, building on the community right to bid established in the Localism Act of 2011. The right to bid is not a right to buy - capital is still needed - so the fund would address this gap.

Why is this worth doing?

The [Quirk Review](#) argued: *“Community ownership can bring people from different backgrounds together. It can foster a sense of belonging. It can play a role in enhancing the local environment, alleviating poverty and raising people’s aspirations. Fundamentally, it’s about giving local people a bigger stake in the future of their area”*. Localities argue that funding and finance is a serious barrier to community ownership: and in the current economic environment, local authorities are unlikely to hand over assets with an economic value. Establishing a capital fund would seed community ownership and attract additional loan finance for organisations. For many organisations, owning an asset is a significant step in becoming financially viable and independent, in turn strengthening the communities around them.

3. Make it easier for charities and volunteers to support our public services

Public services are better when charities and volunteers are involved.

- Services such as the NHS should be asked to **set targets for the management and development of volunteering**. These would aim to increase volunteer numbers, involve volunteers in a wider range of roles, and improve the experience and impact of volunteers.
- **Our senior public service leaders should be asked to become volunteering champions**. Champions would raise awareness of where volunteers could make the biggest impact and change culture around involving volunteers.

How would this work?

Evidence frequently cites the importance of target setting and senior leadership in championing culture change in areas such as diversity. We think that setting targets around experience and breadth of involvement in particular would help, widening the range of volunteer roles. Focussing on the volunteers' receiving a positive experience is likely to translate into better retention rates and more impactful volunteering. We think this is likely to be much more impactful than setting targets for total numbers of volunteers.

The appointment of senior leaders as volunteering champions will widen the involvement of volunteers, complementing the role of volunteer managers, providing role models for other leaders. Target setting should also be accompanied by better sharing of good practice: there are many examples, from hospices to parts of the NHS, showing how structured and well managed volunteering programmes can attract higher numbers of more diverse volunteers, and give them a positive experience.

Why is it worth doing?

There are examples everywhere across the public services of volunteers helping to deliver better outcomes for public services users, such as the [Kings College Hospital volunteering programme](#). Programmes such as [Cities of Service](#) have shown that with the right leadership and direction, volunteering programmes can create opportunities that deliver impact and attract a wider range of volunteers.

Make better use of public money

We need further reforms to how government buys and provides public services. Public bodies could use grant funding instead of large contracts, and spend public money in a way that takes

account of the wider social value of a contract. This will deliver better services for people and extra value for money for taxpayers.

How would this work?

Where appropriate, commissioning and procurement professionals should be encouraged and supported to provide grants for charities. Funders such as [Lloyds Bank Foundation](#) argue that competitive grant making provides excellent value for money. NHS England [guidelines on the use of grants](#) have demonstrated that they are an important tool for commissioners. Where contracts continue to be awarded, more commissioners should consider splitting them into smaller lots to make them more accessible to small and medium charities, as the [National Audit Office has recommended](#) they should consider.

The requirement in the [Social Value Act](#) that public bodies ‘consider’ social value in public sector contracts should be upgraded so that they must ‘account for’ social value. By having to evidence the social value they have generated, commissioners are more likely to incorporate additional social, environmental and economic objectives into their procurement activities. We also recommend that Cabinet Office track the implementation of the Act through yearly progress reports and develop performance indicators so that success can be measured.

Why is it worth doing?

The environment in which charities work has changed dramatically in recent years, particularly for those which are in receipt of public funding. There has been a significant shift in the funding of charities, with many [grants replaced by contracts](#), alongside a reduction in the overall level of public money available. This transition from grants to contracts is a particular challenge for smaller charities bidding for and operating contracts. Furthermore tightly-prescribed contracts that dictate the process of delivery, rather than the desired outcome, can be the greatest inhibitor of innovation. Grants on the other hand can be a more efficient funding mechanism than more complicated contracts: they allow to test new ideas and innovate during both the early scoping and development of services, and their later delivery. Such funding can generate positive returns, through supporting new and more effective ways of working, while also contributing to the sustainability of the charity sector and generating potential cost-savings for commissioners.

Strengthening the Social Value Act would be a powerful tool for both generating long term savings and achieving better outcomes. By using the Act, contracting authorities can secure significant cost savings through more efficient public services. 71 percent of respondents to a Social Enterprise UK survey of local authorities and housing associations in 2014 said that a focus on social value had led to ‘better service delivery’, with 70 percent adding it had led to ‘opportunities for innovation’. Importantly, 52 percent of respondents said delivering social value leads to cost savings.

An example of a service that might be procured using the Social Value Act is provided by the charity Working Chance. Working Chance helps women with criminal convictions find professional high quality jobs, in areas that they wish to work. By building the women's self-confidence and by working with employers to overcome preconceptions, the charity has placed over 760 women into quality employment and supported them to change their and their children's lives for the better. There is an increasingly convincing evidence base that women specific services have a positive impact, and securing employment is a key contributing factor in reducing re-offending. Women who have been supported by Working Chance have a reoffending rate of just 3 percent.

4. Make it easier for people to build their skills and get a good job

Replace European Union programmes that help people get back to work

Or start a social enterprise with new, lighter-touch, flexible programmes. These should focus on local people making decisions about what is needed.

How would this work?

Programmes such as the Big Lottery Fund's [Building Better Opportunities](#) aim to tackle poverty and give more people a chance to find work by building skills, confidence and opportunities, particularly for those furthest from the labour market. [Place-based funding approaches](#) are increasingly being adopted by funders, emphasising flexibility, local knowledge and holistic support. Such approaches build on people's assets. Government should work with charities and social enterprises to explore these design principles to establish new locally based funds to replace the ESF programme, giving more control to local people and moving away from the centralised, heavily administered structural funds programme.

In particular, a replacement for ESF funding should incorporate the principles of additionality and complementarity to ensure investment is delivering impact, not simply plugging gaps in existing state provision. The distribution of these funds should be locally driven and accessible to smaller organisations who often lack the capacity to engage in time-consuming and complicated procurement processes. Reflecting the link between health, wellbeing and employment outcomes any new programme of support should be holistic in approach, and promote service integration, preventative action and community cohesion. Government should plan to have a new social inclusion programme in place for when Britain leaves the EU in 2019.

Why is it worth doing?

Structural funds have been incredibly important, [particularly for the most deprived communities](#). For 2007-2013, the UK received €4.47bn of ESF funding which, when matched by national co-funding, brings the total spend on ESF projects to €8.6 billion. €3.5bn in ESF funding, which would likely all be matched by national contributions, has been allocated to the UK for 2014 – 2020 tranche. As the UK leaves the EU, it will be critical to the future of these communities to both replace these structural funds, but also to use public money more effectively.

Make it easier for unemployed people looking for work to volunteer

This could be achieved by getting rid of red tape and confusion about the rules.

How would this work?

More needs to be done to ensure that Jobcentre Plus (JCP) staff on the ground understand the potential benefits of volunteering and know the [rules about eligibility to volunteer](#).

Understanding of the role of volunteering and about the rules for people receiving benefits is still inconsistent and so better information and training should be provided to job centre staff. The government should do more to ensure that national policy is being implemented on the ground and that staff are being supported to do this.

To address these challenges there are three key things the government should do:

- Ensure up to date and consistent information and guidance is available to JCP work coaches around volunteering whilst on benefits
- Develop the knowledge and understanding of JCP staff, particularly ‘work coaches’, about the role volunteering can play
- Establish more effective working relationships between volunteering agencies (Volunteer Centres and NCVO) across all DWP initiatives, including DWP prime contractors, to ensure a consistent approach to volunteering. This should also include looking at the approach to funding interventions by charities, voluntary organisations and social enterprises

Why is it worth doing?

There is already significant [evidence to demonstrate the important role that volunteering can play in the pathway to employability](#). It can play an [especially significant role for those defined as ‘disadvantaged in the labour market](#). Through volunteering people can access opportunities to gain experience and develop their skills; including soft skills like communication and an opportunity to build confidence and self-esteem; crucial for those who are long-term unemployed. Although at a national level government policy recognises the role volunteering can play we think there is more to do in order to ensure the opportunities to volunteer for people who are unemployed are made available and promoted locally.

We need better local pathways to employment through volunteering and this requires ensuring there are effective relationships in place between local JobCentre Pluses and the voluntary sector, particularly volunteering infrastructure and support services. We believe there is more scope for government to work with charities and the voluntary sector to support the development of better partnerships locally; identifying and understanding problem areas and

potential opportunities in order to promote volunteering as a positive option for JCP claimants. All partners involved share a common goal of enabling more job seekers to benefit from volunteering.

5. Give everyone a stake in post-Brexit Britain

Getting people more involved in their communities is an important way of giving them a say in their future: people will get involved if they know that they are heard and that they are making a difference. Our proposals aim to build opportunities for individuals and communities to inform post-Brexit Britain.

- When parliament legislates to replace EU laws and regulations through the **Great Repeal Bill**, there should be proper mechanisms in place for changes to be debated and scrutinised, informed by the expertise of charities and the communities they work with.
- We ask that as part of the negotiations to leave the EU, the **right to stay of EU national is resolved without delay**.
- **Simple and effective visa requirements should be put in place** to enable people from overseas to continue to dedicate their time and talents to our communities and public services.

How would this work?

These proposals are ultimately the responsibility of parliament and the British government in its negotiations with the EU27. We have not therefore made policy proposals: in practice, we are asking that parliamentarians and government engage with charities and listen to their concerns and those that they work with.

Government can lay the right ground for doing this by sending a positive and encouraging message to charities and their trustees about their role in informing the debate. Too many trustees, particularly in smaller charities, are fearful of speaking up on behalf of their beneficiaries and the communities they serve, and therefore miss out on important opportunities to engage with decision makers on issues where they have expertise. Government could demonstrate its recognition of charities' role in the policy making process by resigning the [Compact](#) and refreshing its commitment to the principles set out in the agreement. Another action that would reset the narrative around charity campaigning and give confidence to charities about their right to speak up would be to implement the recommendations of Lord Hodgson of Astley Abbots, following his review of the third party campaigning rules (['Third party election campaigning: getting the balance right'](#)).

Why is it worth doing?

EU nationals are key to the functioning of our country. In the voluntary sector alone, around 5% of staff are non-UK EEA nationals, with this proportion increasing at a higher rate in recent years than the private or public sectors. Large numbers of voluntary sector organisations are

providing services to some of the most marginalised and vulnerable groups in society, including the homeless, disabled people, and the elderly. Around 6% of England's growing social care workforce are EEA migrants and around 90% of them do not have British citizenship.