

NCVO
Members'
Assembly



South-East
Region

KEY FINDINGS FROM BUCKINGHAMSHIRE RESEARCH

ENGAGING VOLUNTEERS IN 2023

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What we do

Support for not-for-profit organisations in Buckinghamshire

- Tailored support on all aspects of running an organisation*
- Training and workshops
- Online resources

Enable volunteering in the county

- Buckinghamshire Volunteer Matching Service
- Online resources
- Tailored support for recruiting and managing volunteers

Community Services

- Gardening and Wellbeing Service
- Handy Helpers
- Transport Hub hotline
- Pub Lunch Clubs
- Community development including response to Ukrainians settling in Bucks

***with priority given to organisations with income of less than £100k**



Volunteering in Buckinghamshire

Broad research aims:

- 1. Explore volunteering needs and barriers – for organisations, current and potential volunteers
- 2. Test and develop ideas about how to evolve the [Buckinghamshire Volunteer Matching Service](#)
- 3. Identify skills and training requirements for volunteers and assess whether a volunteer passport could support skills development

Volunteering at its lowest levels in a decade



Research by Laura Elson Consulting Ltd for Community Impact Bucks and Buckinghamshire Health and Social Care Academy, November 2022 to February 2023

Surveys (169 participants) and focus groups (18 participants)

Volunteers in Buckinghamshire

Main reasons for volunteering:

86%

enjoy it

75%

Use skills for
good causes

Other motivations:

55%

Socialising

54%

Mental Health

51%

Passionate
about the cause

Current Volunteers:

56%

Volunteering in
multiple places

22%

Would
volunteer more



For those who don't volunteer – many had time and plenty of skills to offer.

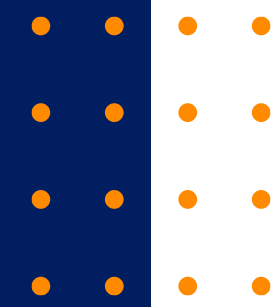
Barriers to volunteering

Barriers for people who don't currently volunteer:

- Not enough spare time (44%) but many said they could give 5 hours a month, which is enough time for many roles
- Don't know how to find out about volunteering opportunities (42%)
- Lack of flexibility in volunteer roles →



I work 4 days a week, but I can't do every Monday. So many organisations need a regular weekly rota commitment, which doesn't fit with me.



Barriers to volunteering

- Onerous onboarding processes and training

If you keep people waiting around too long in the signup process, they get bored and they might move on to something else.

- but this must be balanced with preparing volunteers to deliver activities safely and to a high standard.

- Ignoring applications – or being too persistent

You contact them and you hear nothing back. I take it in my stride, but for a teenager that's hard to deal with when they don't have the courtesy to respond after, it's taken some building of confidence for a young person to apply. Even an out of office to say "thank you, the role is filled" would help.

- Lack of relevant opportunities

32% of people not currently volunteering hadn't been able to find a role that matched their interests.



Visiting the organisation first



chosen by 66% of current volunteers, 64% of potential volunteers

Face-to-face support



Provided early in the role to help volunteers build confidence

Volunteers' needs

Getting a flavour for volunteering – taster sessions

What would help to make choosing and starting a volunteer role easier?



[Read More](#)

Being able to get a taste or the feel of the organisation is key.

One organisation I volunteer with offer an open taster session where members of the public can just enjoy the facilities. But so often at the end of it, people approach us to see if they can become a volunteer because they've had a flavour of what we do and what it's all about. When you see a volunteer role on a piece of paper it doesn't come alive for people in that way does it?

Reducing barriers - making it easier to volunteer

Creating more flexible opportunities – and promoting them

1 in 3 current volunteers

felt that more flexibility in opportunities would enable them to give more time to volunteer

78% of people who don't volunteer

said not having to sign up to a regular commitment would enable them to volunteer

1 in 2 people

say volunteering from or near home would help

53% of those not volunteering

would prefer to support one-off events





Increasing the diversity of volunteering



Reducing barriers – making it easier to volunteer

Underrepresented groups: men, people from minority ethnic groups, the LGBTQIA+ community and those under 40.

- Current volunteers suggested organisations needed more targeted promotion and community outreach to specific groups to let them know about volunteering

19% of potential volunteers identified as disabled, as did 15% of current volunteers.

What would make volunteering more accessible:

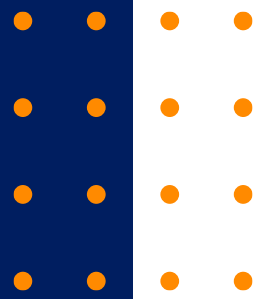
- Volunteering remotely from home
- One place online where volunteering opportunities can be found
- One participant would prefer for meetings, training, and supervision to be held online
- Another would find having the assistance of a support worker would help make volunteering accessible.

Reducing barriers – making it easier to volunteer

Managing expectations around onboarding

Levels of “bureaucracy and red tape” – onboarding processes a major barrier.

One volunteer suggested that this might be unavoidable, but that organisations could manage expectations →



You probably need to manage people's expectations. They could say: “you know, we do have quite a robust induction process, we anticipate that it will take 12 weeks and you won't necessarily get up and running until three months down the line”. And then we just know what we're getting ourselves in for as volunteers.

Volunteers' needs

Skills, training and volunteers' motivations

- Skills development wasn't a major motivator for volunteering among respondents
- Organisations identified a wide range of skills they were hoping volunteers would bring in 2023
- Organisations felt strongly that common core training (safeguarding, confidentiality, professional boundaries) must be provided in-house

Safeguarding needs to be bespoke, every organisation's safeguarding training is different because your service users and operating context are different. But we don't have budget for further ongoing learning though, which would be helpful.

Volunteer Passport Scheme

- There was opposition from volunteer-involving organisations regarding the elements of the scheme that would allow volunteers to be centrally checked and onboarded
- **Volunteer skills record** - capturing training and experience from prior roles, education and career



Volunteers' needs

Easy ways to find out about volunteering

Organisations already offer a wide range of flexible opportunities that cater to a diverse array of interests and bring great benefits for volunteers, *but this isn't widely known about amongst potential volunteers.*

42% of people not yet volunteering

don't know how to find out about opportunities

**32% have not found a role
to suit their interests**



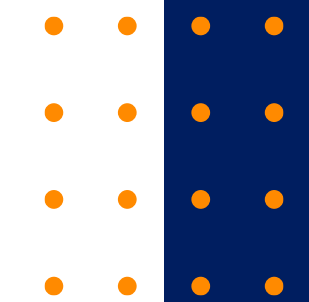
44% feel they do not have time

but 64% could give up to 5 hours a month

78% of current volunteers

said that more flexibility would make it easier to
get into volunteering

Opportunity: promoting volunteering



Volunteering can:



be flexible, does not need to require a large, or regular time commitment



cater for a wide range of interests



be enjoyable, sociable and develops a wide range of skills



be done from, or close to, home



Recommendations for volunteer-involving organisations

1. Create even more flexibility in your volunteering offer
 - Write down all the tasks you need people to do (staff and volunteers)
 - Which tasks could be delivered by one-off volunteers, short-term commitments, remotely, at different times of the day and week?
 - Can the 'usual way' be flexed to individual needs e.g. timings for the school run, adaptations for disabled volunteers
2. In-person taster sessions to 'try before you buy'
3. Reduce/remove practical barriers and manage expectations (e.g. onerous training and onboarding processes, timely responses to applicants)
4. Invest in search engine optimisation and Google Ads to promote opportunities
5. Raise awareness and challenge misconceptions about volunteering





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