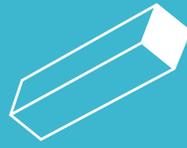




EUROPEAN VOLUNTEER CENTRE

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CHAPTER

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VOLUNTEERING
INFRASTRUCTURE
IN EUROPE



WALES



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1. VOLUNTEERING INFRASTRUCTURE

CONCEPT DEFINITION

In Wales the volunteering infrastructure constitutes the network of volunteer centres, county voluntary councils and the national development agency, *Wales Council for Voluntary Action* (WCVA).

They are committed to work together to deliver a common range of services, to common standards across Wales, funded by the Welsh Government. This agreement was formalised in 2006, in what is known as the Partnership Agreement. Welsh Government funding was secured for a five-year period, and monitoring arrangements are in place.

A key resource for the volunteering infrastructure in Wales is the bilingual website volunteering database www.volunteering-wales.net. This is the front line publicity for volunteering opportunities. Opportunities are uploaded by volunteer centres and the website is managed by WCVA.

It is accepted that volunteering takes many forms, including informal acts of neighbourliness through to regular, committed activity on behalf of a constituted organisation. The volunteering infrastructure promotes the range of volunteering but the focus of its activity is on what we call “*formal volunteering*”.

Volunteering needs to be defined for particular purposes. Grant schemes, for example, may need to define what constitutes “volunteering” for its purpose, whilst volunteer award schemes may define differently what constitutes a “volunteer”.

2. VOLUNTEERING LANDSCAPE

There is no single accepted definition of volunteering, and there is no legal definition. The definition used by the Welsh Government is as follows:

Volunteering is an important expression of citizenship and is 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.

Volunteering is seen as taking place between individuals (informal) as acts of altruism or reciprocity, or mediated by an organisation (formal volunteering). There is no age limit, but statistics are collated on those aged 16 years and over, which is related to ideas of when a person might undertake paid employment. Within an organisation volunteering includes both activity

to benefit others or the environment and activity to maintain the group, through fundraising, organising activities, representation or leadership. Volunteers are most commonly involved in non-profit organisations as board members/trustees or as managers/organisers or helpers. They are also involved in public sector organisations, such as hospitals, the police and coastguard services. Private companies are encouraged to support volunteering opportunities for their staff, including pro bono work and team activities. Sometimes they directly involve volunteers (in private care homes, for example).

New forms of volunteering appear: “timebanking” (where individuals give time to the community in exchange of use of leisure facilities) or “micro-volunteering” (brief actions undertaken, for example, on a mobile phone).

Our understanding of volunteering is being broadened by new forms of voluntary engagement such as “timebanking” (where individuals give of their time in their community in exchange for time credits which allow them to access “rewards” such as, for example, the use of leisure and cultural facilities), “micro-volunteering” (brief actions undertaken, for example on a mobile phone), the inclusion of a volunteering placement in the curriculum for educational qualifications and schemes which aim to provide experience and skills to enable people to access employment.

Estimates of informal volunteering vary greatly depending on the way the question is asked, and surveys in Wales have given estimates of up to 78% of adults indicating they have done some kind of informal volunteering in the last year. There are approximately 1,130,000 adults who volunteer or “help out” at activities in third sector organisations in a year. This represents about two in five of all adults. Of these, about 410,000 people would identify themselves as a volunteer if you asked them, as many people do not see activities helping local groups, such as community associations, school parent teacher groups, sports or hobby clubs as volunteering. There are 230,000 governance posts in third sector organisations. These are probably filled by a lower number of people, as people are often members of more than one management group.

Older people, women and those with higher levels of educational achievement are more likely to say they volunteer in a survey. People in Wales whose first language is Welsh are also more likely to volunteer than those whose first language is English.

3. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR VOLUNTEERING AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION

Much of the legal context for volunteering relates to the whole of the UK.

Employment law defines the rights of employees, including the right to a minimum wage. It is imperative that volunteer-involving organisations avoid creating, even unwittingly, a “contract” with their volunteers which would render them subject to all the implications of employment law. Generally this is achieved by the use of informal language, maximising flexibility and creating a culture of mutual respect with volunteers.

Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs sets out guidance regarding permissible mileage allowances when transport is used in the course of volunteering and guidance concerning the payment of out of pocket expenses without incurring a tax liability. This is particularly relevant where volunteers are in receipt of social benefits, since overpayment of volunteer expenses can be construed as income, which could jeopardise benefit payments.

In Wales there is no specific law on volunteering and there is no legal status of 'volunteer'. In our experience this is advantageous in that it does not reduce volunteering to a narrow concept and leaves possible a wide variety of activity and context for volunteering.

Health and safety legislation includes volunteers, as does the requirements for data protection, child protection and the protection of vulnerable adults. There are restrictions on foreign nationals' right to volunteer in the UK.

Up to date information on legal issues concerning volunteers can be found on the website of Sandy Adirondack¹.

Volunteering itself is a devolved matter within the UK, which means that policy and law making falls within the remit of the Welsh Government.

The *Government of Wales Act (2006)*² includes an express commitment to working with the Third Sector in Wales:

The Welsh Ministers must make a scheme ("the voluntary sector scheme") setting out how they propose, in the exercise of their functions, to promote the interests of relevant voluntary organisations.

The Voluntary Sector Scheme provides the basis for collaborative relationship between the Third Sector and the Welsh Government. The principle of dialogue with the Third Sector is enshrined in law within Wales. This remains unique within the UK.

'The Third Dimension' (2008)³ set out a programme of action for the Welsh Government which underpinned its support for, and relationship with the Third Sector for the period 2008-2011. One section was devoted to "Valuing Voluntary Action". Amongst the commitments which have now borne fruit, for example, were

- *to take forward the recommendations of the Russell Commission (a UK wide review of youth voluntary engagement) with a view to developing a 'step change' in youthled volunteering opportunities. This has given rise to the successful GwirVol programme (see section 4).*
- *to develop opportunities for employee volunteering within the Welsh Government's workforce and to challenge other public sector bodies to do the same. The Welsh Government's employee-supported volunteering scheme is now well established.*

The third sector effectively monitors and supports the Welsh Government to achieve its commitments.

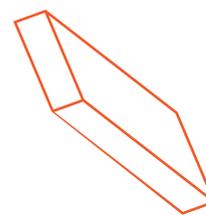
Whilst there is a legal landscape which affects volunteering in Wales there is no specific law on volunteering and there is no legal status of 'volunteer' within the UK. In our experience this is advantageous in that it does not reduce volunteering to a narrow concept and leaves possible a wide variety of activity and context for volunteering. For us, the concept of 'good practice' is even more important. It is voluntary adoption of good management practice, rather than conformity to legal requirement that underpins volunteering.



1. Sandy Adirondack (2012) Updated information for The Russell-Cooke Voluntary Sector Legal Handbook). Available at: <http://www.sandy-a.co.uk/vslh/39vols.htm>

2. The Government of Wales Act (2006). Available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/32/contents>. The Voluntary Sector Scheme is covered in Section 74

3. Welsh Government (2008). The Third Dimension. A Strategic Action Plan for the Voluntary Sector Scheme. Available at: www.wales.gov.uk/topics/housingandcommunity/voluntarysector/publications/thethirddimension/



4. STRUCTURE OF THE NON-PROFIT SECTOR INVOLVED IN VOLUNTEERING

Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) represents, campaigns for, supports and develops voluntary organisations, community action, and volunteering in Wales. It represents the sector at a European, UK and national level. Together with *county voluntary councils (CVCs)* and *volunteer centres*, it provides the generalist support infrastructure for the sector in Wales, working alongside national specialist umbrella and development agencies.

WCVA is a membership organisation, with over 2,500 members. It is a company limited by guarantee, with charitable status. Full membership is open to any national, regional and umbrella local third sector organisation in Wales, and to any other third sector organisation whose interests are not represented at any of the above levels. Other organisations and individuals may join as non-voting members.

Through the Partnership Agreement, the Welsh Government recognises WCVA as the independent national generalist intermediary body supporting the third sector and volunteering in Wales, representing the interests of and providing a strategic lead for the sector. It recognises the county voluntary councils as the independent intermediary bodies promoting and supporting the sector at local authority level, and the role of volunteer centres (either independent or part of CVCs) in promoting and supporting volunteering at local authority level.

The Partnership Agreement commits WCVA, CVCs and VCs to working together across boundaries to work out how best to meet the needs of the third sector, and to eliminate any avoidable duplication in order to free up resources for front-line services. The three parts of the infrastructure work together at trustee, senior management and operational staff levels to plan and review services, and to identify improvements. Of particular relevance to volunteering is the *Volunteering Service Operational Network (SON)*, which meets three times a year to discuss service delivery and quality issues.

At local level, some volunteer centres facilitate and support networks of volunteer organisers. At national level, the Wales Volunteering Policy Network meets three times a year to discuss volunteering policy matters. The network elects a representative (and a deputy) onto the Third Sector Partnership Council. At this council, 25 representatives of different spheres of interest within the Third Sector meet face to face with the Minister responsible for the Third Sector, (currently Carl Sargeant AM, Minister for Local Government and Communities). Funding for this network is available through the Third Sector Partnership Council.

GwirVol is a partnership of third sector, public and private organisations which represent the interests of young people and volunteering. It aims to increase the number and diversity of youth volunteering, to enhance the benefits of volunteering and to create an active culture of youth volunteering in Wales. WCVA is the administrative partner for the scheme, holds the funding and takes actions on its behalf. Other partners include Business in the Community, the Welsh Government (Third Sector group and Department for Education and Skills), Wales Association of County Voluntary Councils, WJEC (examining and awarding body), and various umbrella and national youth organisations. Young people's input to the initiative is made via the youth arm "*GwirForce*". A designated website, www.gwirvol.org, provides information for young people, and for organisations that involve young people. The website is linked to the national volunteering website, www.volunteering-wales.net.

5. OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

The Welsh Government is a key stakeholder in volunteering in Wales, and its involvement in the Partnership Agreement and the Third Sector Partnership Council has been mentioned previously. Local Government funds and works closely with a variety of third sector organisations, particularly in relation to the provision of services, many of which involve volunteers or are entirely run by volunteers.

Amongst public sector bodies, Health Boards have a significant interest in volunteering. Many third sector organisations (including Red Cross, Women's Royal Voluntary Services and others) have a volunteer presence within hospitals and complement statutory provision. In addition, the NHS (National Health Service) in Wales is developing its own local volunteering programmes. The All Wales NHS Volunteering Network brings together designated staff from Health Boards, Welsh Government, and WCVA to strategically develop volunteering further within our health services.

Trade Unions have a degree of interest in volunteering, since they are concerned with good relationships in the workplace. They are also concerned to ensure that jobs are not undermined, by volunteers or in any other way. A charter was jointly produced in 2011, by WCVA and Wales Trade Union Congress (TUC), in order to highlight principles of good practice when working with paid and unpaid staff⁴.

Employers, including private businesses, may have an interest in employee supported volunteering schemes. There are few large scale schemes within the private sector in Wales. Those that do exist tend to be within businesses operating at a UK level (BBC Barclays bank, Marks and Spencer, to name but a few). The Welsh Government and some local authorities in Wales offer employer supported volunteering schemes within the public sector. WCVA and some volunteer centres also support staff to volunteer within work time.

A number of schools are offering the *Welsh Baccalaureate*, in some cases as a compulsory element of the sixth form curriculum. The baccalaureate includes a requirement to undertake 30 hours of volunteering. Other youth schemes such as the *Duke of Edinburgh Award* include an element of 'community service'. For an increasing number of university and other courses, students are encouraged to gain relevant experience either before, or during their course, through

4. WCVA and Wales TUC (2011), A charter for strengthening relationships between paid and unpaid staff. Available at www.wcva.org.uk/volunteering-under-policy.

volunteering. At a time when there is high competition for employment, volunteering becomes an important way of demonstrating skills and experience on Curriculum Vitae.

6. FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Core funding for the volunteering infrastructure is assured on a five-year basis from the Welsh Government. More than £1.3m annually is committed to funding volunteer centres and the maintenance of the volunteering website www.volunteering-wales.net. An additional grant was made in 2011/12 for the enhancement and upgrading of the website.

A number of grant schemes exist in Wales which aim to support and increase volunteering. The *Volunteering in Wales Fund (VWF)* has been run by WCVA since 1982 and has helped to train and support thousands of new volunteers. In 2010/11 alone it enabled the recruitment of over 3,500 new volunteers who have contributed in excess of 350,000 hours to their communities. In financial terms this is worth about £3.8m. The VWF fund aims particularly to support volunteers drawn from key underrepresented groups such as the disabled, 50 year plus, 16-25 year-olds, black and ethnic minority groups, the unemployed and those not in education or training. Vital funding is provided for key posts such as a Volunteer Coordinator or Development Workers and they help to ensure the recruitment, selection and training of new volunteers. Projects supported range from conservation to caring and counselling. Many of the volunteers acquire new skills and their volunteering opens up new opportunities for careers and further training.

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Environment Wales is a partnership of third sector organisations, funded by the Welsh Government. Its aim is to contribute to sustainable development by supporting and encouraging voluntary action to protect and improve the environment of Wales. WCVA is the administrative partner. It is responsible for providing the administrative and financial framework. There are also eight operational partners who host the development officer team (the partners being BTCV, Cylch, Cynnal Cymru, Groundwork Wales, Keep Wales Tidy, West Wales Eco Centre, The National Trust and the Wildlife Trusts Wales). The development officers provide community and voluntary groups with advice and support. Each funded project is allocated a dedicated development officer who remains a constant point of contact. Environment Wales provides funding of around £580,000 per annum through five different grant streams. On average this enables around 100 organisations per year to undertake 200,000 hours of action for the environment, with the help of over 4,000 volunteers. Environment Wales also administers the Welsh Government's Supporting Sustainable Living grant scheme to help organisations from all sectors help bring about long-term changes in behaviour and lifestyle to tackle the causes and consequences of climate change. The main beneficiaries of this grant are third sector organisations.

GwirVol, through WCVA as the administrative partner, offers grants to third and public sector organisations to develop youth volunteering opportunities in Wales and also overseas. These projects are monitored and evaluated on an ongoing basis. GwirVol also funds part-time Youth Volunteering Advisor posts within a volunteer centre in each county of Wales to ensure there is a structure of support to young volunteers. The Millennium Volunteers (MV) programme has been running for over ten years and is now part of the GwirVol initiative. Its aim is to recognise

and reward volunteering by 16-25 year olds in Wales through certificates issued for 50, 100 and 200 hours of volunteering. The 200 hour award is signed by the First Minister. Funding of up to £10,000 is available for projects that want to use MV with their youth volunteers, and can be applied for through the GwirVol process. Projects which have funding from other sources or do not incur extra costs by using MV can apply for 'non-funded status' so that they can use the Award without going through the grants process. During 2012, young people volunteering in sport are eligible for a special MV50 Sport certificate which carries the London 2012 Inspire mark logo (associated with the Olympic Games). Additionally, a small fund is made available by GwirVol every year to volunteer centres to cover the expenses of young people involved with MV or GwirVol who would not be able to volunteer otherwise. Young people can apply for this through their local Youth Volunteering Advisor.

A successful bid to the Big Lottery Fund for just under £1 million over two years will enable all volunteer centres in Wales to focus clearly on developing appropriate volunteering placements for those who are unemployed or who have higher support needs. It will also provide invaluable learning about best practice in this regard so that all organisations can learn from the work and improve their practice in the future.

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7. REGULAR AND SYSTEMATIC RESEARCH

WCVA produces a summary of current research periodically. The latest is entitled “*Third Sector Statistical Resource 2011*”⁵. The following sources of data are used to compile the information. The UK government carried out the “Citizenship Survey”⁶ from 2001 to 2011, which had a small sample in Wales. The results were not consistently published for Wales, but WCVA has analysed the Welsh sample and it provides some relevant information. The Welsh Government funded the “*Living in Wales*” survey⁷ from 2004 to 2008 and there are plans for this to continue in a new national survey. This has included different questions relating to volunteering and to the wider concept of participating in civil society or third sector groups. Charities Aid Foundation and the National Council for Voluntary Organisations fund a survey of giving behaviour for the UK⁸ which includes some Welsh respondents.

WCVA has undertaken its own organisation based survey⁹, every two or three years, which provides data on formal volunteering. The next survey will be in autumn 2012. A third sector knowledge portal¹⁰ has been established in partnership with the British Library which contains links to relevant research. It is common for academic research to be based on case studies in different parts of the UK but without distinguishing between them, so much of the qualitative research reported can be applied with care to Wales.

5. WCVA (2011) *Third Sector Statistical Resource*. Available at www.wcva.org.uk/images_client/publication/WCVA%20Almanac%202010%20E.pdf

6. Communities and local government (2011) *Citizenship survey April 2010-Mar 2011, England*. Available at: www.communities.gov.uk/publications/corporate/statistics/citizenshipsurveyq4201011

7. Welsh Assembly Government (2008) *Living in Wales 2007*. Available at: http://data.gov.uk/dataset/living_in_wales_survey

8. Charities Aid Foundation and National Council for Voluntary Organisations (2011) *UK Giving 2011*. Available at: www.cafonline.org/publications/2011-publications/uk-giving-2011.aspx

9. WCVA (2009) *Formal Volunteering in Wales*. Unpublished working paper

10. Third sector knowledge portal: www.tsrc.ac.uk/Research/KnowledgePortal/tabid/840/Default.aspx

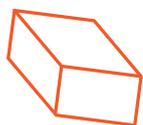
8. ETHICS AND QUALITY STANDARDS FOR VOLUNTEERING

The delivery plan for WCVA and volunteer centres lays down the expected range of services delivered. Targets are set by each organisation but performance is monitored centrally by WCVA and the combined results are discussed at the *Volunteering SON (Service Operational Network)*. This ensures mutual accountability and ongoing discussion about quality and consistency of the service provided.



The main quality standard for volunteer-involving organisations is the *Investing in Volunteers Standard*¹¹. It is a UK standard, owned by the UK Volunteering Forum. The Investing in Volunteers Operations Group is responsible for development and management at UK level and a Quality Assurance Panel is responsible for monitoring Quality Assurance.

Within Wales, Investing in Volunteers is managed by WCVA. More than 50 organisations have achieved the award since it began in 2004 and about 25 are actively working towards it. The new Investing in Volunteers ‘health check’ gives organisations the option for a trained advisor to undertake a benchmarking exercise and to draw up an action plan, setting out what would be necessary to fulfil the requirements of the standard. This is less costly and less demanding than undertaking the full Investing in Volunteers process. It is an attractive alternative in some cases.



The All Wales NHS Volunteering Network has produced its own volunteering “toolkit” which relates the Investing in Volunteers standard to the context of the National Health Service, giving examples of documentation and practice. All training and advice is based upon awareness of the Investing in Volunteers standard, which is accepted as the model for good practice in volunteer management.

9. AWARENESS OF VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES

Volunteering opportunities are advertised on the volunteering Wales website www.volunteering-wales.net. Young people are likely to search database via the youth friendly GwirVol portal website www.gwirvol.org. All volunteer centres have access to this database. They support individuals via email, phone and in person to find suitable opportunities.

Volunteer’s Week is celebrated throughout the UK during the first week in June. Volunteer centres are committed to promoting this and local organisations make it an opportunity for recognising and rewarding volunteers in some way and for raising wider awareness. Volunteer’s Week certificates are available for organisations to present to volunteers (free of charge from WCVA). Other resources are limited due to lack of specific funding for Volunteer’s Week. Certain publications (such as the Big Issue magazine) and broadcast media sometimes take the opportunity to profile volunteering during Volunteer’s Week.

11. The Investing in Volunteers Standard (2010) is available at www.investinginvolunteers.org.uk

Awareness about volunteering in general is also raised by the annual *Volunteer of the Year awards*, which are managed by WCVA, and by many local volunteer awards schemes run by volunteer centres.

10. ADDITIONAL COUNTRY SPECIFICITIES

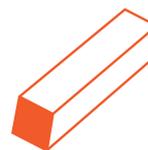
National conferences (at least one per year on volunteering), policy briefing events (on volunteering issues every one or two years) and a bimonthly newsletter “*Volunteer News*” keep the sector informed of news and development in volunteering. The website www.wcva.org.uk includes a range of information sheets, model policies and other information which is useful to volunteer managers. WCVA’s *freephone Helpdesk* service, (0800 2888 329), is available during office hours for individuals and organisations and can direct enquirers to the expertise they require, in English or in Welsh.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Partnership Agreement that provides the basis for Welsh Government core funding for WCVA, county voluntary councils and volunteer centres is due for renewal in 2013. The agreement has been ground-breaking, underpinning a coherent and integrated support structure, and demonstrating the Welsh Government’s commitment to the intrinsic value of the third sector to the quality of life for people and communities in Wales. Working with its partners, WCVA will look to agree with the Welsh Government how to build on and improve support for volunteering in Wales from 2013 to 2018.

Co-operation with UK colleagues in the areas of volunteering policy, youth, and Investing in Volunteers has developed well in recent years. Communication via the phone and Internet has reduced the necessity for face-to-face meetings and enabled the sharing of information with ease. We need to continue to develop efficient means of working together, to inspire and learn from one another and to develop joint initiatives where appropriate.

The recognition of volunteer time in the delivery of Structural Fund programmes is permitted by the European Commission and is successfully used in Wales. The European Commission could do more to encourage other member states to do likewise.



Resources

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