



**Open Report on behalf of Lee Sirdifield, Assistant Director - Corporate**

Report to:	<b>Public Protection and Communities Scrutiny Committee</b>
Date:	<b>19 April 2022</b>
Subject:	<b>Volunteering in Lincolnshire</b>

**Summary:**

This report provides an update from Voluntary Centre Services and Lincolnshire CVS about the role, impact, and future developments in volunteering across Lincolnshire. It provides insight from recent engagement work with volunteers, along with setting out recommendations for future areas of focus.

**Actions Required:**

Members of the Public Protection and Communities Scrutiny Committee are invited to review and comment on the information contained in this report and highlight any recommendations or further actions for consideration.

**1. Background**

- 1.1 Voluntary Centre Services (VCS) and Lincolnshire CVS (LCVS) are the county's two generic infrastructure organisations, providing a range of support to community and voluntary sector organisations including the co-ordination and development of volunteering through district based and nationally accredited volunteer centres.
- 1.2 The community strategy for Lincolnshire County Council places a focus on volunteering, recognising the valuable contributions that volunteers make to Lincolnshire. The strategy sets out ambitions to utilise volunteering to support people to take the first steps into employment, gain the confidence and experience that they need to thrive, or to enable individuals to give something back to their community. This report provides an update on work completed to improve the access and delivery of volunteering opportunities across Lincolnshire.

## **Volunteering and the Covid-19 Pandemic**

- 1.3 Volunteering has been at the forefront of the Covid-19 recovery, and the crisis continues to demonstrate the importance of volunteering and the community spirit that exists within communities. The aim of VCS/LCVS has been to help both organisations and members of the public wishing to volunteer by offering safe, practical advice and guidance; to minimise the spread of coronavirus and keep volunteers safe.
- 1.4 Covid-19 Emergency Response - During the early part of the pandemic and throughout the various phases of restrictions over the last two years, VCS/LCVS have worked locally with the LRF Communities and Volunteering Co-ordination Cell and District Hubs to create pathways for brokering volunteers into local and national opportunities. These include the NHS Volunteer Responders Scheme, British Red Cross Emergency Reserves, volunteer telephone befrienders, foodbanks and local neighbourhood and village-based volunteer groups.
- 1.5 Over the last two years with Covid-19 restrictions, VCS/LCVS have supported over 3,000 people to volunteer locally in a variety of roles from the initial emergency response to the vaccination programme and traditional volunteering roles.

## **Covid-19 Vaccination Programme**

- 1.6 As Volunteer Centres, VCS/LCVS took the lead in supporting GP Practices and Primary Care Networks (PCNs) with recruiting volunteers for the various hubs and vaccinations sites that have delivered the Covid-19 vaccinations. They took on this role in partnership with the LRF Communities and Volunteering Cell and the Voluntary Engagement Team (VET). This also included being part of the LRF Expert Reference Group to support PCNs and test their plans for rolling out vaccination sites.
- 1.7 Alongside the direct recruitment and brokerage of individual volunteers, VCS/LCVS also provided support to the PCNs to help induct, manage, and support volunteers. Since the start of the vaccination programme in January 2021, VCS/LCVS have recruited over 550 volunteers who have been supporting the vaccination programme and have volunteered on a regular basis across seven vaccination centres in the County.

## **The Lincolnshire Legacy**

- 1.8 VCS/LCVS are working alongside colleagues within the Lincolnshire Resilience Forum (LRF) and the Voluntary Engagement Team (VET) to develop a long-term approach to supporting volunteers to help in emergency situations. The Lincolnshire Volunteers Programme will build upon and harness the momentum that has developed around volunteering, creating a lasting legacy for Lincolnshire. The programme will provide a robust level of coordination, training, and ongoing support for volunteers, whilst enabling the development of a range of new volunteering opportunities, utilising digital technologies, including:
  - Volunteering in response to emergency situations (through the LRF)
  - Volunteering at one off events and activities
  - Volunteering to support vulnerable individuals and communities

- 1.9 The programme will also provide Lincolnshire organisations with a simple and effective recruitment and deployment process to enable a flexible team of volunteers to react swiftly and at scale to local situations.

### **Traditional Volunteering**

- 1.10 With groups pausing their services, charity shops unable to operate and the usual face to face roles stopping, Lincolnshire saw a decline in active traditional volunteering opportunities available in communities throughout the pandemic. In 2020 there were fewer than 50 active opportunities on VCS/LCVS systems that were actively recruiting volunteers; mostly that were specific to the pandemic, such as Vaccine Clinic support, NHS Responders and grass roots community groups offering localised support to pockets of communities.
- 1.11 As Covid restrictions have continued to ease in the last year or so, VCS/LCVS have seen an increase in the need for volunteers in more traditional roles. In comparison to two years ago, there are now over 300 active roles on VCS/LCVS systems, with more being added daily. Not only are the traditional roles returning, but there are also new roles being registered by both new and existing organisations. There also continues to be an increase in the number of groups advertising for new trustees.

### **Volunteering Annual Survey (February-March 2022)**

- 1.12 The recent volunteering annual survey, completed by 162 people, aimed to understand how the Covid-19 pandemic has impacted on volunteering habits across Lincolnshire and identify volunteer motivations, barriers to volunteering, and any volunteer support needs. The key findings of the survey are detailed below.

#### **1.13 Length of time volunteering**

The survey asked respondents to provide details of the length of time that they have been volunteering for, along with whether they are actively engaged in volunteering at the moment.

- 47% of respondents have been volunteering for over three years.
- 13% of respondents have been volunteering for less than one year.
- 17% (27 people) are not currently volunteering but have in the past.
- 10% (16 people) are considering becoming a volunteer in the future.

#### **1.14 Barriers and obstacles to volunteering**

The survey also asked a series of questions to establish potential barriers and obstacles that may prevent or make it difficult for individuals to participate in volunteering opportunities.

- 36% of people indicated that they had faced obstacles or barriers that had made it difficult or prevented them from volunteering over the past twelve months.
- The main barriers were Covid-19 restrictions and having to isolate due to health conditions or family members health conditions.
- Other obstacles included challenges with travel and rural isolation, work commitments and difficulties accessing Covid-19 volunteering due to a disability.

- Respondents also indicated that their 'usual' volunteering opportunities were not available as groups and services had closed or scaled back their services and activities.

#### **1.15 Did the Covid-19 pandemic encourage or discourage volunteering?**

Throughout the pandemic the level of volunteering was closely monitored and as Lincolnshire entered recovery, attention was given to whether volunteers returned to posts, or whether the pandemic had changed individual preferences.

- 63% of people indicated that their views on volunteering had not changed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 22% (35 people) were encouraged to volunteer during the pandemic.
- 15% (25 people) were discouraged to volunteer during the pandemic.

#### **1.16 Supporting emergency volunteering within the future**

Lincolnshire saw a positive response to the Covid-19 emergency. The volunteering annual survey asked respondents to comment on whether they would be interested in engaging in any future emergency response activities.

- 58% of people indicated that they would be interested in get involved in Lincolnshire's emergency-response efforts in the future.

#### **1.17 Volunteering habits**

The survey also asked respondents to comment on how frequently they volunteer.

- 54% of people indicated that they were engaged in 'regular' volunteering.
- 7% of people indicated that they were engaged in 'ad-hoc' volunteering.
- A further 10% of people indicated that they were engaged in 'regular' and 'ad-hoc' volunteering.
- 29% of people are not currently volunteering.

#### **1.18 Volunteering hours**

Respondents were asked to provide information on the number of hours that they volunteer for each month.

- 17% of people indicated that they volunteer for over 30 hours per month.
- 29% of people indicated that they volunteer between 16 and 30 hours per month.
- 43% of people indicated that they volunteer between 5 and 15 hours per month.
- 11% of people indicated that they volunteer less than 5 hours per month.

#### **1.19 Volunteering prior to the pandemic**

To further explore the impact of the pandemic, respondents were asked to comment on whether they were still volunteering now with the same organisation that they were prior to the pandemic.

- 81% of people are still volunteering for the same organisation they were prior to the pandemic.
- 11% of people are no longer volunteering for the same organisation they were prior to the pandemic.
- 8% of people were not volunteering prior to the pandemic.

### **1.20 Interest in new volunteering roles**

Given the increase in volunteering opportunities that are now being presented, respondents were asked to indicate whether they would be interested in taking on new volunteering roles.

- 38% of people are interested in getting involved in volunteering or taking up new volunteering roles.

### **1.21 Volunteering support requirements**

It is recognised that some volunteers require support to access opportunities and to perform effectively in a volunteering role. Respondents were asked for views on the support arrangements that they required.

- 23% of people indicated that they would like support to find new volunteering opportunities.
- 19% of people would like to access additional training.
- 19% of people would like general advice about volunteering.

### **1.22 Volunteer motivations**

Respondents were asked to provide further insight into why they volunteer. This information could help to inform any future campaigns to attract new volunteers within Lincolnshire. There is a notable alignment to the volunteering ambitions set out in the community strategy.

- 85 people indicated that they volunteer 'to make a difference'.
- 59 people indicated that they volunteer 'because they are passionate about a particular cause or organisation'.
- 23 people indicated that they volunteer 'to gain/develop new skills'.
- 22 people indicated that they volunteer 'to build confidence'.
- 8 people indicated that they volunteer 'to help get back into paid work'.

### **1.23 Making volunteering easier**

The survey asked respondents to tell us how they thought that access to volunteering could be made easier. Respondents suggested the following ideas that might help people to start volunteering:

- Volunteer drop-in clinics/sessions
- Volunteering taster days
- Greater promotion and awareness of a central bank of volunteering opportunities
- Training and mentoring support
- Support to improve confidence

- Better public transport
- Less red tape and need for insurance, DBS checks, etc
- Less paperwork / simpler application processes
- More time/hours in the day

#### **1.24 Priority areas for Volunteer Centres during 2022-23:**

To help to ensure an appropriate focus for volunteer centres, a number of priority areas have been identified. These include:

- Recruiting volunteers for 'traditional' volunteering roles.
- Supporting organisations to develop new and innovative volunteering opportunities.
- Supporting volunteers with additional support needs to access volunteering opportunities.
- Supporting volunteer host organisations to develop best practice in supporting their volunteers.
- Provide a range of training opportunities for volunteers to develop their skills and knowledge.
- Supporting delivery of the Lincolnshire Volunteer's programme.
- Supporting employers to enable their staff to volunteer through Employer Supported Volunteering (ESV).
- Raise awareness and support volunteers to access one off or Micro-volunteering opportunities.
- Increase access to volunteering opportunities and raise awareness of volunteering in Lincolnshire.

## **2. Conclusion**

- 2.1 The survey provides useful insight into the views of those volunteering within Lincolnshire. This will be used to help support enhancements to the services offered by VCS/LCVS, and to deliver the ambitions of the community strategy in terms of supporting access to different types of volunteering activity.

## **3. Consultation**

The report presents the finding of an engagement exercise that VCS/LCVS ran in February and March 2022.

## **4. Appendices**

None

## **5. Background Papers**

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

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