

### Why is this issue important?

People involved in voluntary and community activities are reported to have higher levels of subjective wellbeing (Table 1).

In areas with high levels of community involvement there are benefits to the wellbeing of both those involved and to other people living in the area who are not themselves directly involved in contributing to local social capital.<sup>1</sup>

There is increasing evidence that high levels of social capital promote health and lower morbidity and mortality.<sup>2</sup> Volunteering is a key part of building social capital. Social capital, trust and participation in decision-making are strong indicators of resilience in local communities.<sup>3,4,5</sup>

Volunteering, amongst other benefits, has been shown to reduce the incidence of stress and depression and improve life satisfaction and longevity (Table 1).

Participation and volunteering in the community also raise children's educational achievements, improves behaviour and helps develop social networks and foster a sense of belonging.<sup>6</sup>

Volunteering around retirement can help with the transition from working life to retirement.

Nationally, nearly a quarter of people aged 50 or over are engaged in volunteering. Older people derive even greater mental health benefits from volunteering.<sup>2</sup>

Volunteering is defined locally as "an activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or individuals or groups other than, or in addition to, close relatives".<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Helliwell J. Well-being and Social Capital Harvard University: Conference on wellbeing and social capital; 2003 cited in Bell D. Annexes in Quality of Life and Well-being: Measuring the benefits of culture and sport: Literature review and thinkpiece. Edinburgh: Scottish Executive; 2005.

<sup>2</sup> Aked, J, Marks, N, Cordon, C. & Thompson, S. (2008). Five Ways to Wellbeing: The evidence. London: Available from

<http://www.neweconomics.org/projects/entry/five-ways-to-well-being>

<sup>3</sup> NHS Brighton and Hove & Brighton & Hove City Council. Annual Report of the Director of Public Health – Resilience. 2010.

<sup>4</sup> Impetus. Joining the Dots: a triple impact volunteering strategy for Brighton and Hove. 2010-2015; 2010

<sup>5</sup> Research based on referenda in Switzerland, in Donovan N and Halpern D. Life Satisfaction: The state of knowledge and implications for government. London: Cabinet Office Strategy Unit; 2002.

<sup>6</sup> Bacon N, Brophy M, Mguni N, Mulgan J, Shandro A. The State of Happiness. Can public policy shape people's wellbeing and resilience? London: The Young Foundation; 2010.

**Table 1: Benefits of volunteering**

Associations with reductions in the incidence of:	Clear positive impacts on volunteers:
depression <sup>7,8</sup>	longevity <sup>9</sup>
stress <sup>7,8</sup>	ability to carry out activities associated with daily living <sup>10</sup>
hospitalisation	ability to cope with their own ill-health <sup>10</sup>
pain	Life satisfaction (by improving psychological wellbeing, confidence and self-esteem) <sup>7,8,11</sup>
psychological distress	

In 2014 the Office for National Statistics found Britain to be the loneliness capital of Europe.<sup>12</sup> We are less likely to have strong friendships or know our neighbours than residents anywhere else in the EU, and a relatively high proportion of us have no one to rely on in a crisis (this applies to people of all ages). Loneliness can be twice as bad for older people's health as obesity and almost as great a cause of death as poverty.<sup>13,14</sup> Volunteering can help directly address loneliness.

The last Labour government's strategy to build social capital promoted greater investment by statutory organisations in the 'Third Sector' (not for profit businesses, including the voluntary and

<sup>7</sup> Impetus. Joining the Dots: a triple impact volunteering strategy for Brighton and Hove. 2010-2015; 2010. Update due Autumn 2015.

<sup>8</sup> Jenkinson CE et al. Is volunteering a public health intervention? A systematic review and meta-analysis of the health and survival of volunteers. BMC Public Health. 2013; 13: 773. Published online 2013 Aug 23. doi: 10.1186/1471-2458-13-773 [Accessed 30.07.15]

<sup>9</sup> Rogers N, Demakakos P, Taylor M, Steptoe A, Hammer M, Shankar A. Volunteering is associated with increased survival in able-bodied participants of the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing. journal of Epidemiology and Community Health 2016;70:583-588

<sup>10</sup> IVR and University of Lampeter - Volunteering & Health What impact does it really have? Available at: [http://www.ivr.org.uk/images/stories/news-item-attachment/volunteering\\_health\\_impact\\_full\\_report1.pdf](http://www.ivr.org.uk/images/stories/news-item-attachment/volunteering_health_impact_full_report1.pdf) [Accessed 05/09/2016]

<sup>11</sup> Fujiwara D, Oroyemi P, McKinnon E. Wellbeing and civil society Estimating The value of volunteering using subjective wellbeing data. Cabinet Office & DWP Working Paper 112. Available from: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/221227/WP112.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/221227/WP112.pdf) [Accessed 05/09/2016]

<sup>12</sup> Social Care Institute for Excellence. At a glance 60: Preventing Loneliness and Social Isolation among older people. 2012. Available at: <http://www.scie.org.uk/publications/atagance/atagance60.asp> [Accessed Sept 2016]

<sup>13</sup> Victor CR, Bowling A. A Longitudinal Analysis of Loneliness Among Older People in Great Britain. The Journal of Psychology. Vol. 146, Iss. 3, 2012h Available at: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00223980.2011.609572?src=ecsys&journalCode=vjrl20> [Accessed 05/09/2016]

<sup>14</sup> Loneliness is a major health risk for older adults. W.Harms. Feb.16, 2014 quoting; Cacioppo J, Rewarding Social Connections Promote Successful Aging. Seminar presentation University of Chicago Available at: <http://news.uchicago.edu/article/2014/02/16/aaas-2014-loneliness-major-health-risk-older-adults> [Accessed 05/09/2016]

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community sector) including volunteer programmes. The Coalition Government championed the concept of a 'Big Society', whereby the voluntary and community sector and its volunteers play a pivotal role in providing certain local and national services. The current Conservative Government further supports the notion of volunteering not only in the voluntary and community sector but also within the context of Civic Society, and for the delivery of certain public sector services. They propose a three day volunteering entitlement with full pay to all employees of public bodies and large companies.<sup>15</sup>

There are 32million people aged 16 years or over (74%) who volunteer each year in the UK. With 42% of people questioned in the Government's recent Community Life survey reporting volunteering formally (i.e. through a group, club or organisation) at least once in the previous year and 27% saying that they take part at least once a month ('regular volunteers').<sup>16</sup> Rates of volunteering in England are relatively stable, with the decline witnessed at the start of the recession having stopped.<sup>17</sup>

Various reports estimate the economic value of UK volunteering to be between £23 and £70billion a year.<sup>18</sup> However this is not the full picture, with recent research concluding that the nature of volunteering itself is changing in certain instances, for example job substitution and mandated volunteering, which questions the principles of volunteering and its added-value.<sup>19</sup> There are often unrecognised costs associated with volunteer programmes, as volunteers need to be supervised, managed, insured and trained.<sup>20</sup>

Whilst rising unemployment offers people more time (lack of time being a significant barrier to volunteering), those out of work are generally less

likely to volunteer than those in work (34% compared to 42% for formal volunteering).<sup>21</sup>

Many people are not aware of the wide range of differing volunteering roles.<sup>22</sup> For example:

- Being a group 'member' or 'helping out'
- Fundraising
- Providing a service
- Governance roles
- As part of recovery and rehabilitation
- Grass roots activists or social activists
- Peer supporters
- Mentors & coaches
- Businesses – pro bono activity, staff volunteering schemes
- Learning and work development placements

### Key outcomes

- ***Social isolation - Proportion of people who use services and their carers, who reported that they had as much social contact as they would like. (Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework)***
- ***Social care-related quality of life which includes participation (Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework)***
- ***Self-reported wellbeing (Public Health Outcomes Framework)***
- ***Increasing equality and improving engagement are key principles of the Brighton & Hove Local Strategic Partnership's – The Connected City Strategy.***

### Impact in Brighton & Hove

Estimates suggest that there are 50,000 volunteers in Brighton & Hove across the public, business and voluntary & community sectors. There are, for example, 1,858 volunteers supporting and working alongside council staff in a range of services such as the 853 volunteer school governors. Brighton & Sussex University Hospital trust had 469 volunteers

<sup>15</sup> Social Action: Harnessing the Potential Updated June 2015  
A Discussion Paper June 2015. Cabinet Office.

<sup>16</sup> Cabinet Office analysis of 2013/14 Community Life Survey (May 2013 to April 2014)

<sup>17</sup> Institute for Volunteering Research. Volunteering and the recession. 2011. Available at: <http://www.ivr.org.uk/images/stories/Institute-of-Volunteering-Research/Migrated-Resources/Documents/T/Think-piece-on-volunteering-rates-and-the-recession-D3.pdf> [Accessed 05/09/2016]

<sup>18</sup> The Join In Trust 'Hidden Diamonds' 2104. Available at:

<https://www.joininuk.org/hidden-diamonds-true-value-of-sport-volunteers/> [Accessed -09/09/2016]

<sup>19</sup> Curtis A. How volunteering and its support structures are faring in the current economic climate. 2015. Available at:

<http://www.ivr.org.uk/images/stories/Evidence%20Bank/volunteering-in-the-downturn-report-summary.pdf>. [Accessed 05/09/2016]

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/voluntary-sector-network/2013/oct/14/george-osborne-volunteering-not-free>

<sup>21</sup> Kitchen, S. 2008-09 Citizenship Survey: Volunteering and Charitable Giving Topic Report. 2009. Department for Communities and Local Government: London.

<sup>22</sup> Volunteering England. From Barriers to bridges – Involving a broader range of volunteers, Institute for volunteering research: London. 2013. Available at: <http://www.volunteering.org.uk/component/gpb/diversity-overview#barriers> [Accessed 05/09/2016]

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supporting staff in one month (June 2015) in wards, offices and reception areas.<sup>23</sup>

The city has a substantial and strong voluntary and community sector with a broad range of organisations concerned with issues of both people and/or place. New ways of commissioning services, with a real decrease in resources has resulted in voluntary and community sector providers and statutory agencies working together to provide creative solutions and many of these involve developing a wide range of volunteer roles.

Volunteers have a key role in Healthwatch Brighton & Hove, the local independent consumer champion for health and social care and provide advice on health and social care issues, capture case studies, represent Healthwatch at meetings and support “enter and view” teams.<sup>24</sup>

### Where we are doing well

The city has a significant third sector with a large number of volunteers producing key sustainability and health outcomes. So for the third sector alone:

- There are 27,600 volunteer positions in the third sector in Brighton & Hove.
- An additional 13,800 governance positions which are held mostly by volunteers.
- Volunteers donate 110,400 hours per week.
- Volunteers donate a total of 5,740,800 hours per year, which equates to £44m per year.
- There is a ratio of 4:1 volunteers to paid staff in the third sector.
- Investment in and continuation of the Skills Exchange and Business engagement activity generated £70,000 of pro bono support to voluntary sector organisations.<sup>25</sup>
- The Volunteer Centre had over 4,000 volunteering enquiries over the last year.

- There are 59 active community and residents associations across the city with over 300 estimated volunteers and activists.<sup>26</sup>
- The City Tracker survey 2015 found that 15% of residents surveyed had been involved in some form of voluntary local activism<sup>27</sup> over the past year compared to the England figure of 8%.

A local Social Returns on Investment pilot found;

- that 90% of those volunteering 21 hours or more per month felt they could influence local decision-making and all gained skills, confidence and knowledge.
- Volunteers identified their key motivators as:
  - A sense of personal satisfaction, being useful and productive - by far the highest motivator
  - The reciprocal relationship in helping themselves as well as others
  - To support a particular cause - to give something back to a group or organisation that has directly or indirectly impacted on their life
  - Spiritual relevance.<sup>28</sup>

An Online Good Practice guide to develop high quality volunteering has been developed and is being widely used.<sup>29</sup>

A Volunteer Co-ordinators Forum includes a learning element which provides the opportunity to develop skills, disseminate good practice and share experiences in the management of volunteers.<sup>30</sup>

The Volunteer Champions group is made up key people from cross sector organisations who are able to influence and champion the value of having volunteers within organisations.

<sup>26</sup> Taking Account 3. Available at: <http://bhcommunityworks.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/FINAL-TAKING-ACCOUNT-3-REPORT.compressed.pdf>. [accessed 09/09/2016]

<sup>27</sup> Brighton & Hove Strategic Partnership. City Tracker. Available at: <http://www.bhconnected.org.uk/content/surveys> [Accessed 25/08/2016]

<sup>28</sup> Catalysts for Community Action and Investment: A Social Return on Investment analysis of community development work based on a common outcomes framework. Nef October 2010

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.bhcommunityworks.org.uk/volunteering/good-practice/>

<sup>30</sup> Brighton & Hove Volunteer Co-ordinators Forum. <http://www.bhcommunityworks.org.uk/members/services/volunteer-co-ordinators-forum/>

<sup>23</sup> Brighton & Hove Connected and Brighton & Hove Community Works. The power of volunteering: A vision for Brighton & Hove. Available at: <http://www.bhcommunityworks.org.uk/public-sector/the-power-of-volunteering/> [Accessed 25/08/2016]

Available at <http://www.bhconnected.org.uk/sites/bhconnected/files/5763%20Volunteer%20Strategy%20final.pdf> [Accessed 22/08/2016]

<sup>24</sup> Trained volunteers who assess health and social care adults services, report on findings and make recommendations.

<sup>25</sup> Community Works. Monitoring and Evaluation 2014-2015.

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The Volunteer Implementation Group play a strategic role in shaping the city's response to the Power of Volunteering.

Volunteering is included as a key element in many city-wide plans, agendas and strategies, for example; Happiness: Brighton & Hove Wellbeing Strategy and the City Employment and Skills Plan.

Brighton & Hove City Council has a Volunteering Policy and Toolkit which aims to create a consistent approach across the organisation and contribute to the corporate principle: A city that people take pride in, where citizens, communities and businesses can get involved and take action to address things that matter to them.

A cross-sector partnership group aims to champion and maximise the impact of volunteers and will align their work to the refreshed citywide volunteering strategy.<sup>31</sup> The group membership reflects the increasing range of volunteering opportunities across all sectors - particularly important at a time of financial challenges across social care, healthcare, recreational and education systems. The strategy pledges to:

- Raise awareness of volunteering across Brighton & Hove by regularly bringing volunteering to the attention of cross sector partners, the media and the public
- Increase the number of people committing to volunteer from all communities through attracting more volunteers from diverse communities across the city
- Enhance recognition of the value that volunteers bring to the city through regular promotion of the triple impact of volunteering for the city, community, business and organisations, and for individuals
- Improve accessibility of volunteering opportunities by creating more high quality, well supported, accessible volunteering opportunities
- Promote good practice in working with volunteers through continuing support of the cross sector Volunteer Co-ordinators' Forum and endorsement of the need to adequately resource volunteer management and support.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.bhcommunityworks.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/The-Power-of-Volunteering-A-vision-for-Brighton-and-Hove.pdf>

Most schools provide the opportunity for young people to volunteer on their school council/forum, many have student governors and citywide there is an elected Youth Parliament which gives young people, including those from vulnerable groups, the chance to contribute to decisions made about services.

A number of organisations have a large number of volunteers and facilitate older people's volunteering including LifeLines, AgeUK Brighton & Hove, Hangleton and Knoll 50+ Group, Impact Initiatives and Neighbourhood Care Scheme.

### Local inequalities

National evidence shows that people from hard to reach groups are less likely to access volunteering opportunities.<sup>22</sup>

The latest audit of the third sector in Brighton & Hove in 2014,<sup>32</sup> shows that:

**Gender:** In keeping with the trend seen with voluntary and community sector paid staff, 65% of volunteers are women compared with 35% men, with little change from 2008. National data finds no significant difference between the number of men and women who volunteer and so Brighton & Hove may differ to other parts of the country in this respect.<sup>33</sup> Just 0.18% of volunteers and 0.25% of management committee members were recorded as being Trans.

**Ethnicity** - 5% of volunteers are from Black and Ethnic Minority communities (up from 3% in 2008), but this is very low compared with 19.5% of the city's population being from a BME group.<sup>34</sup>

**Age:** Around two-thirds of volunteers (68%) and management committee members (67%) are aged 25-59 years.

In the academic year 2014/15 there were 2,382 students volunteering their time from the Universities of Brighton and Sussex.<sup>35</sup>

Those under 25 represent 14% of volunteers and those 60 or over 19%. This is similar to previous

<sup>32</sup> Community Works. Taking Account 3: The economic and social audit of the third sector in Brighton and Hove. June 2014. Available at:

<http://bhcommunityworks.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/FINAL-TAKING-ACCOUNT-3-REPORT.compressed.pdf> [Accessed 05/09/2016]

<sup>33</sup> NCVO. UK Voluntary Sector Workforce Almanac (2016) [online] Available at: <https://data.ncvo.org.uk/almanac16/> [accessed 09/09/2016]

<sup>34</sup> Office for National Statistics. Neighbourhood Statistics. Ethnic Group (KS201EW) Census 2011.

<sup>35</sup> The Power of Volunteering; <http://www.bhconnected.org.uk/sites/bhconnected/files/5763%20Volunteering%20strategy%20final.pdf>

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years and is in line with the population figures in the city. Nationally there has been a 52% increase in volunteers aged 16-24 (23% in 2010/11 to 35% in 2014/15).<sup>36</sup>

**Disabled people** - 9% (4% in 2008) of volunteers are registered disabled. Currently over 30 organisations have signed up to the Disability Action Alliance Charter pledging to provide opportunities for disabled people to volunteer and commit to ensure appropriate support to enable this to happen.

**Sexual orientation:** Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people (this information is not available separately for LGB and trans respondents) are more likely to volunteer than heterosexual people in the city. Over a third of LGBT people volunteer for an LGBT group, and almost half regularly participate in national LGBT groups. Amongst management committee members 7% are LGBT. There are also high levels of young volunteers across the Allsorts LGBT volunteering programme.<sup>37,38,39</sup>

Although each group has seen an increase since the 2008 audit, the figures for LGB people, Disabled people, and Black and Minority Ethnic people are an under representation of the Brighton & Hove population overall. Some respondents stated that they do not gather this type of data for volunteers therefore these figures must be treated with some caution.

Several projects have been created that are working towards expanding access to high-quality, well-supported volunteering opportunities for those population groups who have historically experienced additional barriers. Examples include people with learning disabilities, physical disabilities and/or mental health issues alongside tailored brokerage that ensures the best match for the individual.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>36</sup> <http://blogs.ncvo.org.uk/2016/04/11/sharp-increase-in-young-peoples-volunteering/> [accessed 09/09/2016]

<sup>37</sup> Browne K. Count Me in Too. LGBT lives in Brighton & Hove, initial findings: Academic report. University of Brighton and Spectrum LGBT Community Forum: 2007

<sup>38</sup> Taking Account 3. Available at: <http://bhcommunityworks.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/FINAL-TAKING-ACCOUNT-3-REPORT.compressed.pdf>. [accessed 09/09/2016]

<sup>39</sup> Allsorts Youth Project. Allsorts Annual Report. Brighton & Hove. Available from: <http://www.allsortsyouth.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/Allsorts-Annual-Report-2015-2016-.pdf>

<sup>40</sup> Impetus – Better Futures programme. See <http://www.bh-impetus.org/projects/better-futures/>

### Predicted future need

Given the continuing recession and substantial cuts to public funds the role of volunteers is increasingly important. The range of volunteering roles and remits broadens. This adds to the importance of organisations factoring in the ongoing support, mentoring and training to support volunteers.

### What we don't know

We do not have adequate information on the impact of volunteering across equalities groups in particular BME, religious and faith based groups.

### Key evidence and policy

NICE Guidance. Older people: independence and mental wellbeing 2015<sup>41</sup>

NICE Guidance. Community engagement: improving health and wellbeing and reducing health inequalities, 2016<sup>42</sup>

**Taking Account:** Capturing the social and economic impact of the community and voluntary organisations in Brighton & Hove. 2014.

<http://www.bhcommunityworks.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/TA3-Executive-Summary.pdf>

### Recommended future local priorities

1. Bring volunteering to the attention of cross sector partners, the media and the public
2. Recognise the value and impact of volunteering in the city
3. Continue to improve accessibility of volunteering opportunities and attracting more volunteers from diverse communities
4. Promote good practice in working with volunteers.<sup>43</sup>

### Key links to other sections

- Happiness and wellbeing
- Social connectedness
- Community resilience and assets
- Employment and unemployment

<sup>41</sup> Available at: <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng32>

<sup>42</sup> Available at: <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng44>

<sup>43</sup> The Power of Volunteering: a Vision for Brighton & Hove. Available from: <http://www.bhconnected.org.uk/sites/bhconnected/files/5763%20Volunteering%20Strategy%20final.pdf>

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### Further information

Brighton & Hove Volunteer Centre

<http://www.bhcommunityworks.org.uk/volunteering/>

Brighton & Hove volunteering strategy: The Power of Volunteering 2016

<http://www.bhconnected.org.uk/content/power-volunteering>

National volunteering webpages

<https://www.ncvo.org.uk/ncvo-volunteering>

<https://do-it.org/#/>

Possability People

<http://www.possabilitypeople.org.uk/weve-changed/>

### **Last updated**

September 2016