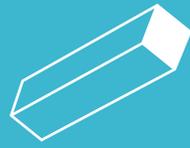




EUROPEAN VOLUNTEER CENTRE

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CHAPTER

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VOLUNTEERING
INFRASTRUCTURE
IN EUROPE



ENGLAND



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1. VOLUNTEERING INFRASTRUCTURE CONCEPT DEFINITION

Definition of infrastructure

Volunteering England's 2004 strategy for volunteering infrastructure, Building on Success¹, included the following definition of voluntary and community sector infrastructure:

The physical facilities, structures, systems, relationships, people, knowledge and skills that exist to support and develop, coordinate, represent and promote front-line organisations thus enabling them to deliver their missions more effectively.

This work also defines infrastructure organisations as:

Voluntary organisations whose primary purpose is the provision of infrastructure functions (support and development, coordination, representation and promotion) to front-line voluntary and community organisations.

The role of volunteering infrastructure

A number of reviews have taken a strategic look at the role volunteering infrastructure should play in England.

In 2004, Volunteering England published Building on Success: a strategy for volunteering infrastructure in England 2004-2014. The strategy recommended a number of steps be taken to strengthen volunteering infrastructure, including the development of a single brand and national quality assurance programme for local infrastructure bodies. The strategy also recommended the adoption of a simpler set of core functions to define the role of volunteering infrastructure more clearly and encourage a greater coherence in approach across England. These core functions are now used by the Volunteer Centre network, with centres required to demonstrate successful delivery of the functions in order to use the Volunteer Centre name and branding.

The core functions Volunteer Centres are expected to deliver are:

1. *Brokerage;*
2. *Marketing volunteering;*
3. *Good practice development;*
4. *Developing volunteering opportunities;*
5. *Policy response and campaigning.*

1. Penberthy, C. and Forster, A. (2004) Building on success. Strategy for volunteering infrastructure in England 2004 – 2014, Volunteering England: London

The strategy also expressed concern about the “unsustainable number” of local volunteering infrastructure bodies and called for a consolidation of local infrastructure made up of fewer organisations.

Changes to the structure of infrastructure

As the UK Government implements its plan to reduce the UK’s deficit by reducing public spending commitments, funding for the voluntary sector is being reduced. In addition, funding programmes are increasingly being designed to provide incentives for organisations to merge or collaborate in order to reduce their costs. These funding changes are likely to create a shift in the number of infrastructure bodies as well as how they work.

Local infrastructure

Following a new funding programme, further change to volunteering and wider voluntary sector infrastructure is on the way. Announced in July 2011, the ‘Transforming Local Infrastructure’ programme requires local infrastructure organisations to merge or collaborate in order to secure funding. Whereas several infrastructure bodies in an area may have been funded by government before, this programme will only fund one bid in each county, requiring organisations to merge or collaborate in order to bid.

This reflects a government aim to ‘rationalise and transform’ local infrastructure, bringing greater cost effectiveness and reducing reliance on government funding. As the programme hasn’t been fully launched, the implications of Transforming Local Infrastructure are not yet clear. However, given the need for collaboration to secure funding, it is expected that the programme will lead to significant changes to infrastructure in some areas.

National volunteering infrastructure

Changes to the central government funding available to support national volunteering and voluntary sector infrastructure bodies are also changing the nature of infrastructure. Central government had supported a number of national infrastructure organisations, including Volunteering England, over a number of years through a ‘strategic partners’ programme. In February 2011, the Minister for Civil Society announced that the strategic partner programme, which was providing core funding to 42 organisations would be abolished in 2014, with a smaller group of 12 organisations receiving tapered funding until that point. Organisations were encouraged by government to merge or collaborate in order to secure funding. A number of national charities have merged as a result and further changes to the shape of national infrastructure are expected.



2. VOLUNTEERING LANDSCAPE

In England, the most authoritative ‘top-down’ definition of volunteering is found in the introduction to the “refreshed” *Compact on relations between Government and the Third Sector in England*². This defines volunteering as:

... an activity that involves spending unpaid time doing something that aims to benefit the environment or individuals or groups (other than or, in addition to close relatives)

2. Home Office (1998) *Compact on relations between government and the voluntary and community sector in England* Cm 4100, The Stationery Office, London

The introduction to the Compact goes on to state that “there are four principles that are fundamental to volunteering”. These are:

1. *Choice: Volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual.*
2. *Diversity: Volunteering should be open to all.*
3. *Mutual benefit: Both the volunteer and the organisation that the volunteer works with should benefit from the relationship.*
4. *Recognition: The contribution of volunteers should be recognised.*

Volunteering is a popular activity within the UK. The most up-to-date information is available from the 2009-10 Citizenship Survey³, which was until 2011 published by the Department for Communities and Local Government (the survey was discontinued in 2011). This survey makes several important distinctions. Firstly, between formal volunteering (which takes place within a group, club or organisation) and informal volunteering (which takes independently of such groups); and secondly, between volunteering by an individual that takes place at least once a month (regular volunteering) and that which takes place at least once a year.

In 2009-10, 25% of people took part in regular formal volunteering in England (at least once a month) while 40% volunteered at least once a year (this figure includes the 25% mentioned above). Volunteering informally is even more popular: in the same period of time, 29% of people took part regularly and 54% of people did so at least once a year. The level of formal volunteering has remained relatively stable between 2001 and 2009-10, whereas the rate of informal volunteering has seen a steady but significant decline more recently.

Data within England also shows that levels of volunteering are significantly linked to age: those aged between 35 and 74 years are more likely to undertake regular formal volunteering than

other age groups, whereas people aged between 16 and 25 and between 65 and 74 year olds are the most likely to undertake regular informal volunteering compared to other age groups. Gender is also important. Women are more likely to undertake both formal volunteering and informal volunteering than men (42% compared to 39% for all formal volunteering).

The most popular fields of activity for volunteers in England include education (31% of current formal volunteers), religion (24%), sports and exercise (22%) and health and disability (22%).

Many other factors affect volunteering rates including socio-economic classification. Rates of volunteering are higher amongst those people in higher socio-economic classifications, in employment, with higher levels of qualifications, and those people in groups considered not to be at risk of social exclusion.

The most popular fields of activity for volunteers in England include education (31% of current formal volunteers), religion (24%), sports and exercise (22%) and health and disability (22%). Most commonly, formal volunteers are involved in raising and handling money (65%) and organising / helping to run an event (50%). Many are also involved as trustees or committee members (28%).

3. Department of Communities and Local Government, Citizenship Survey (2010) 2009-10 (April 2009 – March 2010) Statistical release 12, England, London, Department for Communities and Local Government, 2010.

3. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR VOLUNTEERING AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION

Legal framework

Unlike workers or employees, volunteers in the UK have no special legal status. While many pieces of legislation refer to, and affect volunteers, no single law creates a clear codified legal framework for volunteering or the voluntary sector. A number of Acts of Parliament have, however, important implications for volunteering:

The Police Act 1997

The Police Act has two important implications for volunteering. The first is that the Act legislated for the creation of the national Criminal Records Bureau and vetting system. A Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) check, which details an individual's criminal history, is required by an employee or volunteer wanting to work with children or vulnerable adults. Concerns about CRB checks have been a prominent policy issue in the voluntary sector, due to concerns about the bureaucracy faced by volunteers using the system. In October 2010, a government review of the system was announced, with legislation being brought forward to reduce the scope of the system.

The second implication for volunteering came in more detailed regulations set out by the Police Minister in 2002, which provide a rare example of a "volunteer" being formally defined in a statutory instrument. According to the regulations, a "volunteer" means a person "engaged in an activity which involves spending time, unpaid (except for travel and other approved out-of-pocket expenses), doing something which aims to benefit some third party other than or in addition to a close relative". This is the working definition of a volunteer used by most government departments and agencies as a reference point for their work relating to volunteering.

National Minimum Wage Act 1998

The National Minimum Wage Act created, for the first time in the UK, a universal right for workers to receive a centrally prescribed national minimum wage. In setting out the exclusions from the minimum wage, the Act created a new category of volunteer, a "voluntary worker".

The Act gives all workers the right to receive a minimum wage, with a worker being defined as someone working under a contract. During the drafting of the Bill, concern was raised that given the nature of their activity, some volunteers on structured full-time programmes are in effect working under a contract, and may have become entitled to the minimum wage.

To avoid this problem, a new "voluntary worker" legal status was created, to recognise specific circumstances in which someone may volunteer to work under a contract. In addition to out-of-pocket expenses, voluntary workers are able to receive financial support to cover their subsistence costs and be provided with free accommodation for the duration of their placement. They cannot however receive any financial contribution towards accommodation costs.

While the voluntary worker status offers a sensible exception to the minimum wage for certain types of volunteer, the definition continues to create some confusion in the voluntary sector.

The new "voluntary worker" legal status was created for people who may volunteer to work under a contract. In addition to out-of-pocket expenses, voluntary workers are able to receive financial support to cover their subsistence costs and be provided with free accommodation for the duration of their placement.

Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006

Following the murders of two children by a school caretaker who had been subject to a CRB check, the independent Bichard Inquiry recommended a more robust vetting system for those working with children and vulnerable adults. The Act created a new organisation, the Independent Safeguarding Authority, with responsibility for maintaining a register of those people deemed fit to work with these groups. People wanting to volunteer or work with children or vulnerable adults will need to register with the authority.

The proposed system has led to debate in the media, much of it highlighting concern that the tougher safeguarding regime will deter volunteering. In response to public concern, a review took place in September 2009, which led to some elements of the scheme being relaxed. Following continued anxiety, the programme was frozen by the new coalition government whilst the scheme is reviewed.

Other legislation and “volunteer rights”

UK law offers no specific protection to volunteers as volunteers. Legal protections provided by the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Data Protection Act 1998 apply to volunteers in the same way as they do to any other member of the public who is not protected by virtue of being an employee or a worker.

The absence of any specific legal protection or dedicated rights for volunteers has led to growing concern among some volunteering groups. A number of high profile cases of volunteers alleging mistreatment by well-known national charities led to the establishment of a “Volunteer Rights Inquiry”⁴ in England. Having explored a range of options including the creation of a Volunteering Ombudsman, the Inquiry recommended stronger efforts within volunteer-involving organisations to improve practice, with a later review to consider whether following these steps an independent arbiter is needed.

Policy framework

A wide range of government departments have long provided financial support to volunteering in a number of ways, but since 1997 two departments have been tasked with co-ordinating government voluntary sector policy. For much of the previous Labour administration, responsibility for the voluntary and community sector sat with the Home Office (the UK Interior Ministry). Support for the sector was provided by the Voluntary and Community Unit, which later became the Active Communities Directorate.

In 2006, recognising the growing importance of the sector to government policy, and to acknowledge the rise of social enterprise, the *Office of the Third Sector* was created. Based in the Cabinet Office, the Office brought together the voluntary sector responsibilities of the Home Office and the social enterprise responsibilities of the then Department for Trade and Industry. Headed by a Minister for the Third Sector, the reformed structure created the UK’s first minister with sole responsibility for voluntary sector issues, including volunteering.

Following the election of a Conservative/Liberal Democrat Coalition government in May 2010, responsibility for the third sector has remained in the Cabinet Office. The Office of the Third Sector has been renamed the Office for Civil Society, but no substantive changes made to its responsibilities. The newly elected Prime Minister has publicly discouraged use of the term ‘third sector,’ preferring instead ‘civil society’. The co-ordination role and leadership role of



4. <http://www.volunteering.org.uk/policy-and-campaigns/volunteer-rights-inquiry-3r-promise>

the Office for Civil Society does not extend to all aspects of volunteering. The Department for Communities and Local Government leads on civic participation and elements of the Big Society agenda relating to local government.

The Compact

Relations between the voluntary sector and government in England are governed by *the Compact*. The development of a national agreement setting out clear mutual expectations and responsibilities between sector and state was recommended by the Independent Commission on the Future of the Voluntary Sector in England, chaired by Professor Nicholas Deakin. This led to the creation of what became known as the Compact, which was launched in 1998 by Deputy Home Secretary Alun Michael MP.

The Compact is overseen by the “Compact Partnership” of two organisations – the *Office for Civil Society*, representing the government and *Compact Voice*, representing the voluntary sector. The Commission for the Compact, a body involved in Compact implementation was recently abolished as part of the review of government agencies.

A single national Compact is underpinned by *Local Compacts*, agreed by local authorities and representatives of the voluntary sector in particular areas of England. The Compact is not intended to be merely a document, but a basis for building strong partnership working between government departments, agencies, local authorities and the voluntary sector.

As well as encouraging more constructive relationships, the Compact can also be used by the voluntary sector to seek redress when organisations believe that government has not treated them fairly. For example, the Compact requires government to provide at least twelve weeks for consultations and to give fair warning to organisations of cuts in funding. A Compact advocacy service, operated by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO), provides assistance to voluntary sector bodies that believe the government has breached the Compact’s requirements in its dealings with them.

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

National infrastructure

Volunteering England is the national infrastructure body dedicated to volunteering issues. A wider group of infrastructure bodies represent volunteer-involving organisations, such as Community Matters which represents local community organisations and the National Association for Community and Voluntary Action (NAVCA) which represents local Councils for Voluntary Service and other local support bodies. NCVO is the lead infrastructure body for the voluntary sector as a whole.

Local infrastructure

At a local level, the national network of Volunteer Centres provides the mainstay of volunteering support and development. There are around 300 Volunteer Centres across England. As well as advertising local volunteering opportunities, the centres provide support to local volunteer-involving organisations. The network is a mixture of independent organisations and Volunteer Centres being run as part of a larger organisation, such as a Council for Voluntary Service.

Volunteer-involving organisations

The UK has an extensive network of volunteer-involving organisations. Some of the largest organisations include heritage charity the National Trust, with 61,000 volunteers and health and social care charity WRVS⁵ with 40,000 volunteers. Environmental volunteering charity British Trust for Conservation Volunteers⁶ (BTCV) involves 628,000 volunteers through its range of opportunities and its community group network, while Community Service Volunteers (CSV) involves 160,000 through its range of initiatives.

5. OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

Volunteering opportunities and programmes are run across all three sectors – public, private and voluntary sector. There is a long tradition of volunteer involvement in the public sector, including in the health and social care sector. The UK's National Health Service took as its foundation the voluntary hospital movement.

Volunteers engaged directly by government departments

As well as providing a range of funding streams and support programmes for volunteering, government departments and agencies directly support and involve volunteers in a wide range of roles.

Volunteers are engaged across government. The Home Office funds the national Neighbourhood Watch scheme, which involves people in local crime prevention activities. Natural England, the government's conservation agency, involves around 2,200 as volunteer wardens on National Nature Reserves.

The criminal justice system involves large numbers of volunteers, with 30,000 people sitting as volunteer Magistrates and 14,000 people giving their time as Special Constables in the police forces of England and Wales. In addition, thousands of volunteers play a role in ensuring the rights of those detained are respected, by serving as Independent Custody Visitors, Prison Visitors or members of prison monitoring boards. The criminal justice system is a prime example of how reliant public services are on the continued involvement of volunteers.

Volunteer support for the emergency services is one of the most high profile areas. HM Coastguard relies heavily on its volunteer Coastguard Rescue Service, and the UK's lifeboat service is provided by the Royal National Lifeboat Institute (RNLI), whose rescue boats are crewed entirely by volunteers, although the government does not provide any financial support to the RNLI. The UK Mountain and Cave Rescue Service is staffed entirely by 3,500 volunteers.

The National Health Service has long involved volunteers, and health and social care remains one of the most popular areas in which people give their time. While there is no overall figure for the number of volunteers in health, involvement is significant; Birmingham University Hospital NHS Trust alone involves 1,400 volunteers across its hospital sites.

In addition to direct involvement, numerous charities run schemes to engage volunteers in the public sector. Health charity WRVS runs shops and activities in hospitals across England, while Community Service Volunteers recruits full-time volunteers to work alongside care workers.

5. <http://www.wrvs.org.uk/>

6. <http://www.btcv.org.uk/>



6. FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

NCVO's 2010 UK Civil Society Almanac⁷ provides valuable information about how the voluntary and community sector – which involves the greatest proportion of volunteers – is funded. The total income of the sector in 2007/08 was £35.5 billion, of which £12.8 billion comes from

The reduction in the income of the voluntary and community sector – which involves the greatest proportion of volunteers – has been estimated to be between £3.2 billion and £5.1 billion.

statutory sources (grants, contracts and fees), although three-quarters of charities receive no government funding at all. Income from individuals (donations, legacies, fees and fundraising) contributed £13.1 billion, making up the single most important funding stream for the voluntary sector as a whole.

While such figures provide useful information, they describe the whole voluntary and community sector, which is broader than volunteering. Evidence on how volunteering itself is funded tends to be more limited, although some information is available. Surveys undertaken by IVR show that volunteer management is under-funded within many organisations. Management Matters⁸, a survey of volunteer managers in England carried

out by IVR in 2008, found that 31% reported that their organisation did not have funding for supporting volunteers. Organisations with fewer volunteers are more likely to report that they received no funding for supporting volunteers. When funding does exist, it is frequently common for organisations to receive it from external grants which specify supporting volunteers (24%).

All sectors within England have been affected by the Government's attempts to address the public deficit and reduce public spending. The reduction in the income of the voluntary and community sector – the sector which involves the greatest proportion of volunteers – has been estimated to be between £3.2 billion and £5.1 billion⁹. It is quite possible that this will have a negative effect on volunteer management and the ability of organisations to effectively involve and support volunteers.

7. REGULAR AND SYSTEMATIC RESEARCH

There is a strong body of research focusing on volunteering in England. Large-scale national surveys of volunteering have been carried out by the Institute for Volunteering Research (IVR) in partnership with other organisations in 1981, 1991, 1997 and 2007. The 2007 national survey of volunteering, *Helping Out*¹⁰, explored volunteering and charitable giving, allowing the relationship between the two to be examined. A further major source of statistical data on volunteering has been the government's Citizenship Surveys which began in 2001 and ran until 2011, taking place initially every other year (2001, 2003, 2005, 2007) and then on a rolling, continual basis. This survey provided the primary evidence on levels of volunteering in England. In 2011, as part of the Government's attempts to address the public deficit and reduce public spending, the Citizenship Survey was discontinued.

7. Clark, J., Kane, D., Wilding, K. and Wilton, J. (2010) *The UK Civil Society Almanac*, NCVO: London

8. Machin, J. and Ellis Paine, A. (2008) *Management matters: a national survey of volunteer management capacity*, IVR: London

9. New Philanthropy Capital (2011), *NPC perspectives: Preparing for cuts, how funders should support charities in a world of government cuts and changing funding structures*, London: NPC

10. Low N., Butt S., Ellis Paine A. and Davis Smith J. *Helping Out. A national survey of volunteering and charitable giving*, London, Cabinet Office, 2007

There is also a great deal of wider research exploring the different elements of volunteering, using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Topics of study can be highly diverse, but frequently focus on volunteer management, barriers to volunteering and access, and impact and benefit to the different stakeholders involved. Much of this research is hosted within IVR's Evidence Bank (www.ivr.org.uk), which contains over 200 freely-available reports and publications on volunteering. There are also a wide range of tools available to organisations to measure the impact of volunteering, but two of the more popular include the *Volunteering Impact Assessment Toolkit (VIAT)*¹¹ and the *Volunteer Investment and Value Audit (VIVA)*¹², both developed by IVR.

While a great deal of research has already been undertaken by IVR and other organisations, there are nonetheless major gaps in the evidence base which require further exploration. In May 2011 IVR hosted a roundtable discussion on the future of the volunteering research agenda, bringing together key researchers in the field. Some of the key areas requiring future research are identified below:

1. *Research examining how and why people engage in volunteering, taking into account a volunteer's life course and the wider social and environmental context within which their volunteering takes place.*
2. *Much research on volunteering has tended to focus on its positive impact but there is less research on the possible negative consequences of volunteering.*
3. *The existence of tensions and complexities around volunteers replacing paid staff, particularly in the context of public service delivery.*
4. *A need for researchers to engage more critically with methodology, including the advantages and disadvantages of different methods.*

8. ETHICS AND QUALITY STANDARDS FOR VOLUNTEERING

There is a UK-wide quality standard for volunteering, run through the UK Volunteering Forum, a partnership of the national volunteering infrastructure bodies in England, Scotland, Wales and

In England, over 550 organisations have achieved the "Investing in Volunteers" standard, ranging from small community organisations to large national charities.

Northern Ireland. Over 550 organisations have achieved the "Investing in Volunteers" standard, ranging from small community organisations to large national charities.

Sitting alongside the main standard is "*Investing in Volunteers for Employers*", aimed at strengthening high quality involvement of employees as volunteers. Organisations such as Microsoft, the BBC and Barclays have achieved the standard, recognising the work they do to support their employees to volunteer.

11. <https://ecommerce.volunteering.org.uk/PublicationDetails.aspx?ProductID=V311>

12. <http://www.ivr.org.uk/component/ivr/viva--the-volunteer-investment-and-value-audit-a-self-help-guide>

9. AWARENESS OF VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES

Finding out about volunteering

Volunteers report that they find out about opportunities in a variety of ways. The 2007 national survey of volunteering and charitable giving found that the most common way was through word-of-mouth (66% of volunteers found out about their volunteering this way). The next most common way was having previously used the services of the organisation (20%) and through a leaflet or poster (7%) was the third most common way¹³.

National database of volunteering opportunities

The UK has a national online volunteering database, administered by online charity YouthNet. The database can be accessed through the www.Do-it.org website, launched in 2000. At any one time, there are around one million volunteering opportunities available through Do-it and an average of 16,000 volunteers register with the site each month. The majority of volunteering opportunities on Do-it are uploaded by local Volunteer Centres.

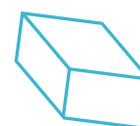
Promotion of volunteering

Every year, national promotional campaigns are run to raise awareness of volunteering. Community Service Volunteers runs the annual *Make a Difference Day*, while Volunteering England organises *Volunteers Week* and *Student Volunteering Week*.

10. ADDITIONAL COUNTRY SPECIFICITIES

The constitutional structure of the United Kingdom means that policy making responsibility is divided between the UK central government and devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Voluntary sector policy is one of the devolved policy areas, meaning that the Scottish and Welsh Governments and the Northern Ireland Executive have direct jurisdiction over volunteering policy. Approaches to volunteering infrastructure therefore vary between England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The chief executives of the national volunteering infrastructure bodies in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland meet regularly through the United Kingdom Volunteering Forum. The Forum was established to ensure close co-operation on volunteering matters across the UK and is supported by a policy forum and a research forum.



13. Low N., Butt S., Ellis Paine A. and Davis Smith J. *Helping Out. A national survey of volunteering and charitable giving*, London, Cabinet Office, 2007.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

To improve the quality, quantity and diversity of volunteering, Volunteering England has been lobbying for:

- *The reduction of red tape and bureaucracy associated with volunteering, including simplifying Criminal Record Bureau checks.*
- *Continued support for volunteering infrastructure organisations.*
- *Clear steps by government to ensure that 'social value', including the value of volunteering, is taken into account in the awarding of contracts to deliver publicly funded services.*
- *Stronger links to be built between local Jobcentres and the voluntary sector, to ensure that those looking for work can receive advice on volunteering opportunities as well as job opportunities.*
- *Clearer guidance from insurance companies to end the practice of voluntary drivers being discriminated against with higher premiums.*

At a European level:

- *We would like to see greater opportunities for organisations to share policy and practice knowledge across Europe.*

Resources

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Department of Communities and Local Government, *2008-09 Citizenship Survey. Volunteering and Charitable Giving Topic Report*, London, Department for Communities and Local Government, 2010

Home Office, *The Volunteering Compact Code of Good Practice*, London, Home Office, 2005

Independent Commission on the Future of the Voluntary Sector in England www.jrf.org.uk/publications/future-voluntary-sector

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